



## Orleans County Conservation District Position Description

**Position Title:** Community Engagement Programs Specialist

**Who we are** The Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District was established in 1947, after Vermont passed the [Soil Conservation Act](#), with an original purpose to drive locally-led voluntary conservation through contacts with farmers. In 1968, the Vermont State Legislature amended the Soil Conservation Act broadening our scope to conserve all natural resources. The mission of the Orleans County NRCD is to protect and enhance the waters of Orleans County by providing leadership, education and services for implementation of sound land stewardship practices in order to improve the quality of all of the county's soils and waters.

We are seeking to fill a part time Community Engagement Programs Specialist position to join our 8 board member and 5 staff member team to serve the Orleans County community. Orleans County is primarily forested while home to about 70 dairy farms. Dairies have decreased by 40% in recent years and has had a 50% increase in vegetable farms. Our county has the greatest number of lakes and ponds in any other county in the state, which is where our greatest residential development density is located. Orleans County has seen a 5% population growth in recent years. Our Community Engagement Specialist will support our organization to address natural resource issues related to these ongoing and emerging trends in the county.

We are non-regulatory subdivision of Vermont state government that functions much like a non-profit, which means that landowner engagement with the District is voluntary and incentive-based. Our work is done by coordinating available resources to promote the conservation of natural resources through education, conservation programs and technical services.

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**Job summary:** Join our team! Orleans County NRCD is looking for an innovative, highly motivated, flexible team player with strong professional communications experience, who can build internal and external community partnerships in this dynamic position driven by conservation science, high quality service and a passion for Vermont Agricultural and Natural Resource Conservation.

The ideal candidate will have base knowledge, interest and experience in agriculture and/or conservation science and/or natural resources management to enhance and deliver community outreach, engagement and education opportunities about conservation practices, harnessing our story and successes, sharing news of local clean water project delivery efforts, facilitating dialogue around environmental issues, and mobilizing participation in district programs and initiatives aimed at protecting natural resources. These efforts will continue to promote widespread and improved understanding of local conservation and support diverse and sustained collaboration and help in building new partnerships.

This position will be responsible for planning, organizing, implementing, and managing external communications activities for OCNRCD and support OCNRCD's internal continuous improvement goals. Primary activities include:

1. Overseeing internal communications plans and strategic branding initiatives.
2. Provide high quality program related education and outreach through a variety of mediums.
3. Manage social media accounts.
4. Develop and deliver special projects.

This position is grant funded and is under the general supervision of the OCNRCD Manager.

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**Minimum Qualifications:**

Bachelor's degree proffered but not required, marketing or communications or related degree with a minimum of three (3) years non-profit experience, including demonstrated success of communication campaigns and event planning experience. Ideal candidate will have strong and consistent communication skills in a variety of settings, a professional demeanor, the desire to establish and maintain satisfactory working relationships with OCNRCD team members, landowners, and partners to improve and build the organizations community connections and recognition of services with the ability to understand the work of OCNRCD on watershed issues and effectively communicate that work within the conservation profession arena in Vermont.

It is essential for the person occupying this position to pass a federal background check to be able to use the NRCS computer network and maintain confidentially.

**WAGE AND BENEFITS**

This is a non-salaried position starting at \$40,560 per year with room to increase. Based on OCNRCD personnel policy, part-time employees are entitled to health care stipend or HSA benefits, and sick, holiday and vacation time.

**Work schedule**

30 hours a week with the expectation of the position becoming a fulltime

**Office Location:** USDA office at 59 Waterfront Plaza in Newport VT with some remote work possible

**Target Start Date:** 4/28/2025

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**Program Duties and Performance Requirements**

1. Overseeing internal and external communications and strategic branding initiatives. (25%)
  - Work with the District Manager and the board to oversee marketing, outreach and communication policies, plans and strategies for delivering compelling content for public & media relations, press releases, social media presence, online giving, digital communications, messaging, storytelling, educational materials and branding.
  - Participate in appropriate training programs.
  - Adopt and manage district message frames and elevator pitch.
  - Work with District Manager and staff to deliver the districts quarterly newsletter and event emails.
  - Maintain the Communications Calendar, including working with District Manager and staff to develop projected annual workshop calendar. including annual branded events and other timely offerings and consistently coordinating with OCNRCD staff regarding communication scheduling.
  - Keep track of communication metrics and other relevant statistics and make recommendations for future improved communication to relevant staff.
  - Manage the creation of OCNRCD's Annual Report.
  - Serve as an ambassador for OCNRCD
  - Using existing natural resource related surveys, studies and data develop and share relevant communications, within social and cultural context, to inform readers of local natural resource issues. For example, working with and supporting board members in developing a monthly newspaper article like the tracking of the requirements for TMDL implementation efforts.
  - Develop communications products. For example, using the OCNRCD new logo create materials for community recognition.
  - Maintaining positive working relationships with partner organizations and posting content to partner communication tools – for example Agrivew, NEK collaborative, NEKO newsletter, Lake Association newsletters etc.
  - Work with the District Manager to develop and secure grant funds for the position.

