



RCPP Partner Proposal Guide

*For RCPP Classic and
Alternative Funding
Arrangements Requests*

VERSION 5.0

ISSUED 09/16/2025

Natural Resource Conservation Service



NOTE: Partners should use this guide alongside the latest RCPP funding announcement, which includes critical information about the program.

Version History

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	9/4/2019	
2.0	9/25/2019	Updated most fields and replaced mockups with RCPP portal screenshots
2.1	10/24/2019	Updated narrative questions and added note to demarcate which narrative questions apply to renewal submissions.
2.2	11/21/19	Added note and step 21 to section 4.2.5.
2.3	5/21/20	Updated narrative questions section to distinguish between RCPP Classic & Renewals
3.0	12/20/21	Merged RCPP Classic and AFA Guides. Appendix A has been updated. Appendix B has been entirely rewritten. Appendix C has been updated to include all proposal type narrative questions.
3.1	1/11/22	Added new narrative questions
3.2	5/25/2023	Incorporated portal enhancements and updated table in Appendix A RCPP Easements
4.0	3/25/2024	Login.gov has replaced eAuth, updated TA guidance, updated narrative questions
5.0	9/16/2025	Updated narrative questions, Renewals not offered this year

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1. Overview of RCPP

This user guide is meant for partners submitting RCPP proposals within the RCPP Portal.

1.1. RCPP Vision and Goals

RCPP has as its critical feature a co-investment approach through which NRCS and partners collaborate to implement natural resource conservation activities. Following are three key principles of RCPP:

1. **Impact**—RCPP applications must propose effective and compelling solutions that address one or more natural resource priorities to help solve natural resource challenges. Partners are responsible for evaluating a project’s impact and results.
2. **Partner Contributions**—Partners are responsible for identifying any combination of cash and in-kind value-added contributions to leverage NRCS’s RCPP investments. Partner contributions are evaluated based on their share of overall project costs and the value of qualified expertise they add to achieving project goals and objectives.
3. **Partnerships and Management**—Partners must have experience, expertise, and capacity to manage the partnership and project, provide outreach to producers, and quantify the environmental and when possible, economic and social outcomes of an RCPP project. RCPP ranking criteria give priority consideration to applicants that meaningfully engage historically underserved farmers and ranchers.

Successful RCPP applicants bring an array of financial and technical capabilities to projects, demonstrate experience working effectively and collaboratively with agricultural producers, including landowners; and propose, sustainable, and measurable approaches to achieving compelling conservation outcomes.

2. RCPP Portal Roles and Workflow

2.1. RCPP Portal Roles for Partners

The RCPP Portal provides partners with the ability to perform the following functions, for proposals and/or projects for which they are the lead partner:

- Create, submit, and/or withdraw proposals
- View project record and agreements
- Complete annual and final reports within the portal
- Submit payment requests for supplemental agreements

2.2. RCPP Proposal Workflow for Partners



3. Accessing the RCPP Portal

3.1. Establish Access

Both a Login.gov and a portal account are required to access the portal. Steps involved in establishing access can vary, based on a user's existing permissions. Please review the following list to determine the appropriate steps for your situation:

