Conservation Connector User Manual

Developed by the Conservation Technology Information Center

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Introduction

Purpose

The Conservation Connector website serves as a centralized platform designed to connect agricultural producers with a wide range of financial and technical assistance programs aimed at supporting sustainable conservation practices. This manual is intended to guide program coordinators and administrators in effectively entering, managing, and maintaining program information on the website, ensuring that farmers and other users can easily find and access up-to-date, accurate program details. By following this manual, coordinators will be equipped to contribute high-quality entries to the Conservation Connector, fostering impactful connections between program offerings and the agricultural communities they support.

Manual Objectives

This manual is designed to provide program coordinators and administrators with clear, step-by-step guidance on entering, updating, and managing program information within the Conservation Connector website. By following the instructions outlined here, users will be able to:

- Navigate the website and locate key features.
- Enter accurate and comprehensive program details, including eligibility criteria, funding options, and contact information.
- Update and maintain program listings to ensure they remain current and relevant.
- Troubleshoot common issues and access support when needed.

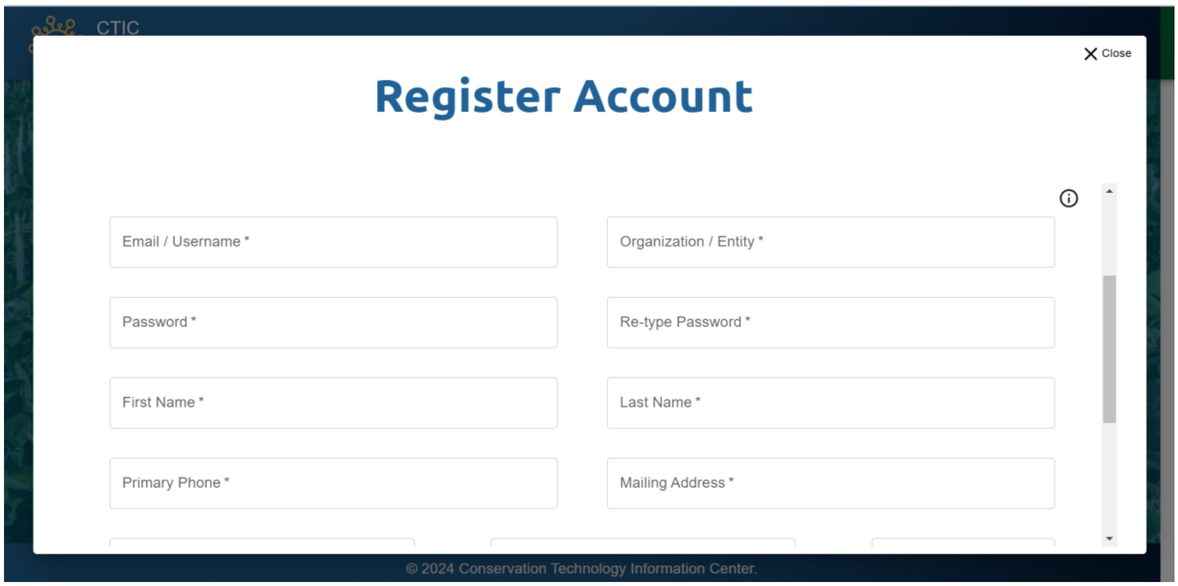
With this manual, coordinators will be equipped to enhance the quality and accessibility of program entries, helping agricultural producers find the resources they need to adopt sustainable conservation practices.

Getting Started

Accessing the Website

1. **Website URL**: Begin by opening a web browser and navigating to the Conservation Connector website at Connector.ag.
2. **Login Credentials**:
    - **Username and Password**: Program coordinators/administrators who have previously met with CTIC staff should receive login credentials via email. If you haven't received your login information, please contact our team at connector@ctic.org. Click "Login" in the navigation bar and input your username

    and password. You will have the option to edit the password you are given at this point.
  - **Creating a Password**: For first-time users looking to register for new programs, click “Login” in the navigation bar, and choose the “Register” button on the login page to set up your account. You’ll receive an email asking you to confirm your email address.

