4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Standard 4R IN

Requirements for Certification
of Nutrient Service Providers in Indiana
2026

NUTRIENT STEWARDSHIP CERTIFICATION

AGRIbusiness Council of INDIANA

rate source place time

Indiana 4R Survey

Indiana 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Standard Version 4.0

Req. No.	Requirement	Evidence	Grower Customer
1			
	Nutrient Service Providers, sales, and application staff have undergone an initial training and staff are able to demonstrate knowledge about 4R Nutrient Stewardship and the 4R Certification Program.	Meeting agendas, education log, or materials indicating 4R concepts and topics (Right Rate, Time, Place and Source) were covered, roster of those in attendance. Can be an interview with various staff. Educational information and sample presentations available at 4rcertified.org/resources. Other IN based training programs must be approved by Program Administrator.	F R A
2			
(a)	Certified professionals must have current certification in good standing.	Print-off current credentials and/or certification. Credentials should include one or more of the following: Certified Crop Adviser (CCA), CCA 4R Specialty, USDA-NRCS Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Specialist (or TSP), Certified Professional Agronomist (CPAg), or other relevant accreditation from the American Society of Agronomy or National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants.	F R A
(b)	Nutrient service providers, or any staff providing nutrient recommendations, attend a training, at least once every three (3) years on the practices and principles of 4R Nutrient Stewardship, soil sampling and testing techniques, and/or nutrient water interaction.	If the staff person is a CCA, then proof of active status is sufficient. If not a CCA, evidence of attendance at educational based training programs listed on page 1 will be required.	F R
3			
	All personnel taking soil samples must undergo initial training to provide consistent procedures of taking representative and accurate soil samples.	An initial training for all staff taking soil samples, this includes any seasonal staff taking soil samples. Training records and training process documentation on file. For recommended best management practices for soil sampling procedures, visit https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/AY/AY-368-w.pdf.	F R
4			
(a)	Discussion with grower customers on nitrogen Best Management Practices include options of split application, nitrification and urease inhibitors, slow release technologies, timing, placement, rates, and sources.	Signatures of grower customers on file or direct education mailings to all customers.	F R A
(b)	Discussion with grower customers on phosphorus Best Management Practices include VRT technology, timing, placement, rates, and sources.	Signatures of grower customers on file or direct education mailing to all customers.	F R A

(c)	Nutrient service provider has sponsored or directly provided a training session on 4R Nutrient Stewardship that is available for all grower customers and has conveyed by mail or electronic distribution information on 4R Nutrient Stewardship annually to all customers.	Agenda of the company-sponsored educational event shows training on 4R Nutrient Stewardship approved by the Program Administrator for at least half hour agenda item.	F R A
5			
(a)	Soil tests are conducted at least once every four (4) years.	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic. No soil test result may be older than four (4) years old.	F R
(b)	Soil (analysis) tests include, at minimum: Phosphorus, Potassium, pH, CEC, and soil organic matter.	Review of soil testing records on file, can be hard copy or electronic. All four items must be indicated on the records.	F R
(c)	Soil tests are taken from relatively uniform areas no larger than 20 acres.	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic. Maps indicating acres represented in sample must be provided. All areas sampled must be smaller than 20 acres. (See NRCS 590 criteria).	F R
6			
(a)	Crop yield goals are discussed with the grower and are based on previous crop yield history, which include one or more of the following: farmer relayed information, yields maps, soil potential, plot data, county averages, Farm Service Agency, crop insurance, etc.	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic. Proof of level of crop management may be previous yield history (as provided by the grower), which include: farmer relayed information, yields maps, crop yield by soil potential, plot data, county averages, Farm Service Agency records, crop insurance records, plot yield data, or local adaptive management research. Documentation or records of process used to establish yield goals must be provided.	F R
(b)	Records of individual fields include, and are reviewed with grower customer, at a minimum include the following: - Field boundary, - Current soil test results, - Crop yield goals, - Nutrient recommendations, - Rates of nutrients applied to field, - Scale tickets or work orders, - Billing for the field and/or as applied maps	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic.	F R A
7			
(a)	Nutrient recommendations are based on the soil test history of the field, and yield goals.	Review of records on file, hard copy or electronic. Soil test results must be equal to or less than 4 years old. If it is a new field without a current soil test, recs for P and K are limited to crop removal rates until a soil test is taken. County average yields or previous year actual yields may be used for yield goals.	F R