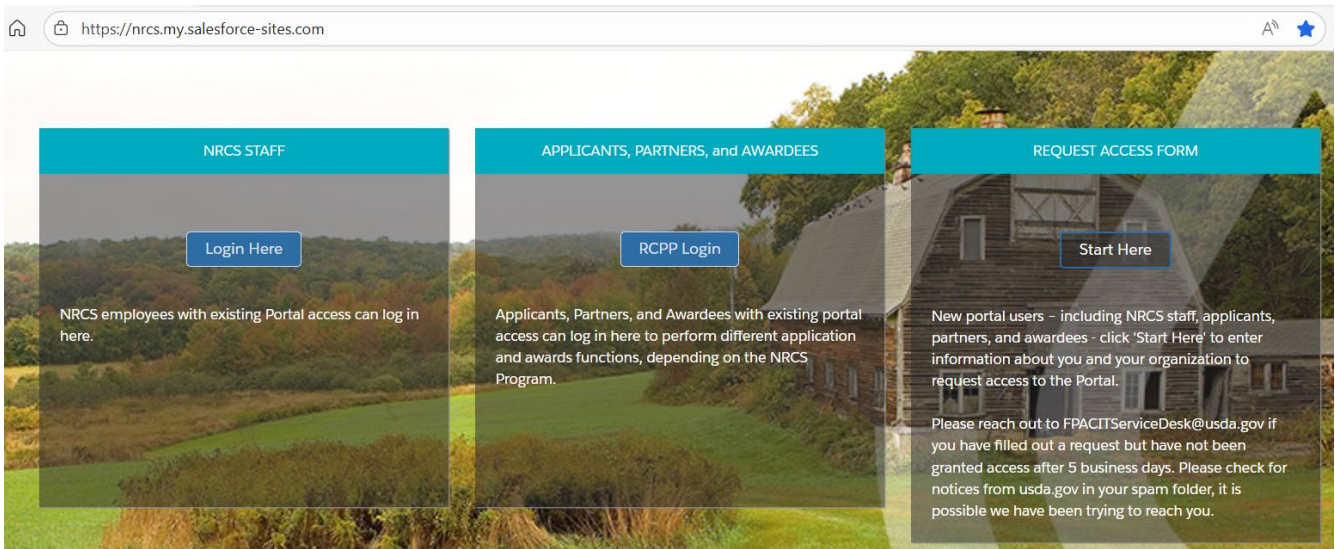
- Individuals who already have portal access (for an existing project, or a prior proposal) can skip this step, and move onto Section 3.2 of this guide "Home Screen."
- Individuals who do not already have portal access will need to follow the steps below to establish a new Login.gov account and/or link an existing Login.gov account with a new RCPP Partner Portal account. (Login.gov has replaced eAuth to verify user identity and control access to most government applications, including the RCPP portal.)

3.1.1. Overview: Establishing Access to RCPP Partner Portal

- **Step 1:** Go to **login.gov** ([Create an account | Login.gov](#)) and create a login.gov account. Please use your personal email when creating a login.gov email. (Help on this step is available via the [login.gov help site: Help | Login.gov](#).)
- **Step 2:** After creating a login.gov account please verify your identity. Click on this link for help on verifying identity: [Verify My Identity](#)
- **Step 3:** Visit the RCPP public portal website (<https://nrcs.my.salesforce-sites.com/>) and submit a request access form. (Partner will need to enter **same e-mail** used for login.gov into access form. Note: new users should use to denote specific reason access being sought (i.e. support new proposal submission or "manage project #1234"). (Details on this step are included in the following section 3.1.2 of this guide: RCPP Partner Portal, Request Access Form).
- **Step 4:** Wait 3-5 business days for your partner portal account to be created; you will receive an e-mail once access granted. *(Linking new login.gov account to portal account is a multiplatform, multi-step process, necessitating this processing time.)
- **Step 5:** AFTER partner receives email acknowledging partner portal account has been created: user can return to portal (<https://nrcs.my.site.com/>) and click "login.gov" link (in the "middle" Applicants, Partners box). (NOTE: A more exhaustive login.gov identity verification process may occur during the partner's first login. Though this may seem "redundant" given prior establishment of Login.gov account, it is required if user's existing Login.gov account does not include eAuth Level 2 identity verification).
- **Step 6:** RCPP Partner has verified their identity and should proceed to Section 3.2 of this guide: Home Screen.

3.1.2. Requesting a User Account within the RCPP Portal

1. Go to the RCPP portal login page - Organization". (<https://nracs.my.salesforce-sites.com/>)
2. Click on the “start here” button for new users as shown below.



3. Under the dropdown below “I am a ?...” select “Partner/Applicant/Awardee and select RCPP under which NRCS Program.

Once you complete and submit the form, watch for notice from a USDA email address. Access will typically be granted or additional application requirements communicated via e-mail within 3-5 business days of request.

***Required**
I am a ?...: Which NRCS Program are you requesting access in relation to?*:

4. Enter the full name of the designated user and the partner organization name. Select yes under “Is it for new Application”?

