

Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate (AOSPDC) Performance Guidelines

Who Needs an Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate (AOSPDC)?

You need an AOSPDC if you are preparing Nutrient Management Strategies (NMS) and/or Nutrient Management Plans (NMP) for agricultural operations that you do not own, operate or work for. AOSPDC certificate holders are referred to as “consultants” in this document.

The laws that relate to nutrient application are:

- the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 (NMA)
- Ontario Regulation 267/03 (O. Reg 267/03)
- the associated Protocols

The skills and knowledge you need to be a consultant are outlined in the Core Competencies for the Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate document, which you can find at www.nutrientmanagement.ca.

What are Performance Guidelines?

The performance guidelines go beyond the legal requirements and core competencies of your AOSPDC – they provide consistent best management practices and describe the ways that OMAFRA expects you to conduct yourself in the development, submission, review and application of NMS and NMP.

Performance Guidelines for AOSPDC Holders

General

1. Stay up-to-date and continue to learn about nutrient management and related legislation (e.g. *Environmental Protection Act*, *Ontario Water Resources Act*)
2. Communicate with farmers and build networks with representatives from municipalities and agricultural associations, and help them understand how the NMA may affect their operations. Share sources of information that will help these stakeholders keep current with all relevant nutrient management program and legislation changes.
3. Act conscientiously and diligently in providing professional services.
4. Use best management practices to minimize adverse or environmental effects.
5. Ensure the information and professional advice you give is accurate, up-to-date, follows agronomic best practice and adheres to legislative requirements.
6. Be aware that you are obligated to report serious contravention of the NMA and related Acts and Regulations (e.g., the *Environmental Protection Act*, and the *Ontario Water Resources Act*) to the proper authority.

7. Be sure to follow all appropriate biosecurity measures when visiting a farm

Relationships with Clients

1. Clearly explain to your clients what services you are providing and where consulting, engineering or geotechnical services start and stop.
2. Coordinate information gathering with project partners (e.g. Chief Building Officials, Conservation Authorities, engineers, contractors, farmers)
3. Inform your clients if any of their activities, whether planned or in progress, will be harmful to the environment or do not follow good stewardship practices.

Guidelines for Implementation of NMS and NMP

1. Clearly communicate the economic benefits of NMS and NMP to your clients.
2. Before starting to work on an NMS or NMP, clearly communicate the following information to your clients:
 - a. Their roles and responsibilities in providing full, complete and accurate information in the development of the NMS and NMP;
 - b. Their legal responsibility to follow the NMS and NMP and to document their activities;
 - c. Their legal responsibility to complete an annual review and update to their NMS and NMP before February 15 each year;
 - d. The duty to report spills or events that could potentially cause an adverse effect
 - e. Timelines for the project
 - f. The consequences of not complying with the NMA and Regulations, and the role inspections and site visits play in enforcing the regulations

Developing the NMS and NMP

1. Work with the client to ensure the NMS and NMP accurately reflect the conditions on the agricultural operation.
2. Verify that all information provided by the client is accurate by conducting a site visit and having the client warrant that the information is correct and comprehensive.
3. Develop a contingency plan that accurately reflects the farm operation and addresses any potential environmental issues.
4. Make sure the NMS/P is practical and effective and can be followed on your client's farm operation
5. Ensure the NMS/P will not contravene any federal/provincial legislation (e.g. the Building Code)
6. Diligently and consistently apply best practices in assessing the conditions of each farm operation (e.g. soil types, slope measurement, sensitive areas)
7. Make sure your NMS/P is accurate, consistent, presented in a neat, organized fashion, and properly signed
8. Before finalizing the NMS/P, review the documents with the client to ensure full awareness and understanding of the contents.

9. Understand your personal responsibility and liability as a certified individual when signing a NMS or NMP.
10. Keep thorough, accurate and dated records for all activities and communications with your clients.

Guidelines for the Approval of NMS/Ps

If the NMS/P requires approval from OMAFRA:

1. Expedite the preparation of the NMS/P by directing questions and concerns to the OMAFRA Approval Unit staff or Environmental Specialists.
2. Keep your clients informed of the status of the submitted NMS/P during the approval process. Immediately share information about Requests for Additional Information.
3. Ensure the clients are aware of and agree with any changes to the NMS/P made as a result of a review, and that the changes accurately reflect farm business and agronomic practice on the operation.
4. Once the NMS/P is approved, review the contents/changes of the NMS/P with the client within 30 days.
5. Conduct and finish activities in a timely fashion, in particular responding to Requests for Additional Information from OMAFRA's Environmental Management Branch.

For more information:

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