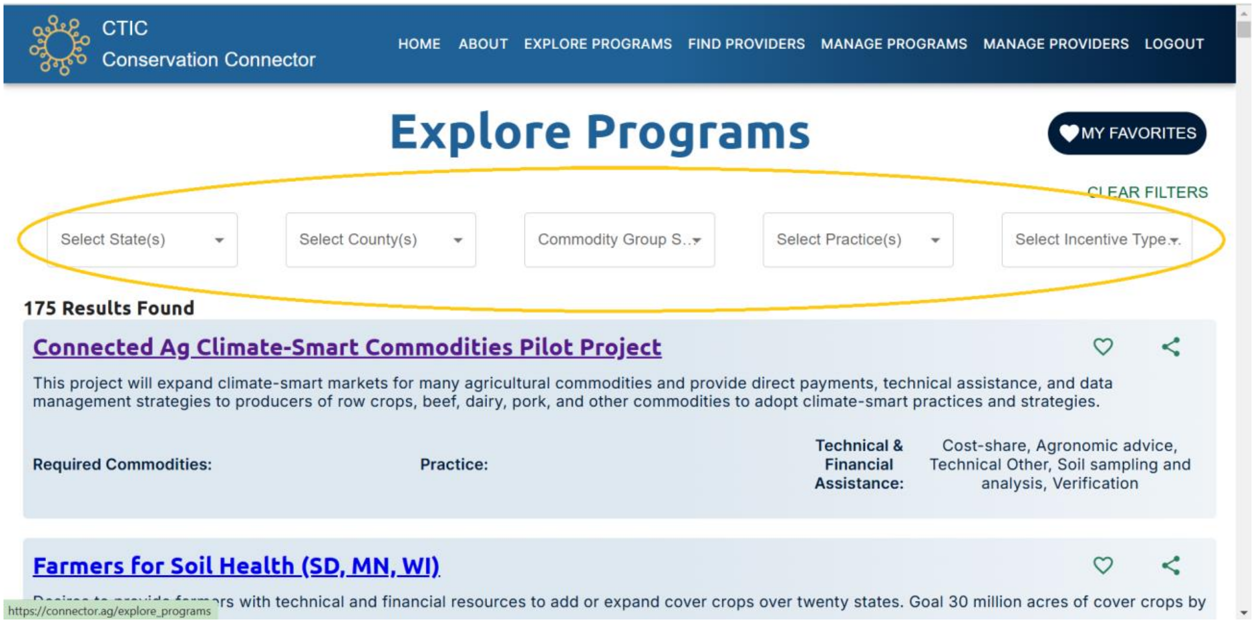


3. **Troubleshooting Access Issues**:
   - **Forgot Password**: Use the “Forgot Password” link to reset your password if you have trouble logging in.
   - **Technical Support**: If you experience technical issues, reach out to the support team at Connector@ctic.org.
4. **Navigating the Homepage**: Once logged in, you will land on the homepage, which can be used to search the database for active programs. To enter new programs or service providers choose the tabs labeled “Manage Programs” or “Manage Providers”.

Website Navigation Overview

Searching Programs

If you choose “Explore Programs” or “Find Providers” in the navigation bar, you will be presented with a full list of entries in the database. Results can be filtered by selecting options in the fields circled below. While this picture highlights the programs tab, the same options may be filtered for service providers.