First Name and Last Name *:
Organization Name*:

Is it for new Application?*:

5. Complete the Business Address Information.

BUSINESS ADDRESS	
Address 1*	City*
Address 2	State*
Zip Code*	Time Zone*
Login.gov Email Address*	Business Phone*

6. Enter the Funding Announcement, Project, or Supplemental Agreement related to the Portal Access request. In the “Do you have an existing Login.gov account?”, user should answer “yes”. If “no”, then refer back to 3.1.1 Step 1 for acquiring a Login.gov account.

Note: Verify the designated user has a Login.gov account under the same personal Login.gov email address entered in the New Access Form in prior step above.

Click the blue “submit” button at the bottom of the page.

Which Funding Announcement, Project, or Supplemental Agreement is this request related to? (Please use the four digit Project ID number):

Do you have an existing Login.gov account?*

Yes

To access the NRCS Programs Portal, you will need a [Login.gov](https://login.gov) account with eAuthentication Level 2. If you need to create a new Login.gov account, visit <https://login.gov/create-an-account/>. For detailed information on e-Authentication, please visit the [USDA website](#).

Submit Cancel

If user has an established Login.gov account under same e-mail entered into “business e-mail” field on New Access Form, within 3-5 business days user should receive e-mail acknowledgement of access to RCPP Partner Portal.

Note: While it typically takes no more than five business days for new accounts to be activated, processing times can increase closer to proposal deadlines. Please submit your new account request as early as possible to avoid delays.

Proposal Process for Partners

3.2. Home Screen

After logging in to the RCPP portal, you will see the following home screen. To submit a new proposal, select that 2018 Farm Bill option under the RCPP Proposals tab as shown below.

WELCOME TO THE
RCPP Partner Portal

Need Help?

Please check [Videos and Guides](#) and the [FAQs](#) pages located in the [Help](#) button.
If you still need help, please contact the NRCS Support team:

Email: usdafpacbc@servicenowservices.com
Phone: 970-372-4200

NOTE: Please use Chrome or the latest version of Internet Explorer.
There are some compatibility issues between Salesforce and older versions of Internet Explorer. Some functions may not work properly.

Create new proposal

- Now accepting Classic Applications through Jun 15 2023.
- Now accepting AFA Applications through Jun 15 2023.

Submit a ticket

Once you select the 2018 Farm Bill tab, user can view, create, and submit a Proposal during an announced Funding Opportunity open period.

PROPOSALS PROJECTS SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENTS HELP

RCPP Proposals

⚠ Deadline Information:
The **Create new proposal** button is only available before the proposal deadline of the current RCPP program cycle.

+ Create new proposal

- Now accepting Classic Applications through Jun 15 2023.
- Now accepting AFA Applications through Jun 15 2023.

Proposal/Project
2018 Farm Bill Partner Proposals

4 Items • Sorted by Fiscal Year • Filtered by All proposal/project - Record Type • Updated a few seconds ago

⚙ ✖

	Fiscal Year ↑	Project Number	Project Name	Status	Project Type
1	2023	2950		Full Proposal In Progress	RCPP Classic
2	2023	2951		Full Proposal In Progress	AFA
3	2023	2952	Screenshots for Classic Guide 2023	Full Proposal In Progress	RCPP Classic
4	2023	2959	Test Project for FY 23 Proposal Guide	Full Proposal In Progress	RCPP Classic

3.3. Creating a Proposal

3.3.1. Starting a New Proposal

1. Click the  button.

Please note: If the Proposal deadline has passed, the **New Proposal** button will not be available. The status and the Proposal deadline will be displayed on the left side panel.

2. The **Basic Project Information** screen is displayed. On the left side of the screen is a menu that allows users to navigate between the various sections of an RCPP proposal. This will also display the status of the proposal as well as the deadline for submitting proposals.

Proposal Number: 2959
Status: Full Proposal In Progress
Proposal type: RCPP Classic
Deadline: 2023-06-16
Fiscal Year: 2023

- Basic Project Information
- Project Details
- Executive Summary
- Partners & Contributions
- Funding Request
- Upload Map
- Narratives

3.3.2. Basic Project Information

3. Fill out the Basic Project Information. All fields with a red asterisk are required.

Basic Project Information

PROJECT SPECIFICS NOTE: Information specific to proposal, not partner profile.

