



Request for applications

Deadline: November 22, 2019

The National Wildlife Federation is accepting applications for farmers and conservation professionals, i.e. “champions” to promote cover crops and other soil health practices (no till, diverse rotations, and managed grazing) by conducting “out of the box” outreach.

Who can apply?

Cover Crop Champions want to take sustainable agriculture to the next level. They are passionate about cover crops but also passionate about communications and outreach.

A Cover Crop Champion team should be comprised of at least **one outreach champion** and **one farmer champion**. Priority will be given to groups with multiple farmer champions. There is no maximum group size.

Outreach Champion- Agricultural professionals who are employees of a farm, conservation, or education-related organization (for example, a non-profit organization or an educational institution). The role of the outreach champion is to support farmer champions by assisting with planning and implementing their proposed outreach plan.

Farmer Champion- Farmers who personally use cover crops and have soil health as a primary mission. The farmer champion’s role includes promoting cover crops and soil health practices around their region.

Where will the outreach take place?

Due to our funder’s priorities in the Mississippi River Basin, applicants are exclusively sought from the following states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

What is “out of the box” outreach?

Conventional outreach is no longer working. Traditional events tend to speak to the innovative farmer rather than the non-adopter. NWF is looking for Champions who will create an outreach plan with new themes and messaging frames that will appeal to the mindsets and motivations of those who have not yet adopted soil health practices. The possibilities are endless. We are very flexible with funding new ideas to reach this specific audience.

This is not a grant to fund the outreach that you have been doing for years. This is a collaborative and targeted outreach program, grounded in social science, specifically designed to get non adopters to start using sustainable practices. We believe that cover crops can work on all farms and that lack of widespread adoption represents a communication problem, not a knowledge issue.

What are Champion Responsibilities?

- Champions should conduct “out of the box” outreach activities to reach non-adopter farmers. Activities are proposed in the application.
- Each team is responsible for directly reaching at least 150 farmers and 10 crop advisors with messages on cover cropping as a practice.
- At least two members of each team must attend an outreach and messaging training to be held on **February 19 and 20, 2020**. All costs associated with attending this training will be covered by NWF.
- All members of a champion team are required to attend (remotely) or view all training webinars hosted by NWF.
- Champions will be required to attend and evaluate one field day in their area using evaluation criteria provided by NWF.
- Champions will be required to develop and submit an event plan for NWF approval after completing the training.
- Outreach impact must be measured according to NWF guidance
- Champions will be expected to engage in a listserv and regularly scheduled phone (2-3) calls coordinated by NWF.
- Champions will be required to complete a mid-term report by July 1st, 2020 and a final report by September 30th, 2020.
- **All activities must be completed by September 30th, 2020.**

What can this grant offer?

Each team can request up to \$10,000 to cover the costs of their outreach plan. This includes time, materials, advertisement, food, etc.

Sought-after outreach and messaging training that displays the best in agricultural outreach science to equip Champions with the skills to be successful with their plans.

Year round assistance from National Wildlife Federation staff.

Champions throughout the Midwest will have an effective network through which they can interact in order to learn from and support each other, and access latest research from academics and government agencies.

How will applications be ranked?

Ranking criteria will be estimated impact, likeliness of completion and cost-benefit ratio. New groups will be prioritized or repeat groups with at least two new members.

How to apply:

- Fill out the attached form and send to Jess Espenshade: espenshadej@nwf.org by **November 22nd, 2019**.
- Questions? Contact Jess Espenshade at: espenshadej@nwf.org or 734 887 7114
- Introduction webinar for additional questions will be held on October 8th at 1pm CT. Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6105447733121347083>

Cover Crop Champion Application Form

1. Applicant name; indicate outreach or farmer champion by each applicant/s name
2. Applicant/s contact information (address, phone, email):
3. Explain your qualifications and/or experience with cover crops (less than 300 words, in paragraph form or bullet points):
4. Explain your plan for each farmer champion to reach at least 150 farmers and 10 crop advisors with messages on cover crops and other soil health practices.
5. Explain why your outreach plan will reach non adopters better than conventional outreach.
6. Identify any challenges to achieving success.
7. Estimate your budget. There is a limit of \$10,000 in total expenditures for each application.