2. Provide high quality program related education and outreach through a variety of mediums to local stakeholders, farmers, private landowners, and municipalities. (25%)
    - Supporting staff with the creation of program related communication materials like factsheets.
    - Photo document, harness and produce graphic materials & project success stories.
    - Work with staff to produce and deliver excellent outreach events like our annual plant sale, community trainings, locally led community engagement efforts, workshops, presentations to community groups, writing press releases, and coordinating demonstration projects or tours.
    - Process survey results, data points and worksheets from meetings and workshops.
  3. Manage social media accounts and website. (10%)
    - Harness and creatively share the work of OCNRCD.
    - Work with District Manager and staff to maintain the district's website and recommend upgrades and improvements as a general weekly task.
    - Work with staff to track available grants and share with followers.
    - Develop graphic materials and share relevant natural resource related information and opportunities to the community.
  4. Develop and deliver special projects. (40%)

Current workload examples:

    - "Marketing Conservation" project - supporting the agriculture community in sharing their successful conservation stories by developing a cohort of four farms in the county, who will be trained and have tools to advocate for and have a positive peer to peer impact.
    - Work with the District Manager to coordinate and execute Local Work Groups (USDA NRCS Program Manual 440, Part 500) to lead locally led conservation efforts in district communities, connecting on-the ground local knowledge with decision making at the State and National level.
    - Work with the Agricultural Resources Program Specialist to develop and provide opportunities for farm peer-to-peer networks, like farm tours and for farmers to engage in public meetings and agricultural initiatives related to agricultural water quality and conservation efforts. This may include developing and providing stipends for farms to engage in public meetings and initiatives. Maintain a list of meetings that farmers can attend for the advocacy.
    - Revive the OCNRCD annual Agricultural, Working lands and Natural Resources literacy "Conservation Field Day" for 4-6 graders in Orleans County.
    - Work with OCNRCD Lake Watershed Programs Specialist staff to serve as a resource for Lake Associations including creating supports and coordination efforts in lakes association communities and leverage Lake associations volunteer and other resources.
    - Support increasing natural resource knowledge base and increased capacity of land base contractors in the restoration work sector.
    - Card rack brochure projects: Create board member recruitment card, develop a general landowner's card rack brochure and update and finalize the OCNRCD brochure rack card.
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### **Skills Needed for Success**

- Possess an interest and passion for OCNRCD's mission.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, communications management experience and skill set are required.
- Project management skills - deadline-oriented, able to prioritize multiple complex responsibilities, projecting project sequencing, while maintaining a high level of attention to detail and performance.
- Able to independently set workload priorities and meet workload requirements.
- Possess basic design skills
- Experienced and skilled in the use of common communications tools like Mailchimp, Canva and Adobe.

- Must be comfortable setting up systems and juggling multiple projects, while creatively connecting the dots between funding, communications, programming and grant deliverables.
- Ability to coordinate and review the work of other employees.
- Ability to make decisions in the light of established precedents and District policies and to show resourcefulness in meeting new problems.
- Demonstrate good judgment, tact, diplomacy, and ability to guard confidentiality.
- Maintain and keep records of some complexity and prepare important reports and tabulations from these records.
- Able to understand and follow oral and written instructions.
- Maintains professionalism in all duties through positivity, appearance and conduct presenting the best image on behalf of self and district.
- Strong interpersonal skills are required and the ability to work with a wide variety of people within multi-stakeholder communications and priorities and working within a team.
- Basic knowledge and or willingness to learn basic agronomics, ecology, non-point source pollution, how to read the landscape and understand of common restoration BMP practices.

#### **Helpful Skills but Not Required**

- Grant writing success is a plus.
  - Experience working on grant funded programs.
  - Knowledge of Conservation Districts and of local, state and federal conservation programs.
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#### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

Work will be approximately 90% office -10% field based. You will have an assigned a shared workstation with a standing desk, telephone, and computer at the OCNRCD office. The position involves computer work that will include long periods sitting, typing and reading from a computer screen at a workstation for an entire workday. The employee is occasionally required to climb or balance, and kneel, crouch or crawl. The employee maybe be asked to move up to 10 pounds and occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds.

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#### **TO APPLY**

Please e-mail [sarah.damsell@orleanscountynrcd.org](mailto:sarah.damsell@orleanscountynrcd.org) a cover letter and resume as one PDF with "Community Engagement Specialist Application" in the subject line. **Deadline to submit is March 31st, 2025.** Direct any questions to this email address. No phone calls, please.

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