<p>* Project Name <input type="text" value="Test Project for FY 23 Proposal Guide"/></p> <p>* Funding Pool <input type="text" value="Critical Conservation Areas (CCAs)"/></p> <p>* Lead Partner State <input type="text" value="VA"/></p> <p>* Project Type <input type="text" value="RCPP Classic"/></p>	<p>* Lead Partner Organization <input type="text" value="Creative RCPP Test"/></p> <p>* CCA <input type="text" value="Chesapeake Bay Watershed"/></p> <p>* Partners State List (include only states where RCPP funds or contributions will be used)</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">Available</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; min-height: 100px;"> DE NY PA VA </div> </td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center; font-size: x-small; vertical-align: middle;"> ▶ ◀ </td> <td style="width: 40%; border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">Chosen</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; min-height: 100px;"> MD </div> </td> </tr> </table>	<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">Available</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; min-height: 100px;"> DE NY PA VA </div>	▶ ◀	<p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">Chosen</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; min-height: 100px;"> MD </div>
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- a. *Project Name* - Enter a concise title for your proposed RCPP project. Please avoid acronyms that are not widely known.
- b. *Lead Partner Account* – This information is auto-populated by the users account information.
- c. *Funding Pool* - Select either the State/Multi-state or CCA funding pool.
- d. *Critical Conservation Areas (CCA)* – If the funding pool is set to the CCA funding pool, the *CCA Applicable List* will allow users to select a specific CCA funding pool. More information on CCAs, including boundary maps, is available on the [RCPP website](#). Please note all proposed counties for the project must at least partially fall within the boundaries of the CCA.
- e. *Lead State* – Select the lead state where the largest portion of the work will be performed. If a CCA funding pool is selected this dropdown will only include states within that CCA.
- f. *Partner States* – Select all states where work will be performed. If a CCA funding pool is selected this dropdown will only include states within that CCA.

PARTNER INFORMATION

* Does Lead Partner have an active SAM.gov Registration?

* DUNS/UEI

* Address 1

Address 2

* City

* State

* Zip Code

- g. *SAM Registration* – Users should click the checkbox to confirm that have a SAM.gov registration. If this box is not checked users will still be able to submit the proposal, but you will receive an error message reminding users that a SAM.gov registration is a requirement to receive RCPP funding.
- h. *DUNS/UEI* – Enter your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Do not enter your entity’s DUNS number as this system has been retired. See the yellow help box below for help finding your organization’s number or registering for one.

Finding or registering a SAM number –

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

- i. *Address* – Enter the address for the lead partner.

ORGANIZATIONAL AUTHORITY

* Organizational Authorized Signatory

* Organizational Signatory Email

* Organizational Signatory Phone

Organizational Signatory Secondary Email


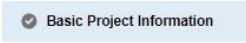
POINT OF CONTACT (POC)

* Project POC Contact Name

* Project POC Phone

* Project POC Email

- j. *Organizational Authority* – This is the person authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of the lead partner.
- k. *Point of Contact Information* – This is individual that will serve as the primary point of contact for agreement negotiation and project management.


4. Click  to save the information for this section. If there are no errors a gray check mark will appear to the right of the  label on the left menu.
5. Click on the *Project Details* to move to the next section.

3.3.3. Project Details

6. Fill out the *Project Details Section*.

- a. *Is this a 5 Year Project?* – By default, this is set to Yes, which locks the *First Fiscal Year* and *Final Fiscal Year* at 2026 and 2031. Note: Project term and/or availability of longer producer/supplemental agreement in RCPP Classic, can be limited by the need to optimize project outcomes. Generally, 1) shorter projects are discouraged as it is difficult or impossible to demonstrate project outcomes in less than 5 years, and 2) longer projects require unique, situational justification.
- b. *Explain why the length of your project is not 5 years.* This field is only visible if the user selects No for the prompt *Is this a 5-year project?* –If a longer (or shorter) project term is being proposed, enter a justification for why a project length other than five years is needed to achieve the goals and objectives of the proposed project.
- c. *First Fiscal Year* – This is automatically set at 2025. This can be updated during agreement negotiation since projects are due to start in 2026.
- d. *Final Fiscal Year* – Enter the proposed end date, if the project is not five years. Most projects are expected to end no more than five years after the start date.

