

particular technical service is completed. NRCS may utilize information obtained through its quality assurance process, documentation submitted by the technical service provider, and other relevant information in determining how to improve the quality of technical service, as well as determining whether to decertify a technical service provider under subpart C of this part.

(b) Upon discovery of a deficiency in the provision of technical service through its quality assurance process or other means, NRCS will, to the greatest extent practicable, send a notice to the technical service provider detailing the deficiency and requesting remedial action by the technical service provider. Failure by the technical service provider to promptly remedy the deficiency, or the occurrence of repeated deficiencies in providing technical services, may trigger the decertification process set forth in subpart C of this part. A failure by NRCS to identify a deficiency does not affect any action under the decertification process. Technical service providers are solely responsible for providing technical services that meet all NRCS standards and specifications.

Subpart B—Certification

§ 652.21 Certification criteria and requirements.

(a) To qualify for certification an individual must:

(1) Have the required technical training, education, and experience to perform the level of technical assistance for which certification is sought;

(2) Meet any applicable professional or business licensing or similar qualification standards established by State or Tribal law;

(3) Demonstrate, through documentation of training or experience, familiarity with NRCS guidelines, criteria, standards, and specifications as set forth in the applicable NRCS manuals, handbooks, field office technical guides, and supplements thereto for the planning and applying of specific conservation practices and management systems for which certification is sought; and

(4) Not be decertified in any State under subpart C of this part at the time of application for certification.

(b) To qualify for certification an entity or public agency must be authorized to provide such services in the jurisdiction and have a certified individual providing, in accordance with this part, technical services on its behalf.

(c) A technical service provider, as part of the certification by NRCS, must enter into a Certification Agreement with NRCS specifying the terms and conditions of the certification, including adherence to the requirements of this part, and acknowledging that failure to meet these requirements may result in ineligibility to receive payments from the Department, either directly or through the participant, for the technical services provided or may result in decertification.

(d) NRCS will certify Technical Service Providers for a time period specified by NRCS in the Certification Agreement, not to exceed 3 years. Decertification and Renewal of Certification is administered in accordance with § 652.26.

(e) NRCS may, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 9701, establish and collect fees for the certification of technical service providers.

§ 652.22 Certification process for individuals.

(a) In order to be considered for certification as a technical service provider, an individual must:

(1) Submit an Application for Certification to NRCS in accordance with this section;

(2) Request certification through a recommending organization pursuant to § 652.25; or

(3) Request certification through an application submitted by a private-sector entity or public agency pursuant to § 652.23 or § 652.24, as appropriate.

(b) The application must contain the documentation demonstrating that the individual meets all requirements of paragraph (a) of § 652.21.

(c) NRCS will, within 60 days of receipt of an application, make a determination on the application submitted by an individual under paragraph (a)(1) of this section and in accordance with

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paragraph (a) of § 652.21. If all requirements are met, NRCS will:

(1) Enter into a Certification Agreement and certify the applicant as qualified to provide technical services for a specific practice, category, or categories of technical service;

(2) Place the applicant on the list of approved technical service providers when certified; and

(3) Make available to the public the list of approved technical service providers by practice or category of technical services.

(d) NRCS may decertify an individual in accordance with the decertification process set forth in subpart C of this part.

§ 652.23 Certification process for private-sector entities.

(a) A private sector entity that applies for certification must identify, and provide supporting documentation, that it has the requisite professional and business licensure within the jurisdiction for which it seek certification, and that it employs at least one individual, authorized to act on its behalf that:

(1) Has received certification on an individual basis in accordance with § 652.22; or

(2) Seeks certification on an individual basis as part of the private-sector entity's certification and ensures that the requirements set forth in § 652.21(a) are contained within the private-sector entity's application to support such certification.

(b) NRCS will determine pursuant to § 652.22 whether the individual(s) identified in the private-sector entity's application meets the certification standards set forth in § 652.21 for the specific services the entity wishes to provide.

(c) NRCS will, within 60 days of receipt of an application, make a determination on the application submitted by an entity. If NRCS determines that all requirements for the private-sector entity and the identified individual(s) are met, NRCS will complete the actions described in paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(3) of § 652.22.

(d) The Certification Agreement entered into with the private-sector entity shall:

(1) Identify the certified individuals who are authorized to perform technical services on behalf of and under the auspices of the entity's certification;

(2) Require that the entity has, at all times, an individual who is a certified technical service provider authorized to act on the entity's behalf;

(3) Require that the entity promptly provide an amended Certification Agreement to NRCS for approval when the list of certified individuals performing technical services under its auspices changes;

(4) Require that responsibility for any work performed by non-certified individuals be assumed by a certified individual who is authorized to act on the entity's behalf; and

(5) Require that the entity be legally responsible for the work performed by any individual working under the auspices of its certification.

(e) NRCS may, in accordance with the decertification process set forth in this part, decertify the private sector entity, the certified individual(s) acting under the auspices of its certification, or both the private sector entity and the certified individual(s) acting under the auspices of its certification.

§ 652.24 Certification process for public agencies.

(a) A public agency that applies for certification must identify, and provide supporting documentation, that it has the authority within the jurisdiction within which it seeks to provide technical services and an individual or individuals authorized to act on its behalf:

(1) Has been certified as an individual in accordance with § 652.22; or

(2) Seeks certification as an individual as part of the public agency's certification and sufficient information as set forth in § 652.21(a) is contained within the public agency's application to support such certification.

(b) NRCS shall determine whether the individual identified in the public agency's application meets the certification standards set forth in § 652.22.

(c) NRCS will, within 60 days of receipt of an application, make a determination on the application submitted by a public agency. If NRCS determines