

Funding Options and Annual Action Plan AEM Base Program Year 6 (2010 – 2011)

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) is a framework created to assist Soil and Water Conservation Districts and their partners develop and deliver a credible agricultural conservation program based on local priorities and goals. The AEM Base Program provides noncompetitive funds to county Soil & Water Conservation Districts to maintain a baseline agricultural conservation program without having to depend on competitive grants to conduct activities within the AEM framework.

Two different funding options are being offered in year 6 (2010-2011) of the Base Program. A description and the minimum requirements of each funding option are provided below. Each District will select the option for which it qualifies and/or best fits its needs.

The following form has been created to help guide the development of your District's Annual Action Plan (AAP) for AEM Base Funding. Your AAP should be consistent with your county AEM Strategic Plan identifying the deliverables you intend to complete between May 7, 2010 and May 6, 2011, through the AEM framework in support of your local agricultural conservation effort. The form involves a set of charts identifying priority watersheds and issues; deliverables to be completed; a budget; and a timeline for completing deliverables. You only need to submit the form for the option in which you will be participating.

Quarterly meetings with your regional AEA will be scheduled to review local program progress, and to make adjustments to the AAP if needed.

Option A – Funding requests may be made for **up to \$40,000** to provide technical assistance (Tiers 1 – 5B) and conduct supporting activities including education, outreach, program evaluation/data management, partnership, and reporting according to an Annual Action Plan in support of a County AEM Strategic Plan.

Option B - Funding requests may be made for **up to \$75,000** to conduct the same activities as Option A if the District meets the following criteria: Districts with a full time AEM or NRCS Certified Planner on staff, and that earned at least 75% of Year 4 AEM Base funds requested are eligible to apply. The AEM Report Card must be completed and included with the AEM Action Plan.

Payments to Districts through the AEM Base Program will be for hours spent on a particular activity related to deliverables identified in the AAP that advance your AEM Strategic Plan. The rate of payment will be \$34/hour unless the work was performed by an intern; in which case the rate charged should be the actual rate.

Eligible Activities – All hours paid for through the contract must have been spent on agricultural water quality related activities and issues. Payments through the Base Program must be documented in a log provided by the SWCC or one approved by the SWCC. Eligible activities include:

1. Technical Assistance – all activities contributing to the completion of AEM Tiers 1 – 5B as outlined in the “Participation Documents” developed for each tier.
2. Educational Activities – organize and conduct workshops, demonstrations, tours, informational programs, and educational articles that support the County AEM Strategic Plan. **Note – activities eligible for payment include setting up, delivering, facilitating, etc. of training events not the actual training of District employees. Training of District employees can be covered under Part A Reimbursement to Districts.**
3. Outreach – conduct activities to promote participation and/or awareness in a County AEM effort. Such activities would include: writing articles; planning and conducting informational meetings; being interviewed by a newspaper, magazine, radio station, or television station; and the AEM signage program.
4. Program Evaluation/Date Management – annually complete the AEM Report Card; update the AEM Strategic Plan, and/or AAP. Also collect, collate, interpret, maintain, and display data resulting from the implementation of the AEM tiers or related activities. This includes develop, consolidate, and/or update case files. It does not include water quality monitoring activities.
5. Partnership Activities – meet with program partners, groups and organizations acting in an advisory role to your AEM activities.
6. Reporting –complete required reports including final and interim reports for the Base Program provided the report is written within the appropriate contract year (example – Year 5 will not pay to complete a Year 4 report). Quarterly meetings with your regional AEA/WQS are eligible.

See AEM Base Year 6 (2010 – 2011) Contract Policies for more detailed information and guidance on the program.

For the AAP forms that follow, complete only for the option in which you intend to participate.