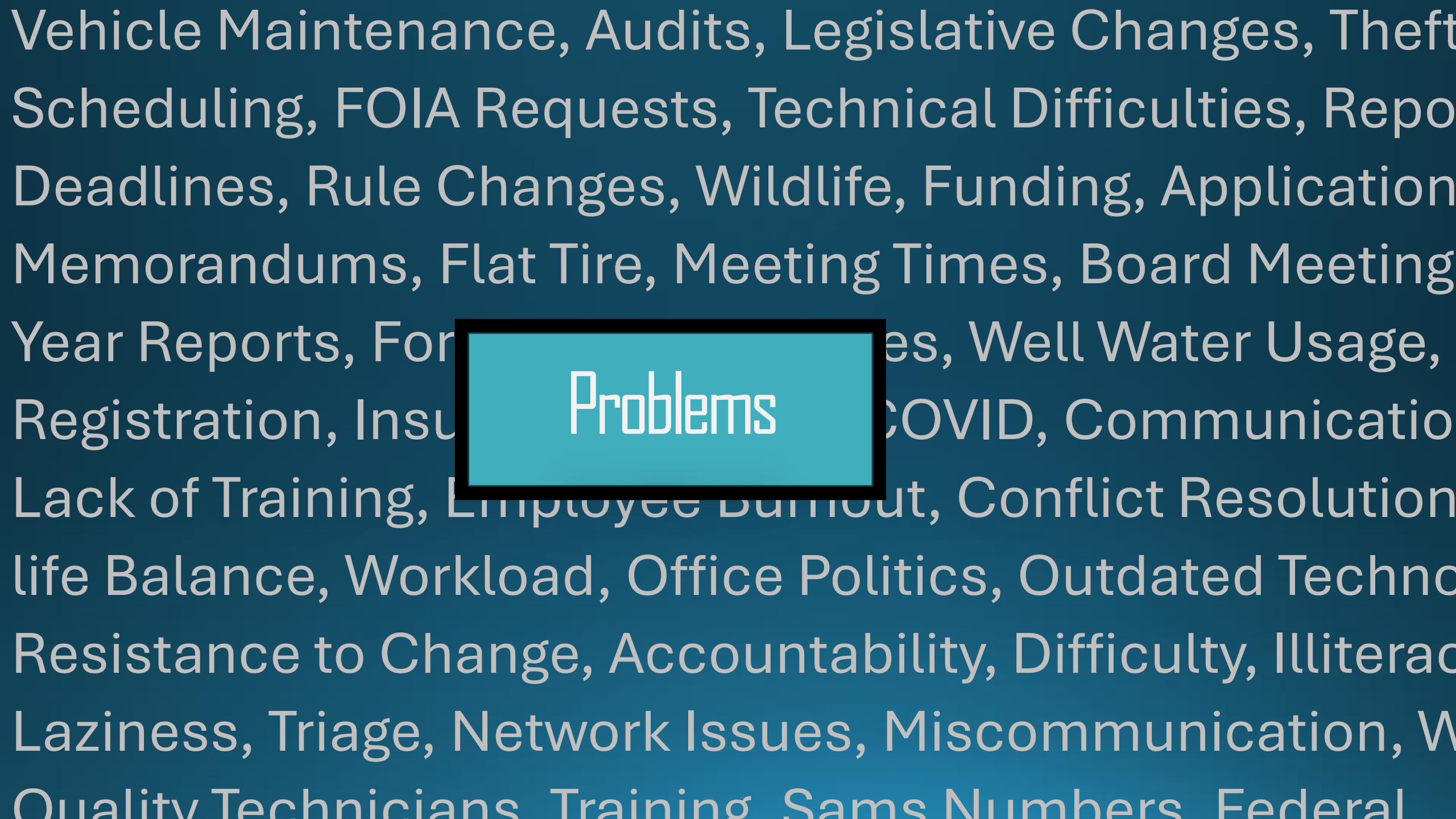
The Field Staff's Guide to the Galaxy

How to Navigate Problems, Personalities, and Program Implementation