- e. *Primary Conservation Benefit (Classic) or Resource Concern (AFA)* – Select the primary conservation benefit or resource concern among the dropdown options. This should be the resource concern that will receive the largest portion of proposed financial assistance, technical assistance, and contributions. For CCA projects, partners must select one of the priority resource concerns listed for the relevant CCA in the RCPP funding announcement.
- f. *Additional Conservation Benefit (Classic) or Resource Concerns (AFA)* – Please select all other resource concerns your project will address through financial assistance, technical assistance, and/or contributions.

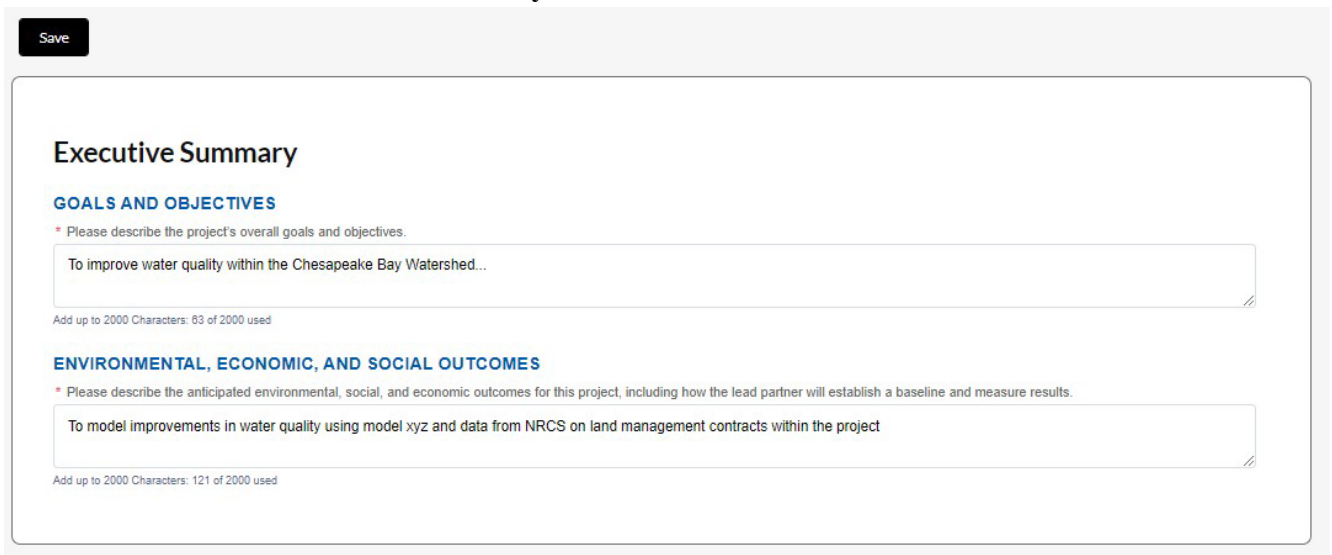
7. Click  to save the information for this section. If there are no errors a gray check mark

will appear to the right of the  label on the left menu.

8. Click on the *Executive Summary* tab to move to the next section.

3.3.4. Executive Summary

9. Fill out the **Executive Summary** section.



Executive Summary

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

* Please describe the project's overall goals and objectives.

To improve water quality within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed...

Add up to 2000 Characters: 63 of 2000 used

ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES


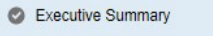
* Please describe the anticipated environmental, social, and economic outcomes for this project, including how the lead partner will establish a baseline and measure results.