(b)	All sources of nutrients are accounted for in the nutrient management recommendation, including but not limited to commercial fertilizers, starter fertilizer, manure/litter, biosolids, cover crops, and the previous crop.	Nutrient recommendations indicate all sources of nutrients in the recommendation records.	F R
(c)	Nutrients are applied according to a written nutrient recommendation that has been prepared within the prior two (2) years.	Records of application will be compared to the recommendations on file. Only applicable to the full service providers.	F A
(d)	If manure is applied, manure analysis must follow land grant university guidance regarding required analysis and/or include, at minimum: total nitrogen (N), total phosphorus (P) or P2O5, total potassium (K) or K2O, and percent solids	Manure nutrient analysis records (hard copy or electronic) will be reviewed if manure is applied on fields where recommendations are made or fertilizer applied. If an analysis is not available, book values from the Purdue University or NRCS will be accepted. Refer to IDEM CFO/CAFO rules and regulations.	F R A
8			
(a)	Phosphorus is neither applied nor recommended to be applied at rates that exceed Tri-State fertilizer recommendations for corn, soybeans, alfalfa and wheat and specialty crops and the total application does not exceed the quantity needed for the next two (2) years of planned crops. A bordering state land grant university fertilizer recommendations may also be used. This does not apply to starter fertilizer.	Records will be compared to Tri-State fertilizer recommendations, or a bordering State land grant university. Field averages will be used to evaluate this criteria. Records of individual soil test will be compared to land grant recommendations or equivalent tool. Variable rate application recommendations should be validated that the software is following the land grant guidelines or results of adaptive management. See Adaptive Management Policy in the Certification Manual.	F R A
(b)	Phosphorus injection, subsurface banding, or broadcasting with immediate incorporation are the recommended placement methods. Where incorporation of phosphorus was not the preferred method, discussion on risk of phosphorus losses was demonstrated.	Recommendation records indicate the preferred placement. Statement on phosphorus placement given/mailed to grower customers or grower customer signature indicating understanding. Disregard this standard if requirements meet standard A7.3.	F R A

9			
(a)	Recommended nutrient application levels of nitrogen fall within suggested/ recommended limits specified by nutrient application recommendations recognized by a land-grant university in Indiana or surrounding State, allowing for adaptive management based on documented on-farm data showing reasonable expectation of improved crop yield without increased risk of harm to water quality.	Records will be compared to Tri State Fertilizer Recommendations or bordering Land Grant University Fertilizer Guidelines or equivalent tool. If above these levels, data from adaptive management research must be presented justifying the different recommendation. Field averages will be used to evaluate this criteria. See Adaptive Management Policy in the Certification Manual.	F R
(b)	For spring-planted crops, right time for nitrogen to be applied is normally before, at or after planting. When fall applications of nitrogen [including phosphate sources containing nitrogen] are made or recommended, growers are informed about the risk, amount, and fate of nitrogen losses associated with the application. With this in mind, fall application of nitrogen fertilizer above 50 pounds per acre is not recommended for spring planted crops, unless: - Soil temperatures less than 50 degrees - Use of nitrogen stabilizers	Signatures of grower customers on file. Rate is based on typical rates as applied with fall application of typical nitrogen and phosphate sources; research will be reviewed and conducted to determine if this amount needs to be revised. Records of application will be compared to the recommendations on file. Only applicable to the full service customers.	F R A
10			
	All nutrient application equipment must be calibrated, at least annually.	Calibration (i.e., maintenance) records indicating equipment service date and any maintenance/service required. Follow manufacturer's guidelines.	F A
11			
	Phosphorus and nitrogen applications to be made on frozen or snow-covered ground are discouraged If applications are made, consideration is given to: - Increased setbacks from water - Minimal cover or field residue - Reducing application rate where possible	Recommendation records indicate the preferred timing. Frozen ground is defined: soil frozen to a depth that does not allow for the proper placement and incorporation of fertilizer. Snow covered ground is defined: when soil cannot be seen because of snow cover.	F R A
12			
	Nutrient Service Provider keeps onsite list and/or copies (either electronic or hard-copy) of relevant national, state, or local laws related to nutrient recommendations and application.	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic and should be updated when needed. Program administrator will provide a list of current laws and regulations	F R A

13			
	Nutrient Service Providers will record a list of grower customers and number of acres in the following categories: full service, recommendation only, and application only.	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic. The NSP will record and submit a list of grower customers and acres per each that fall into these categories: full service, recommendation only, and application only.	F R A
14			
(a)	Nutrient recommendations have been reviewed and acknowledged in writing by the grower/customer.	Documentation and/or acknowledgement (such as but not limited to: hard or digital signatures, CRM records/contract addendum, assistance notes)	F R
(b)	All nutrient recommendation algorithms/equations used for customer recommendations have been reviewed and validated annually.	Signatures of Certified Professional for each algorithm/equation is on file, certifying that they approve the nutrient recommendation.	F R
15			
(a)	Nutrient service provider maintains records for all growers related to soil tests, nutrient recommendations, and applications for a minimum of 4 years.	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic. Fertilizer recommendations and applied scale ticket or as-applied map.	F R A
(b)	Records of nutrient application include at minimum: - method of application; - time of application; - field map showing locations of application; - weather (temperature and precipitation) conditions at the time of application	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic.	F A
(c)	Digital field map data layers must be able to be generated that can be combined in an analysis to better target nutrients in the fields. Possible data layers may include: sensitive areas (e.g. surface water, inlets, wells, areas of concentrated flow, etc.), yield data, soil test data, soil type, HUC watershed codes, tile or topographic maps, digital/sensor imagery, EC data, N modelling, etc.	Review of records on file, can be hard copy or electronic. This information can be in any useable/readable electronic format. Maps may be provided. This data may be in digital format and generated on site at time of audit. If yield data is not available, county yield averages must be incorporated into data layers. As applied maps must show sensitive areas that were protected during application. Refer to sensitive area definition in the NRCS 590 standard.	F R A
(d)	Environmentally sensitive areas (such as inlets, well heads, areas of concentrated flow, gullies, and water bodies where nutrient application may occur) are documented and discussed with the grower customer.	Convey the process conducted to identify sensitive areas, show examples on field maps of identified sensitive areas. NSP must follow all laws related to setbacks for manure (IDEM/OISC)	F R A