Nick Richardson

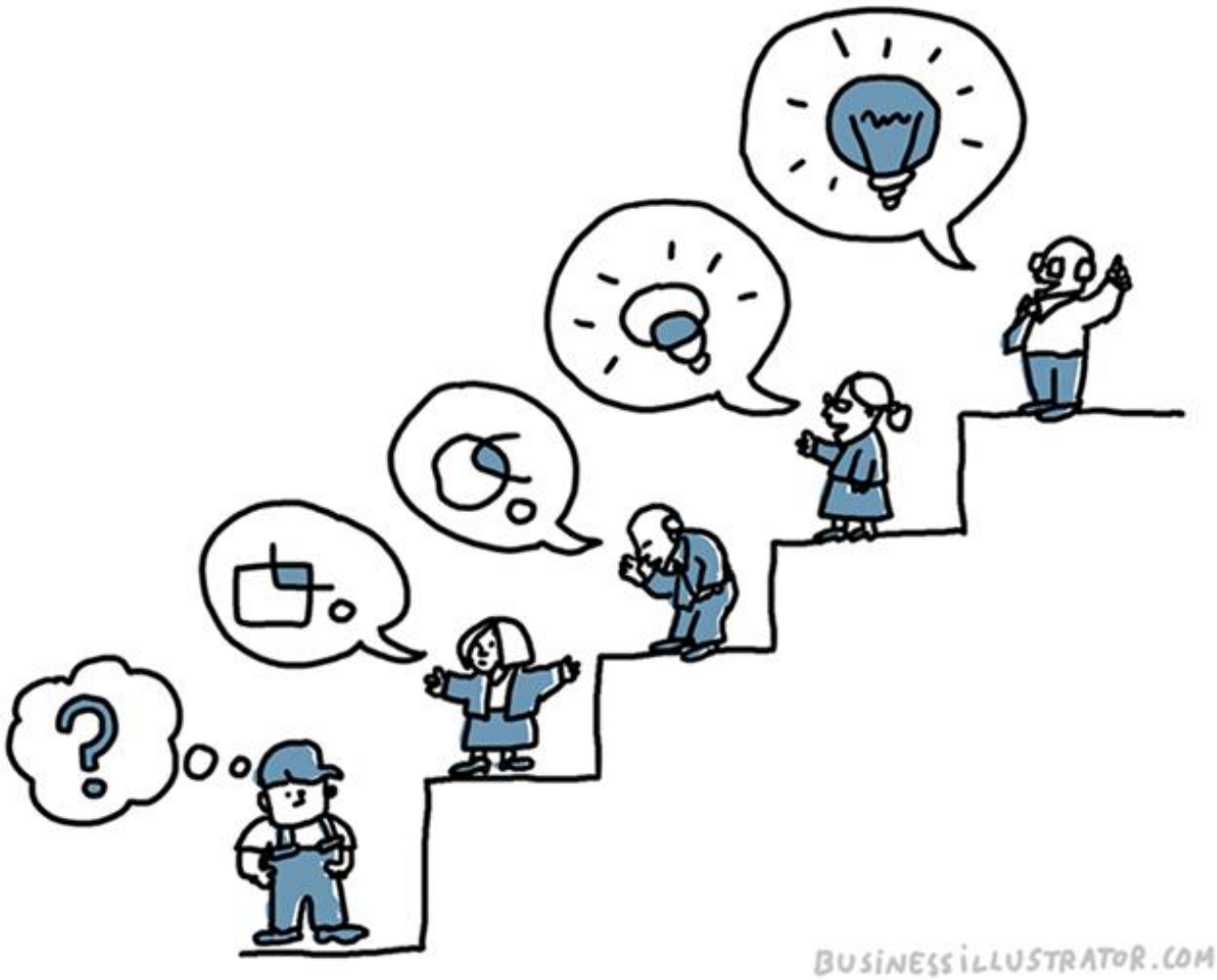
Arkansas Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division