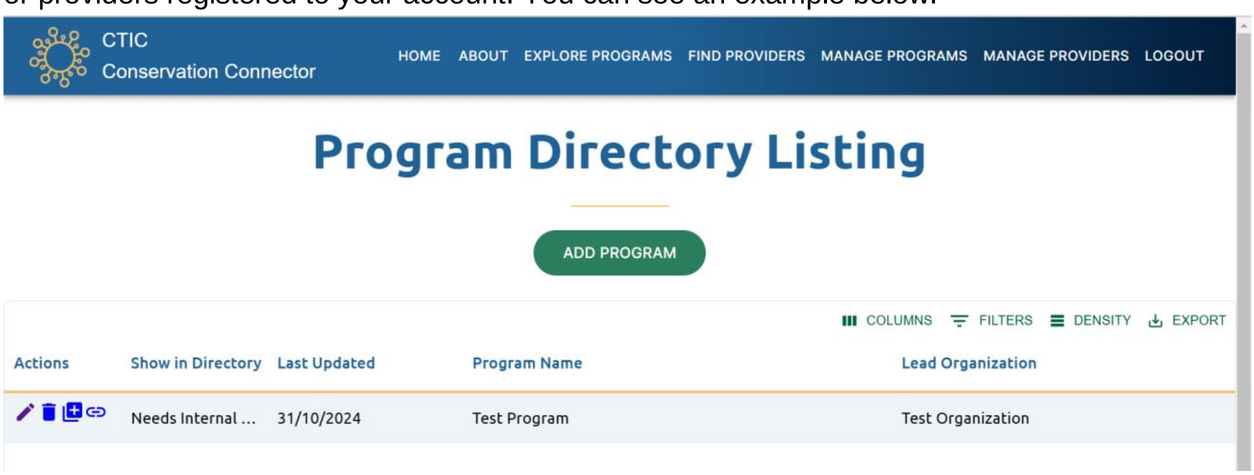


Clicking on specific program cards will lead to a more detailed view displaying all information available about a program or service provider. On this screen, you will see options to contact the organization.

- Clicking the heart icon will add the program or service provider to your “My Favorites” tab which is shown after clicking the button labeled “My Favorites”
- Clicking the share icon will provide options to share a link directly to that program or service provider.

Managing Programs

If you choose “Manage Programs” or “Manage Providers”, you will see a full list of the programs or providers registered to your account. You can see an example below.



You can edit the information shown or filter your results using the options on the left side of your screen. Additionally, you may export your program listings to a spreadsheet using the export button.

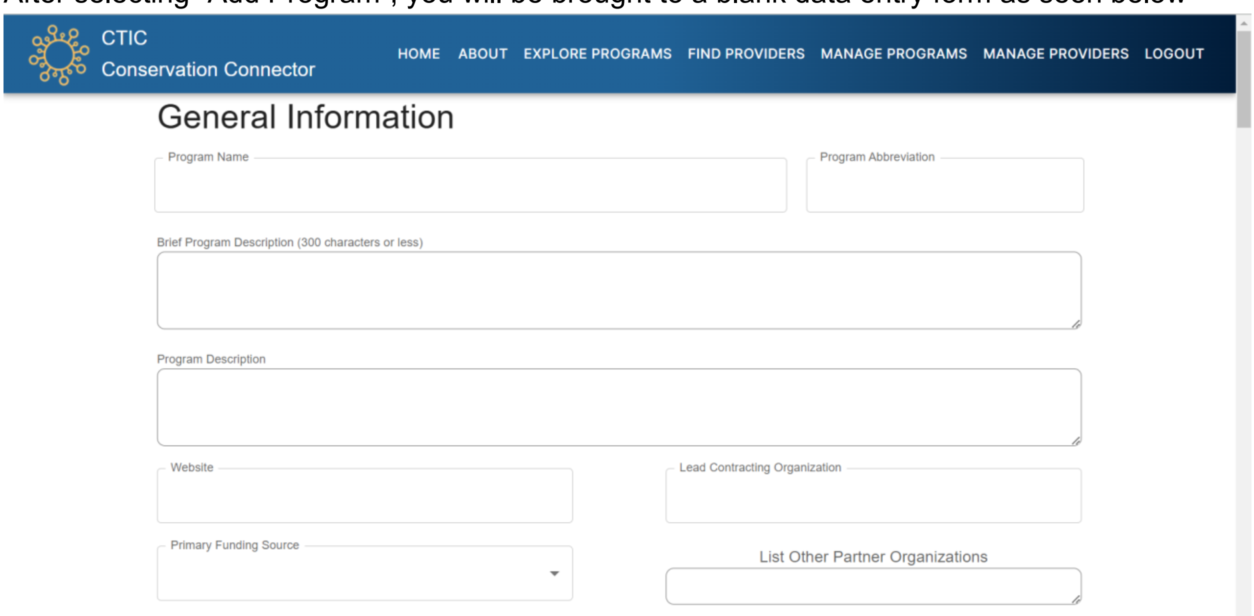
- Clicking the **“Add Program” button** will open a data entry form to enter new program information. Make sure to save the information by clicking the “Update” button at the bottom of the data entry form.
- Clicking the **Pencil icon** next to a specific program will allow you to edit existing programs. Again, ensure you click the “Update” button to save the changes.
- Clicking the **Trashcan icon** allows you to delete programs. If you need to delete a program, click this button, scroll to the bottom, and press “Delete”.
- Clicking the **Duplicate icon** will create a duplicate entry of the program you selected. This may be especially helpful for program coordinators who manage multiple similar programs.
- Clicking the **Link icon** will take you to the website link entered for the program.

