

**Urban Soil Health Working Group  
Organizational Template  
And  
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

**PURPOSE**

Working Groups are partnerships between conservation agencies, farmers, gardeners, non-profits, environmental advocates, and other urban and small farm soil health stakeholders.

Working Groups advise on issues and promote opportunities that relate to urban and small farm soil health. They also provide technical assistance, host workshops, and establish educational initiatives in their area.

Working Groups can leverage seed funding for activities from the statewide Urban Soil Health Program (USH Program) for use to advance local initiatives. Conservation partners and the community show their commitment to soil health with the creation of these Working Groups.

**ACTIVITIES & EXPECTATIONS**

Local Working Groups typically conduct site visits and technical assistance, and create educational events and materials for the community related to soil health. Decisions will be made at quarterly meetings by the representatives of each partner organization.

Expectations:

- Composed of 3 organizations / individuals
- Participate in initial training from USH Specialist (on soil health, site visits, tech assistance)
- Meet at least 4 x per year
- Identify organization to handle finances
- Host 1 x event per year
- Produce 1 x material per year
- Perform site visits, tech. assistance, educational events, and materials (group may focus on one of these activities over others)

**NAME, MISSION, SCOPE**

The Working Group is encouraged to come up with a unique name and establish a mission. This helps to create investment from the partners to focus on urban and small farms via the Working Group structure. It is recommended to have an initial conversation amongst partners about the goals and objectives of the group. Guiding questions that can narrow the focus and clarify the intent of the group are:



- What do you want to achieve with the creation of this group? (Action)
- Will you offer a service to the community? (Service)
  - eg. site visits and technical assistance
- What area will you cover?
  - eg. County-wide or multiple counties combined
- Who are the primary target audience / clients for the services provided?
  - eg. Community gardens, backyard gardeners, market farms
- What other organizations or groups work with this audience or on this issue? Could a partnership be formed? What are benefits and barriers to collaboration? (Partners)
  - eg. Sustainability Nonprofit, Garden Center, Watershed Foundation, Extension Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists

## **GROUP FORMATION & TRAINING**

Once three organizations or individuals have interest in becoming a Working Group, the Urban Soil Health Program Regional Specialist (USH Specialist) will support the group to understand the opportunities and expectations. The basic steps to become a Working Group:

1. Have an initial meeting with an USH Specialist – “What is a Working Group?”  
*Discuss the details of the expected activities and share the financial assistance opportunities (how to get payments & reimbursement from USH Program).*
2. Identify group name, mission, and roles and fill out MOU template
3. USH Specialist provides initial training:
  - *How to do a site visit*
  - *How to perform and interpret a soil test*
  - *How to provide technical assistance – Resources & examples*
  - *Soil Health 101 – Focused on small/urban farm practices*
4. Have a call out meeting to gain additional partners in the group
5. Assess and Support Working Group needs (ongoing)  
*Urban Soil Health Specialists work with group to determine what other conservation practice-specific training the group needs to provide technical assistance – what are strengths and areas for additional training?*

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Other organizations and individuals may join the group at any time, provided that they understand and support the mission and objectives of the Local Working Group. At least one representative from the organization will attend the quarterly meetings, contribute towards one event per year, and promote events and educational materials to their networks.



## **ROLES**

The Working Groups perform site visits and technical assistance and create educational events and materials. Individuals in the group can focus on one or more of these activities. For example, someone is more comfortable with the initial site visit with a land user, and another person wishes to focus on farm tour events. Groups could also start off with doing events, and later take on site visits once they are comfortable. It is great to start small and grow over time. Working Groups are flexible in nature; the structure is designed to complement and leverage individuals' existing work with conservation agencies, relevant organizations, and as growers.

The Working Group will identify an organization responsible to receive funds and reimbursements from the Urban Soil Health Program for their activities. If an organization other than a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) manages the account, then please contact the USH Specialist.

Site visits, technical assistance, events, and materials will be tracked and the quantity of each completed will be reported to the group's USH Specialist quarterly. Invoices to request payments and reimbursements will be submitted to the USH Specialist quarterly. Either one or two people can fulfil these roles. If these individuals are no longer able to fulfill these roles as expected, then the Working Group and/or the USH Specialist will find another point of contact.

