

# THE CONSERVATION FUND

## Position Description

**TITLE:** Midwest Program Associate

**DEPARTMENT/DIVISION:** Conservation Acquisitions

**FLSA STATUS:** Exempt

**REPORTS TO:** Illinois State Director

**NUMBER OF POSITIONS REPORTING TO THIS POSITION:** None

**LOCATION:** Remote in Northeastern Illinois

## THE CONSERVATION FUND

The Conservation Fund (“TCF” or the “Fund”) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the dual mission of protecting America’s most important land, water, and natural resources while also supporting economic growth in communities. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, in its 33-year history The Conservation Fund has protected more than eight million acres of critical conservation property worth \$4.7 billion across all 50 States.

## POSITION SUMMARY

The Midwest Program Associate works closely with the Illinois State Director on projects and programs to advance the Fund’s mission. A key responsibility for this new position is supporting the implementation of the Illinois Working Lands, Water and Wildlife Regional Conservation Partnership Project (Illinois RCPP). With support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the partnership is working to increase habitat, improve water quality, and advance access to farmland by next-generation farmers through protecting at-risk farmland near metro areas.

This position will also help implement the Working Farms Fund. The Working Farms Fund is a new initiative within The Conservation Fund to support entrepreneurial farmers who are increasing the supply of local and healthy food, by providing the farmers a pathway to land ownership. This program continues a multi-decade long commitment to protecting working lands that generate conservation and economic value for local communities.

The Associate will work closely with farmers, landowners, conservation land trusts, agencies, community partners, and the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to facilitate acquisition of key farms and farmland easements and install on-the-ground sustainable ag practices. This will include working directly with farmers in the Working Farms Fund program to aid their achievement of business and land ownership objectives. Advancing equity for BIPOC farmers through farmland ownership and access to resources is an important goal. The Associate will work closely with The Conservation Fund teams based in Chicago, Atlanta and nationally; and will coordinate with The Fund’s Government Relations, Legal, Finance, Marketing and Communications, and Strategic Conservation Planning experts.

## RESPONSIBILITIES & SCOPE

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. Reasonable Accommodations may be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform these essential functions:

- Serve as primary contact on management of the IL RCPP including partnership coordination, oversight of specific projects, tracking and reporting results, and managing flow of funds.

- Support the Fund’s purchase of farms and farmland protection easements through activity such as property research, landowner outreach and engagement, field assessment, applications, due diligence, and record-keeping; manage farmland ownership including lease and operations support.
- In collaboration with the Working Farms Fund team, conduct outreach to farmers; support farmer enrollment; manage application process selecting farmers into the program; provide and coordinate business support and access to land financing resources and third-party technical assistance. Track metrics and manage program databases.
- Coordinate with USDA-NRCS on programs and funding including the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program.
- Manage project-related communications and outreach events and activities.

### **MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

- Strong interpersonal skills with ability to manage multiple and varied relationships.
- Relevant experience in farm operations, the food value chain, or entrepreneurial business development.
- Experience with real estate purchasing and knowledge of land acquisition process, or an interest to learn these skills.
- Affinity for work combining social justice, environmental and climate protection, and economic advancement and a commitment to working to achieve greater equity and respect for all.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Project management experience and knowledge of basic budgeting.
- Strong command of Microsoft Office Suite including Excel
- Ability to learn new and advanced technology.

### **PREFERRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPERIENCE**

- Familiarity with Illinois’ agricultural community and food system networks.
- Familiarity with the various financing and technical assistance providers and resources available to farmers, including USDA, Farm Services Agency, and Illinois Extension.
- Experience with GIS and ESRI products.
- Experience with Salesforce.

### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

- This position will require hiking over rough terrain to view field sites and meet with landowners.

### **WORK ENVIRONMENT**

- Work is performed primarily in a home office setting.
- Estimated travel – 15 –30%

### **COMPENSATION and BENEFITS**

This position offers a competitive salary, opportunities to earn performance-based bonus compensation and a highly competitive package of benefits including employer contributions for health care, paid holidays, vacation and personal/sick leave, retirement plan and more.

This job description is not designed to cover or contain a comprehensive listing of activities, duties or responsibilities that are required of the employee. Duties, responsibilities and activities may change or new ones may be assigned at any time, with or without notice.

To learn more about The Conservation Fund, visit <https://www.conservationfund.org>.

Qualified candidates should email their resume with cover letter to: [careers@conservationfund.org](mailto:careers@conservationfund.org).

*The Conservation Fund, a Non Profit Corporation, is an Equal Opportunity Employer who fully and actively supports equal access for all people regardless of Race, Color, Religion, Gender, Age, National Origin, Veteran Status, Disability, Genetic Information or Testing, Family and Medical Leave status, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression. The Fund prohibits retaliation against individuals who bring forth any complaint, orally or in writing, to the employer or the government, or against any individuals who assist or practice in the investigation of any complaint, or otherwise oppose discrimination.*