Program Entry Process

Now that we have walked through how to register or log in to the website and navigate through the sites, we are ready to begin entering programs or service providers. Find guides below for assistance on these processes.

Creating a New Program Entry

After selecting “Add Program”, you will be brought to a blank data entry form as seen below



In the next section, we will cover the information required to list a program on the Conservation Connector. When entering information, it is important to fill in as many fields as possible. After you complete your entry, click the “Update” button at the bottom of the screen. Without pressing the “Update” button, your data may be lost.

Sections of the Program Form

General Information

The General Information section covers basic program details. In this section, you will be required to add a title, description, and other important information about the program. To complete this section, you will need the following information:

- Program Name and Abbreviation if applicable
- A Brief Program Description (300 characters or less). You may also include a longer program description if you choose
- Website Link
- Lead Organization and Other Partner Organizations
- Primary Funding Source
  - Federal, State, Local, Private, or Philanthropic
- Parent Program: If the program that you are entering is part of a separate parent program, you may select that here.
- PCSC Award: If this program is funded through the Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities grants, select yes. If not, select no.
- Historically Underserved Populations: In this section, you can include information about how your program seeks to prioritize underserved populations.

Contacts

This section will prompt users to input applicable contacts for the program. This person would be the first point of contact for producers interested in enrolling in the program. You may include as many contacts as necessary, giving the option to include specific geography for each contact. The information required for a contact listing is as follows:

- Name
- Organization
- Email
- Phone Number

While specific points of contact are generally preferred, you also have the option to include a link to a contact form. This section would link to an external website for a project that would allow interested producers to submit a form and be contacted by program staff. This may be added in addition to, or in place of contacts.

Financial & Technical Assistance

In this section, you will describe the incentives offered through the program. This is split up into two sections– financial and technical assistance.

Options for financial assistance range from cost-share equipment rental to tax credits and loans. Choose the option that best describes your program. If none of these options accurately represent your program, choose “Financial Other” and describe your incentives in the text box provided. If there are any additional details you would like to add about your financial assistance, include it in this section as well.

Similarly for technical assistance, you can select from a variety of options that are displayed. Again, if the options available do not accurately represent your program, choose “Technical Other” and describe your incentives in the box provided. If there is anything else you would like to add about your technical assistance, include it in this section as well.

Criteria/Eligibility to Participate in the Program

Geography: In this section, select the geography where your program is eligible. This section is set automatically to “All States” and you can refine the selection as necessary. Options are available to select states and associated counties. If there are further geographic requirements, such as watersheds, include that information in the text box provided.

Commodity & Practice Requirements: In this section, select the required commodities to participate in this program from the dropdown menu. If there are commodities not listed or you would like to include any additional information, include those details in the text box provided. The required practices are directly linked to NRCS practice codes. You may choose as few or as many practices as you would like to select. If there are any additional practices or any other details you would like to add, include those in the text box below.

Enrollment, Reporting, and Payment Details

Open Enrollment Period: In this section, you will select “Yes” or “No” if the enrollment period for the program is open. Use the text box to describe the period enrollment is open. Finally, calendar buttons allow you to input specific dates for the start and end of the enrollment period.

Data or Reporting Requirements: In this section, you will select “Yes” or “No” if the program has a data or reporting requirement. If you answered yes, then include the relevant details that enrolled producers would need to share. Examples include soil tests, historic agronomic information, or other required data.

Contracts and Renewals: In this section, you will select “Yes” or “No” if the contracts may be renewed for this program. In the text box, include information on contract length and maintenance agreements if applicable.

Limits of Assistance: In this section, you will select “Yes” or “No” if the program has a limit of assistance. Some programs may have specific acreage or dollar limits of assistance. Include that information here.

Stackability: In this section, you will select “Yes” or “No” if this program may be stacked with other programs. Some programs, specifically federal programs, may not stack with other federally funded programs but may be cost-shared with some private programs. In the text box, describe how your program may stack with other incentive programs.

Sections of the Service Provider Form

General Information

The General Information section covers basic details on the service provider. An address, business phone number, website, and social media links will be entered in this section. After inputting this information, select a type for the listing. Types include private businesses, government organizations, non-profits, and academic institutions.

Geography & Contacts

In this section, you will select a specific geography where the service provider operates. You may select primary states and counties.

Below that, press “Add Contact”. This contact should be the person interested producers should to reach out to. You will be asked to include their name, email, and phone number. Additionally, you may include certifications such as the NRCS Technical Service Providers or Certified Crop Advisors. For these fields, you can select “Yes” or “No”. If you select yes, please include the TSP Certification Number or Certified Crop Advisor Website Link. Finally, you may include a local geography where that contact is relevant.

Services Offered

There are four dropdown menus available in this section.

1. **Service Categories:** In this section, you will find broad categories such as drainage management or grazing/pasture. Select the categories that are relevant to your service provider entry
2. **Mitigation Specializations:** In this section, you will find a shorter list of categories such as water quality or soil health. Select the categories that are relevant to your service provider entry. If none of these specializations describe your services, feel free to leave this section empty.
3. **NRCS Practice Specializations:** In this section, select the NRCS practice codes relevant to your service provider. If the services you offer are not related to a specific NRCS practice code, feel free to leave this section empty.
4. **Commodity Group Specializations:** In this section, select the commodity categories, such as livestock or row crops, that are relevant to your service provider. Select as many or as few categories as you serve.
5. **Service Description:** In this text box, include a brief description of the services you offer. For example, if you offer an equipment rental, include the equipment details in this box.

Managing and Updating Program Entries

Editing Program Details & Updating Contact Information

After you have entered a program listing, you will be asked to update the listing regularly. To update a listing, navigate to the “Manage Programs” page. Click the pencil icon next to the program you are updating. This will allow you to edit the program accordingly. At this point, update any information that may have changed, such as contact information or enrollment dates. After entering any new information, scroll to the bottom and click the “Update” Button” If the information is still applicable and nothing has changed, scroll to the bottom and click the “Update” button.

After updating information and ensuring that everything is current, it is essential to save your information by clicking that button. This will allow CTIC staff to see that you have viewed your program and confirmed that everything is up to date.

Quality Assurance and Data Review

Approval Process

After updating your program, it will be under a new status labeled “Needs Internal Review”. You may still edit your program at this stage. Once you have completed your updates, a Conservation Connector team member will approve your listing after a brief review. At this point, your program will be accessible to the public. If you have any questions about this process, please contact our team for more specific information.