Individuals in a Working Group will primarily be volunteers or serve as part of their day-to-day job roles with the conservation agency or organization with whom they are employed. A portion of the funds that the USH Program pays to Working Groups for site visits and technical assistance may be used to pay additional individuals to perform these activities. For example, a grower wishes to do site visits with other farmers. The Working Group could agree to pay a percentage of the USH payment to that individual as a sub-contractor. The Working Group must agree to this arrangement. The sub-contractor must be trained to provide quality soil health site visits and/or technical assistance, consistent with the intent of the USH Program.

## **FINANCES**

The group will support itself financially primarily by conducting site visits and providing technical assistance. The USH Program will compensate the group for these services. The group is encouraged to seek additional in-kind and cash investment via their community.

Payments for site visits (1a) and follow-up technical assistance (1b) will be made directly to the group with a fee-for-service structure. The costs of educational events (2a) and the costs to develop materials (2b) will be reimbursed after completion. Average costs are estimated per occurrence. See the document "USH Working Group Financials Overview" for the rates for payment and average reimbursements. These reimbursements require a 25% match (non-federal). Examples of match can be found on the document "USH Working Group Financials Process." The "USH Speaker Agreement Template" will be signed for event speaker fees.



Decisions about how funds will be spent will be made by all partners within the Working Group, and ideas will be discussed during the quarterly meetings. The individual(s) responsible for financial and activities tracking and reporting will present a summary at each quarterly meeting, or more regularly upon request.

The USH Program is designed to provide seed funding to kick-start support of urban and small farms by conservation professionals and community members. USH cannot guarantee indefinite payments and reimbursements. As such, Working Groups should identify funding strategy for long-term support.

Details about all payment and reimbursement categories and rates are outlined in the document “USH Working Group Financials Overview.”

Invoices for the activities and match tracking will be submitted at minimum on a quarterly basis to the Working Group’s USH Specialist, according to the submission forms and processes outlined in the document “USH Working Group Financials Process.”

Forms are located on our USH Box Account: [Working Group Forms](https://bit.ly/ush-working-groups) ([bit.ly/ush-working-groups](https://bit.ly/ush-working-groups)).

## **LIABILITY**

The Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) carries an umbrella liability policy that also covers all Soil and Water Conservation Districts. If an SWCD participates in a local Working Group and needs to submit a claim, they can do so via the IASWCD, provided they reference that the IASWCD is a cosponsor and partner on the particular event during which the damage occurred. The IASWCD and the Urban Soil Health Program do not carry separate professional services liability insurance. The IASWCD’s insurance agent can be contacted at: Josh Croy, Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, [josh.croy@infarmbureau.com](mailto:josh.croy@infarmbureau.com) or (260) 925-4214 ext 3870.

## **MEETINGS**

Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis. It is recommended to identify a point of contact responsible to convene and facilitate meetings. This may evolve to rotate to other Working Group individuals once the group becomes more established.

It is also best to identify the point of contact responsible to propose agendas and share them in advance of the meeting via email. Meeting notes may be recorded on a rotating basis by project partners and will be shared within one week after each meeting.

The Working Group will have an annual check-in meeting with their USH Specialist to review the MOU and talk about any changes, successes, and the future opportunities of the group.



**Urban Soil Health Working Group**

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

**SUBMIT THE BELOW TO YOUR  
REGIONAL URBAN SOIL HEALTH SPECIALIST**

**Name of the Working Group:**

**Primary Working Group Point of Contact – Name, Organization, Email**

(Person that communicates regularly with USH Specialist)

**USH Specialist:**

**Mission:**

**Partners**

Partner organizations identified for the initial establishment of this working group include:

Organization	Contact Name
Organization	Contact Name
Organization	Contact Name
Organization	Contact Name
Organization	Contact Name

**Finances**

Organization responsible to submit requests and receive reimbursements and payments from the USH Program for the Working Group:

Contact Name and Email:

**Tentative Meeting Dates – 4 x Year (quarterly)**

1. Jan-Mar
2. Apr-May
3. Jun-July
4. Aug-Sept

Date MOU completed and submitted to USH Specialist:

