



# THE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT NETWORK: THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Virginia Assn of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

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# VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



# The Role of Technical Assistance

Code of VA provides SWCDs are the local delivery service for programs that include:

- (i) provision of technical assistance to advance conservation management services
- (ii) delivery of educational initiatives targeted at youth and adult groups to further awareness and understanding of water quality issues and solutions
- (iii) promotion of incentives to encourage voluntary actions by landowners and managers in order to minimize nonpoint source pollution contributions to state waters



# The Role of Technical Assistance: Who?

Technical Assistance is provided by people who are trained, even certified, as experts in the various disciplines applicable to non-point source BMPs.

Qualifications usually require a minimum of 2 years on the job training after graduation from college

Historically, agriculture has been the focus of SWCD TA. However, the clientele has expanded to include homeowners, local governments, schools, business, etc.

Landowners can't, for the most part, implement conservation efforts without technical assistance. The two go hand in hand.



# The Role of Technical Assistance: What?

Technical Assistance Involves Four Steps:

1. Identify the Problem
2. Educate the Operator
3. Advise the Person Responsible
4. Assist with the installation to meet required standards and specifications.

It includes the components of outreach, education, consulting, planning, oversight, management of state cost – share, assessment of implementation, and reporting of results.





# The Role of Technical Assistance: When?



Technical Assistance is needed over the entire life cycle of a concept, project, activity or business through termination or completion/life span.



It is always more effective to introduce technical assistance and planning at the beginning rather than apply corrective measures.



# The Role of Technical Assistance: How?

## *The Value of SWCD Delivery*

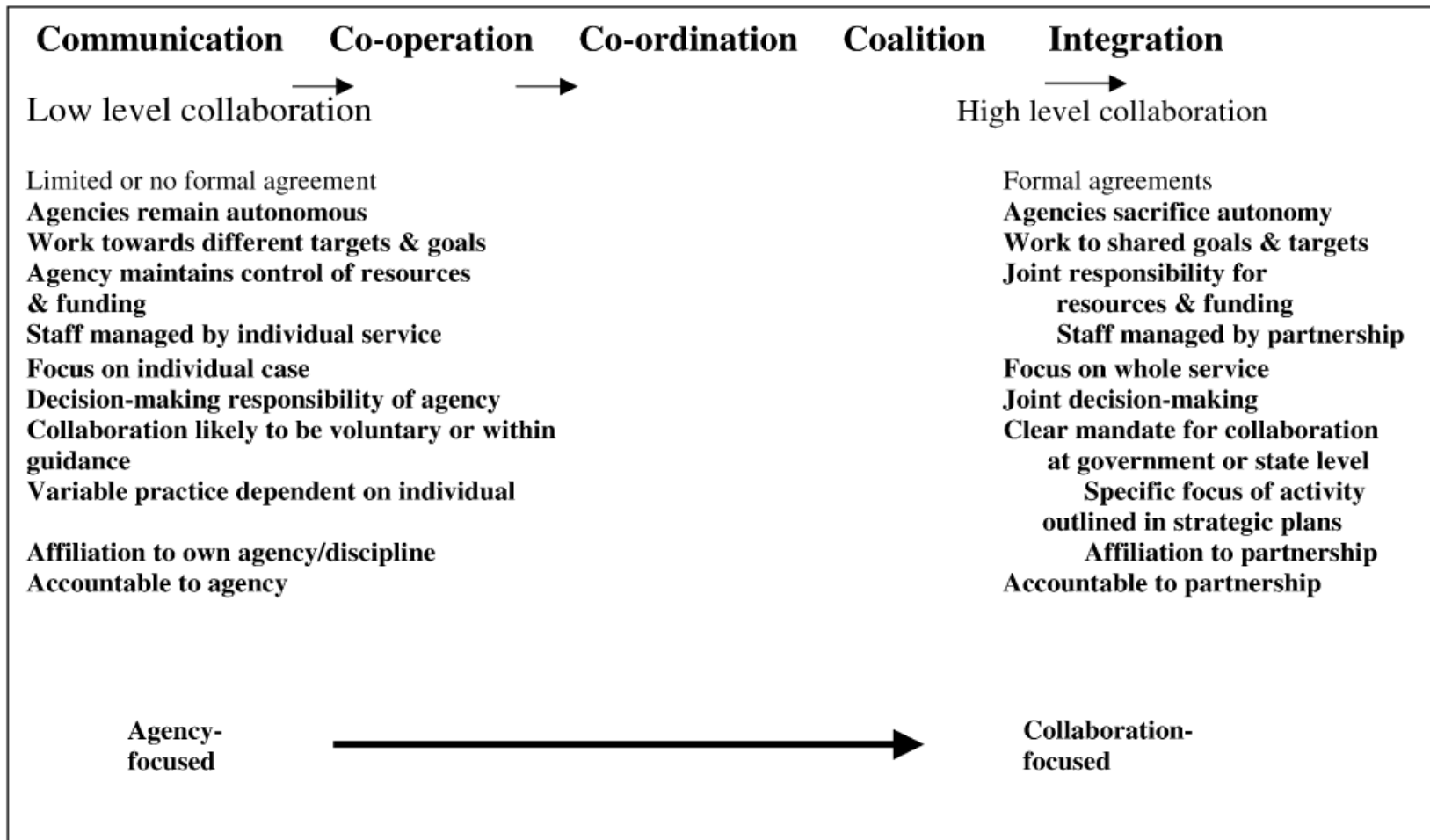
“Each agency brings to the table a knowledge skill set and/or regulatory framework geared towards their own level of government. This district provides the non-regulatory bridge between levels of government in a way that can be understood and/or adopted by citizens. We are grassroots entities and trusted by our constituency in a way that other organizations are not. This puts districts in a unique place amongst the government branches we collaborate with.” – District Director



# The Role of Technical Assistance: How?

## *Key to Our Work: Collaboration*

The features of collaborative endeavors





# The Role of Technical Assistance: How?

## *Trust Frameworks: Connecting Partners*



# The Role of Technical Assistance

## *Next Steps & Thoughts*

Virginia technical assistance is related to the appropriations for cost share and is not consistent from year to year to maintain adequate staffing for 47 SWCDs.

### Virginia Funding to Soil and Water Conservation Districts Fiscal Years 2013-2017

Fiscal Yr. (July 1-June 30)	Admin and Ops	Ag BMP Incentive Programs	Ag Technical Assistance	Supplemental (SL-6)	Supplemental TA
<b>2013</b>	\$4,381,573.00	\$18,640,613.00	\$1,843,155.50		
<b>2014</b>	\$6,360,573.00	\$19,402,186.00	\$2,371,929.00		
<b>2015</b>	\$6,521,091.00	\$24,926,844.99	\$2,782,551.00		
<b>2016</b>	\$6,521,091.00	\$21,799,337.00	\$2,782,551.00	\$6,283,081.00	\$528,768.00
<b>2017</b>	\$6,521,091.00	\$52,596,839.00	\$7,417,751.00		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$30,305,419.00</b>	<b>\$137,365,819.99</b>	<b>\$17,197,937.50</b>	<b>\$6,283,081.00</b>	<b>\$528,768.00</b>



# The Role of Technical Assistance

## *Final Thoughts & Next Steps*

- Recognizing up front technical assistance need and not only the cost share contract Technical Assistance. There is a complexity and needed overlap of education and outreach of technical assistance and Technical Assistance.
- Significant weakness in the current program is the lack of sufficient engineering assistance for design of BMPs.
- Competition exists. SWCDs lose its best employees to agencies like DCR and NRCS because of competitive pay issues.





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