

LWG Goal-Setting Guide

Write a goal your district can achieve and measure



Conservation District

Project / Focus Area

Date

Filled Out By

A good goal is the backbone of your project. It tells everyone what you're working toward, keeps you accountable, and lets you prove what you accomplished. This guide walks you through writing a measurable goal using the SMART framework and gives you a place to draft and refine it before adding it to your project proposal.

1. The SMART Framework

A SMART goal is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Here's what each one means in practice:

S	Specific	What exactly will you do? Where? For whom? Vague goals are hard to act on. The more specific, the easier it is to know if you've succeeded.
M	Measurable	How will you know when you've reached your goal? Include a number - acres, landowners, miles, dollars, events. If you can't measure it, you can't report it.
A	Achievable	Is this realistic given your resources, capacity, and timeline? Ambitious is good, impossible is discouraging. Stretch yourself but keep it doable.
R	Relevant	Does this goal address a real local conservation need? Is it something your district has the authority and interest to lead? Locally driven means locally meaningful.
T	Time-Bound	By when? A goal without a deadline is just a wish. Set a specific date or time period so you have something to work toward.

2. Examples: Weak vs. Strong Goals

Weak Goal

Strong Goal

X We want to help more landowners with erosion.	+ By September 2026, assist 8 landowners in the Blue Creek watershed with establishing grassed waterways on at least 200 acres.
X Improve water quality in our county.	+ By December 2026, work with 5 producers to implement nutrient management plans covering 1,500 acres in the county.
X Do more outreach about conservation.	+ By June 2026, host 3 local field days reaching at least 40 landowners to demonstrate cover crop practices.

3. Build Your Goal - Step by Step

Answer these five questions first. Your goal will write itself.

1. What is the conservation problem or need you're addressing?

Think local - what are you actually seeing in your county or watershed?

2. What specific action will your district take?

What will you do - assist, establish, host, implement, restore, educate?

3. Who will benefit or be involved?

Landowners, producers, students, community members - be specific

4. How will you measure success?

Pick a number - acres, participants, practices implemented, dollars leveraged

5. By when?

Set a specific date or time period

4. Write Your Goal

Now put it all together in one sentence. Use your answers above.

Try this structure:

“By [date], [what your district will do] with/for [who/how many] in [where].”

Our Draft Goal

Check your goal before moving on:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it clear what we're going to do? <i>(Specific)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it include a number we can track? <i>(Measurable)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can we realistically accomplish this? <i>(Achievable)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it address a real local need? <i>(Relevant)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it include a deadline? <i>(Time-Bound)</i>

If you answered 'no' to anything, revise your goal here:

Once your goal passes the SMART check, copy it into your Project Proposal Template.