Benton
Carroll
Boone
Marion
Baxter
Fulton
Randolph
Clay
Washington
Madison
Newton
Searcy
Izard
Sharp
Lawrence
Greene
Stone
Craighead
Mississippi
Independence
Crawford
Franklin
Johnson
Pope
Van Buren
Cleburne
Jackson
Poinsett
Sebastian
Logan
Conway
Faulkner
White
Woodruff
Cross
Crittenden
Yell
Perry
St Francis
Scott
Pulaski
Lonoke
Prairie
Lee
Saline
Monroe
Polk
Montgomery
Garland
Phillips
Hot Spring
Grant
Jefferson
Arkansas
Pike
Howard
Clark
Sevier
Dallas
Cleveland
Lincoln
Desha
Little River
Hempstead
Nevada
Ouachita
Calhoun
Bradley
Drew
Miller
Lafayette
Columbia
Union
Ashley
Chicot


Vehicle Maintenance, Audits, Legislative Changes, Theft
Scheduling, FOIA Requests, Technical Difficulties, Repo
Deadlines, Rule Changes, Wildlife, Funding, Application
Memorandums, Flat Tire, Meeting Times, Board Meeting
Year Reports, For es, Well Water Usage,
Registration, Insu COVID, Communicatio
Lack of Training, Employee Burnout, Conflict Resolution
life Balance, Workload, Office Politics, Outdated Techno
Resistance to Change, Accountability, Difficulty, Illiterac
Laziness, Triage, Network Issues, Miscommunication, W
Quality Technicians, Training, Sams Numbers, Federal
Problems

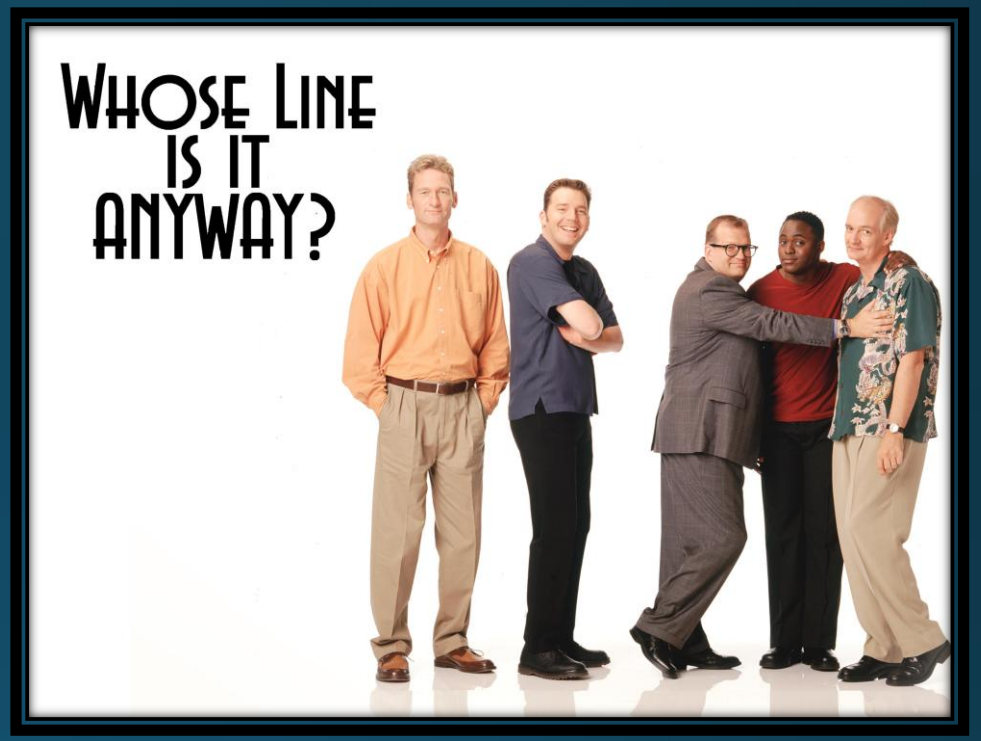
Communication

- Legislation
- Conservation Partnerships
- Internal



Legislative Changes

- The Legislative session of '23
- Altered Title 2
  - Rules Governing Conservation Districts
- 8 pages of rules removed



"Let me know if I'm doing something wrong"

Conservation Partnerships

- NRD (Natural Resources Division)
- AACD (Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts)
- AACDE (Arkansas Association of Conservation District Employees)
- NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service)

NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

USDA NRCS

Internal

- Monthly Field Staff Round-up
- Shared Microsoft Teams folder
- Specialization



Triage

Determining which Districts and Programs need your attention

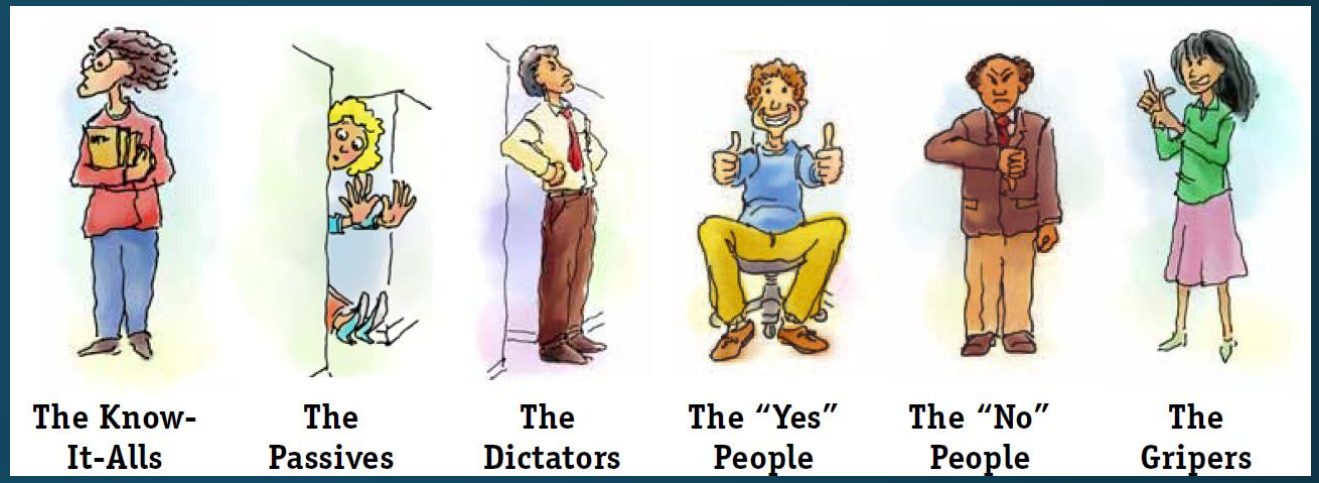
Good "Keep your Sanity"

Bad

Ugly "Fires to put out"

Personalities

75 Conservation Districts
5 Board Members Each
1 Employee Minimum



450 Different Personalities

Secret Weapon

- In Arkansas, any writing, sound, or video that reflects the performance or lack of performance of an official function is considered public record and can be subject to FOIA

- Minutes and recording required for all board meetings

If they continue to lack decorum:



Program Implementation

- State Grants to Districts
  - Application Ranking
  - Quarterly Activity Reports



