ACEP-ALE
APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Entities with active program agreements work with landowners to submit ACEP-ALE applications. A complete ACEP-ALE application allows NRCS to begin processing eligibility and document interest in the program. Below, we list the essential pieces of a complete application package as detailed in National Bulletin 440-25-7 PGM. We also provide context for additional requests made by state offices. Finally, we suggest tips to help streamline review of your application.

COMPONENTS OF A COMPLETE APPLICATION

The application package provides information about the proposed project. The application form, or "parcel sheet", includes instructions about the additional items required for a complete package. Below, we note where each is referenced on the application form and point to related AFT resources.

Parcel Sheet for Entity Application for Agricultural Land Easement Agreement (Form NRCS-CPA-41A)

See also Instruction Sheet for NRCS-CPA-41A

Recorded property deed, executed purchase and sale agreement, or other evidence of ownership.

Parcel Sheet section B(1)

See also ACEP-ALE Landowner Eligibility Checklist

Maps or GIS shapefile(s) showing the parcel location, offered acres, and access. *Note: Legal access may also be demonstrated using a recorded right of access.*

Parcel Sheet section C(1), (10)

See also Instruction Sheet for NRCS-CPA-41A and ACEP-ALE Land Eligibility Checklist

Written pending offer between the landowner and eligible entity to acquire the ACEP-ALE.

Parcel Sheet section C(7)

See also ACEP-ALE Land Eligibility Checklist

Once you submit these documents, NRCS staff will enter the application into their systems. NRCS staff will request additional information after the application has been submitted to verify land and landowner eligibility, confirm physical and legal access, and conduct onsite assessment and ranking. NRCS staff may follow up immediately if the application is submitted close to the deadline. For a complete list of eligibility requirements that may be requested by NRCS, see AFT's ACEP-ALE Land Eligibility Checklist and ACEP-ALE Landowner Eligibility Checklist.

KEY	APPLICATION FORM REFERENCE	RELATED AFT RESOURCE

American Farmland Trust
FARMLAND INFORMATION CENTER

(800) 370-4879
www.farmlandinfo.org

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

STATE-LEVEL REQUESTS

The four items listed above represent the minimum application requirements. However, state program staff sometimes ask for additional information at the outset. This information may help make up for limited staff capacity or simplify an in-state process. Be sure you are collaborating with local service center and state easement staff and communicating with state leadership to better understand these requests.

There may be benefits to submitting a more comprehensive application package. Information to support the land assessment and ranking can make evaluating the application more efficient. Supplying materials up front may save time and avoid the need for follow-up later.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

What follows are some additional tips to help streamline review of your ACEP-ALE application. These suggestions address common pitfalls and could help ensure the application contains complete and accurate information.

1. Double-check that the acres, names, and dollars are consistent throughout the application package. Errors and omissions can hold up review while NRCS seeks corrections.

   - Review offered acres on the application and compare to the evidence of ownership (e.g. property deed) and supporting maps.

   - Landowner names also must match the evidence of ownership and information provided to Farm Service Agency (FSA).

   - Ensure the easement value matches the appraisal or other method of valuation. Be sure the easement purchase price is calculated correctly based on the easement value, requested federal share, and non-federal contributions.

2. Provide a shapefile of the property boundary and access. Digitized parcel boundaries facilitate entry into NRCS systems. Avoid low quality boundary maps with unclear or missing information.

3. Label maps and supporting documents with landowner name(s) or project name (i.e. farm name) to help keep the different components of an application package together.

4. Finalize the parcel's configuration before applying, keeping program purpose, landowner objectives, and long-term stewardship and monitoring in mind. Changing the offered acres after the application is submitted restarts application review and may impact parcel eligibility and ranking.

5. Secure a well-informed estimate of the easement value, preferably by providing a copy of a full appraisal or other NRCS approved method based on final deed terms. A significant change to the easement value later in the process runs the risk of falling short of landowner expectations or needing to request additional funds from NRCS, which are not guaranteed.

6. Obtain all required signatures on the application form.

This checklist is part of AFT's ACEP-ALE Toolkit for entities and landowners. The Toolkit includes eligibility checklists for entities, land, and landowners, which are linked above.

For an electronic version of this checklist, visit: https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/acep-ale-application-checklist/ or scan the QR code.

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