



## **Best Practices for the Start-Up Payment Program (SUPP)**

### **A Component of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) Toolkit**

#### Forms

#### **Form 8: Opt-In Form**

- This form is required to inform the participant of the nature of the program, particularly the legal ramifications of violating the parameters of the program. This form is turned in with the application and serves as the cue for the Association to release the partial cost-share payment.

#### **Form 9: Start-Date Form**

- This form serves to facilitate communication between the landowner, the contractor, and the district. It primarily serves to generate a start-of-work date. This date is key to the release of the start-up payment from the district to the landowner. The district cannot release funds to the applicant any earlier than 60 days prior to the start date on Form 9.
- Form 9 is not required with the application submittal to the Steering Committee; it is required for the district to release funds to the applicant.

#### Frequently Asked Questions

##### *Why are districts offering SUPP?*

- SUPP was modeled after a similar program used by Virginia Agricultural Cost Share Program (VACS) and was adapted to support VCAP. As a fully reimbursement-based program, VCAP is only accessible to those with disposable income at least equivalent to the cost of their practice. Although SUPP only provides a portion of the cost-share up front, it is a small step to making the program more accessible.

##### *Who is SUPP being targeted to?*

- SUPP is open to any applicant within the participating districts. As such, participating districts must offer SUPP to all applicants. Districts may develop secondary criteria, such as lowering the start-up percentage or restricting SUPP to particular practices. SUPP must be applied in a manner that is non-discriminatory on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, religion, or political affiliation.

##### *What do I need to share with the applicant when discussing SUPP?*

- SUPP is an opt-in program. There is no obligation to participate.
- Keep all receipts, invoices, and records related to the practice installation, just as you would have had the program not been partially paid up-front.
- Take photos throughout installation.
- Call your local Soil & Water Conservation District if you have questions.
- Be aware of your project deadline. Projects participating in SUPP not completed by the deadline can be turned over to the Attorney General's office for legal action.



*What happens if the cost share amount changes?*

- District staff will submit a Form 7-Cost Share Adjustment Form to demonstrate the change in cost share regardless of whether the cost share increased or decreased.

*What happens if the landowner does not complete their practice? What happens if the practice isn't completed to specification?*

- If the landowner does not complete their practice within the timeline outlined in their application, they will be asked to return their cost-share payment to the district. The participant has 60 days to return the payment. If not returned within 60 days, the application—now a contract—will be turned over to the Attorney General's office for potential legal action.
- If the practice is not installed to specification, the landowner must communicate with their contractor or landscaper to rectify the issue. In the instance of a "DIY" install, the landowner must rectify the issue themselves or hire a contractor/landscaper. Only practices installed to the specifications of the most recent VCAP Manual, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality BMP Clearinghouse will be reimbursed to the total amount approved on the application. Cost share rates may not increase to account for increased costs due to repairs.
- District employees can support the landowner throughout the VCAP process in communicating the specifications, either to the landowner or to the contractor. Form 9-Start Date can facilitate this conversation and assure that the installer is clear on the specifications.

*Is SUPP funding taxable?*

- Yes, the SUPP funds are taxable income. If the cost-share payments bridge a tax year, the applicant will receive two 1099's.