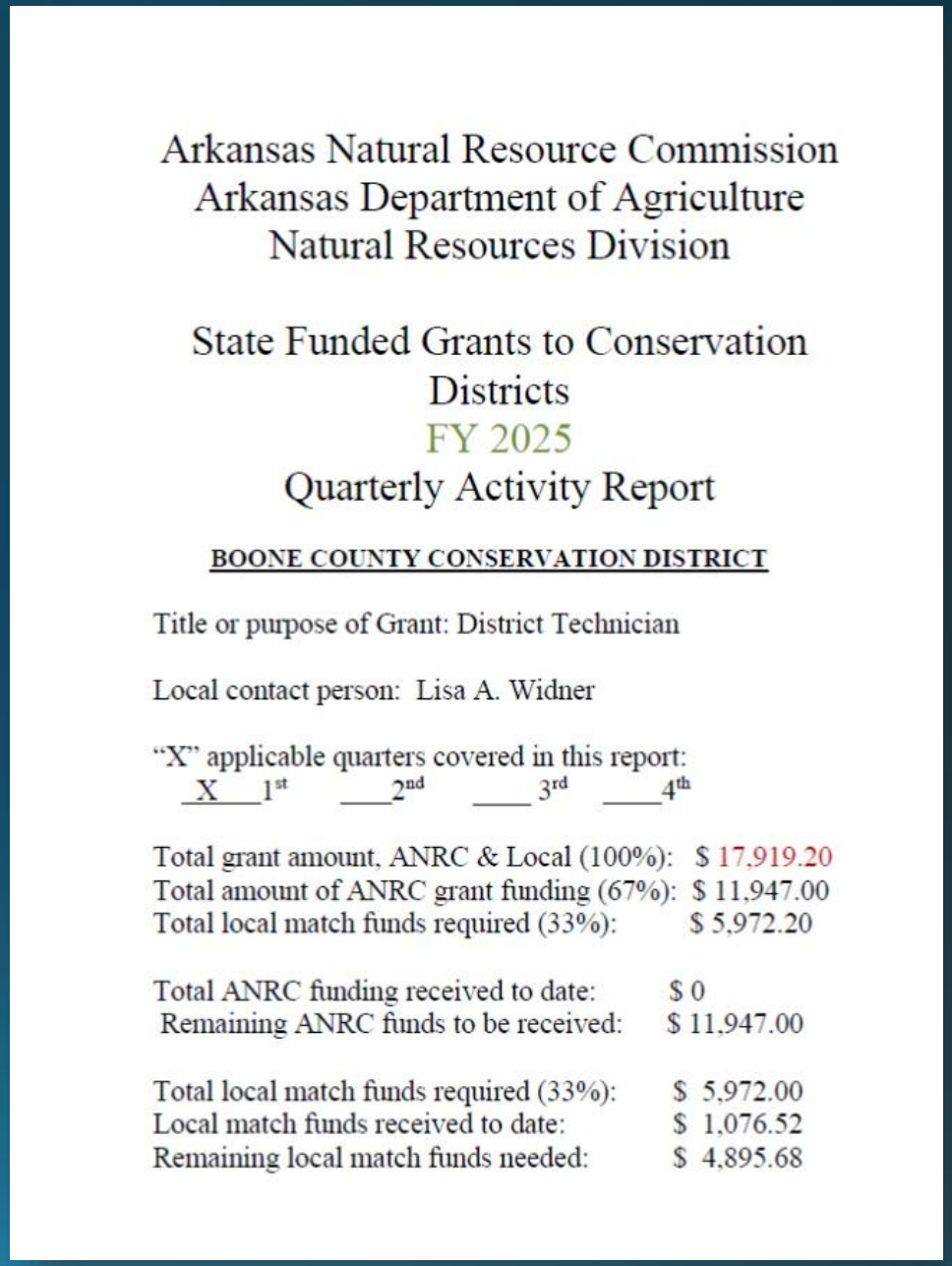
Application Ranking

- Developed a ranking criteria
- Anonymous ranking to prevent bias
- Ranking committee recommends funding based on ranking criteria and feasibility
- Commission approves recommendations

Quarterly Activity Reports

Includes:

- All information to identify the grant
- What money has been spent and how much remains
- Summary on what work has been done
- Measures of Success



Arkansas Natural Resource Commission
Arkansas Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Division

State Funded Grants to Conservation Districts
FY 2025
Quarterly Activity Report

BOONE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Title or purpose of Grant: District Technician

Local contact person: Lisa A. Widner

"X" applicable quarters covered in this report:
_X_ 1st ___ 2nd ___ 3rd ___ 4th

Total grant amount, ANRC & Local (100%): $ 17,919.20
Total amount of ANRC grant funding (67%): $ 11,947.00
Total local match funds required (33%): $ 5,972.20

Total ANRC funding received to date: $ 0
Remaining ANRC funds to be received: $ 11,947.00

Total local match funds required (33%): $ 5,972.00
Local match funds received to date: $ 1,076.52
Remaining local match funds needed: $ 4,895.68

The Answer to the Universe

- In "The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" the answer to Everything is:

  42

- In conservation related field work the real answer to everything is:

  "You can let this job drive you crazy, or you can drive home and laugh about it"

Questions?

Nick Richardson
Environmental Program Coordinator
Arkansas Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Division
Phone (501) 231-0458
nicholas.richardson@agriculture.arkansas.gov