



Job Description: Urban Soil Health Specialist

About The Opportunity

Urban Soil Health Specialists are the technical field staff that implement the Urban Soil Health (USH) Program. The USH Program is an initiative of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD), an Indiana-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to enabling the conservation of Indiana's natural resources through the combined support of its 92 member Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).

The USH Program promotes a systematic conservation approach to agriculture in urban settings and with small-scale, diversified farms everywhere in Indiana. The Urban Soil Health Specialists develop and maintain strong working relationships with the SWCDs, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other local partners in their regional service area of approx. 20 counties. The USH Specialists support the development of local Urban Soil Health Working Groups and provide one-on-one technical assistance, education and outreach with growers and agriculture professionals.



IASWCD is hiring one (1) Urban Soil Health Specialist position in the **Northeast** region of Indiana.

Job Responsibilities

Facilitate and lead local SWCD Boards and staff to work with partners to form local Urban Soil Health Working Groups:

- Communicate with SWCD Boards and staff (5 board meetings each year) about the Program's need and potential.
- Assist SWCDs and local partners to develop independently operating USH Working Groups.
- Assist local USH Working Groups with financial planning to enable their programs to be self-sustaining.
- Organize an annual regional training for Indiana Conservation Program (ICP) staff and other conservation partners within the service area to provide technical training, promote the effort, and discuss issues related to soil health.
- Evaluate and identify issues facing USH Working Groups and collaborate with the USH Program Director, other USH Specialists, and partners to address them.

Provide technical assistance, education, and outreach to local USH Working Groups:

- Encourage local USH Working Groups to provide 25 producers per year with **site visits** that will include evaluations of resource concerns related to soil health and conservation.
- Encourage local urban soil health working groups to provide one-on-one **technical assistance** to 20 producers per year to assist in the planning and implementation of urban soil health practices including cover crop plantings, nutrient management plans, mulching, and reduced tillage.
- Encourage local USH Working Groups to conduct 5 **soil health education events** within the service area per year to promote urban soil health to farmers, conservation staff, and the public.
- Encourage local USH Working Groups to develop 10 **educational materials** per year related to urban and small farm soil health and conservation.

Coordinate with partners to cultivate coverage of urban and small-scale agriculture and soil health programming regionally and statewide:

- Attend meetings and events in the service area to provide updates and keep up-to-date on other regional and local efforts. Typical partners include NRCS, SWCDs, Extension, food councils, and grower networks.
- Continuously cultivate new partnerships, and maintain existing ones, with outside organizations that will be beneficial to the program. Typical partnerships include universities, Master Gardeners, invasives management groups, non-profits with farming education programs, community gardens, and farmers.

General Public:

- Represent the USH Program and IASWCD in public appearances to inform the public of the purpose of the Urban Soil Health Program and its events, and the SWCDs and local USH Working Groups.
- Represent the USH Program at various in-person and virtual meetings, trainings, conferences, workshops, and field days. Local travel to other counties and/or overnight stays represents approximately 15% of the job.



Skills, Knowledge, Abilities and Experience Required

- Knowledge of state and national natural resource and conservation programs and issues.
- Knowledge of soil health issues farmers face in urban and small-scale settings and with farmers otherwise new to agriculture. Experience working with farmers to implement the principles of soil health. Hands-on experience with small-scale, diversified farms is ideal.
- Training and meeting facilitation skills. Strong interpersonal communication skills for consensus building and professional partner development. Experience fostering and maintaining cooperative working relationships with traditional and non-traditional urban soil health partners is a plus.
- Strong time management skills and responsive communication and a mindset to problem solve to support clients.
- Ability to submit timely financial and activities reports and support local USH Working Groups with administration.
- Ability to work independently and with others in a team environment with minimum supervision, work on several tasks simultaneously where there are competing priorities, and complete assignments effectively amidst interruptions. Flexibility to work in remote and in-person environments and utilize technology.
- Ability to occasionally work extended, weekend, and/or evening hours, and travel out of town, sometimes overnight.
- Ability to work outdoors which may involve working in cold, wet, hot, humid, or otherwise uncomfortable conditions.
- Ability to travel and use personal vehicle for job-related activities. Possession of a valid Indiana driver's license and demonstrated safe driving record.

Qualifications

Minimum education: A bachelor's degree is preferred in a field that relates to the responsibilities of this position such as agriculture, horticulture, natural resources, or environmental management, with work experience in natural resource related programs. Hands-on work experience on small-scale, diversified production farms is valued in this position.

Supervision

The Regional Urban Soil Health Specialists shall be under the supervision of the Urban Soil Health Program Director and at the same time shall exercise individual initiative and wide latitude to implement the USH Program on the regional level. The USH Program Director will evaluate the performance of the incumbent on an annual basis. The incumbent will attend frequent USH team meetings. The incumbent will be asked to submit regular activity reports to the IASWCD's Board of Directors.

Location

It is expected that the hire will be regionally located due to travel budget constraints. Office space will be provided in the Northeast Area USDA service center in Fort Wayne, Allen County (602 Coldwater Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46825).

Salary and Benefits

This is a grant funded position and is contingent upon further funding. Initial annual salary is \$46,000 - \$49,000. Annual salary increases will be available based upon job performance. A benefit package that includes a health stipend, retirement contribution, paid time off, flexible work schedule, and cell phone stipend is available.

How To Apply

Email cover letter, resume and 3 references to:

Elli Blaine, IASWCD Urban Soil Health Program Director ebtaine@urbansoilhealth.org

Questions? Email Elli above or call 360-317-6752

This description is on our website: www.urbansoilhealth.org/jobs

Deadline: Monday, September 25, 2023 or until filled. Interviews may be scheduled as resumes are received, and highly interested candidates are encouraged to submit materials prior to the deadline.



Urban Soil Health Program

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