To model improvements in water quality using model xyz and data from NRCS on land management contracts within the project


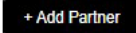
Add up to 2000 Characters: 121 of 2000 used

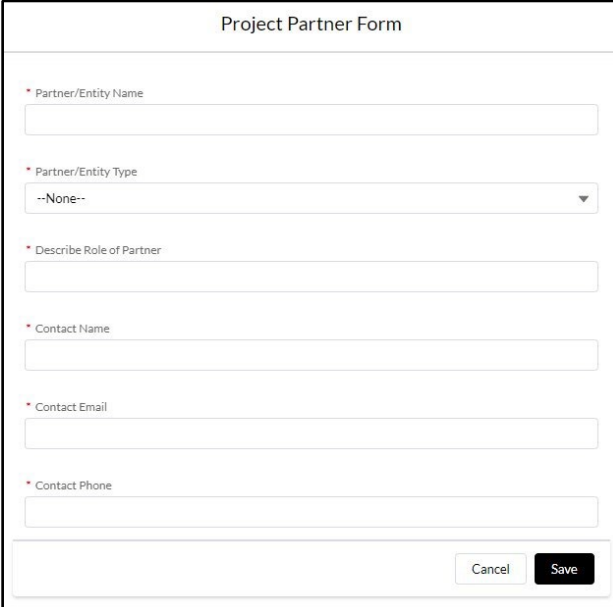
- a. *Description of Goals and Objectives* – A brief summary of the project including project goals and objectives.
- b. *Description of Expected Environmental, Economic, and Social Outcomes* – All RCPP projects must have and report on at least one environmental outcome. Partners may also choose to develop and report on economic and social outcomes (which if included in the proposal as selected, must be carried forward into the project). Assessing economic and social impacts is optional and should only be included if they can be measured and modeled. Partners are highly encouraged to review the RCPP outcomes guidance document posted to the RCPP website for more information.

In this box, partners should briefly describe the anticipated outcomes of their project and the proposed method for measuring outcomes. After a RCPP project is selected for funding, NRCS will work with partners to ensure that proposed project outcomes are meaningful and that methods for measuring and reporting on outcomes are feasible. Proposal outcomes should describe the environmental, economic, and/or social changes expected because of the project.

10. Click  to save the information for this section. If there are no errors a gray check mark will appear to the right of the  on the left menu.
11. Click on the *Partners & Contributions* tab to move to the next section.

3.3.5. Partners & Contributions

12. Fill out the ***Project Partner Form*** – Lead (project) partner (applicant) must enter information for each contributing partner expected to lead delivery of specific contributions. Only partners expected to lead delivery of specific eligible contributions (and informing lead partner reporting of contribution delivery and costs) should be listed; other supporting partners, including partners whose engagement in a project would effectively be limited to that of a paid contractor (via Supplemental Agreement or another mechanism), should be described in proposal narratives, but should not be included in partner list.
13. Click the  icon to edit the lead partner entry to select a *Partner/Entity Type*. All other fields are auto populated by the users account information.
14. Click  to add a new partner or contributing entry. The *Project Partner Form* will appear.

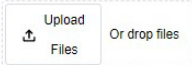


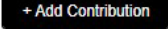
The screenshot shows a web form titled "Project Partner Form". It contains several input fields, each with a red asterisk indicating a required field:

- Partner/Entity Name: A text input field.
- Partner/Entity Type: A dropdown menu currently showing "--None--".
- Describe Role of Partner: A text input field.
- Contact Name: A text input field.
- Contact Email: A text input field.
- Contact Phone: A text input field.

At the bottom right of the form, there are two buttons: "Cancel" and "Save".

15. Fill out the **Project Partner Form**.
 - a. *Partner Name* – Enter the partner, entity, or Federal agency’s full name.
 - b. *Partner/Entity Type* – Select from the dropdown options of partner and entity types.
 - c. *Partner Contact Name, Email, and Telephone* – Enter the name, email, and telephone number of an individual that can be contacted for questions related to the partner organization, third-party entity, or Federal agency.
16. Click the **Save** button. The Partner/Entity will not be available in the dropdown menu for the **Partner Contributions Table**.
17. Repeat step 13 for all contributing partners, entities, and Federal Agencies.
18. For each included partner(those expected to “lead” delivery of specific contributions),

including the lead partner, click  to upload a contribution letter. Letter should describe expected contributions in sufficient detail to inform NRCS consideration of contribution eligibility/impact on project and/or targeted conservation benefits, as well as how partner(s) will document delivered contributions and costs of delivered contribution. For proposed contributions to ultimately be included in a project, costs must be reported as actual costs to partner, and identify any administrative component of actual costs; thus, partner contribution letter should identify method each partner will use to meet these requirements.

19. Click  for each partner and type of contribution.
20. Fill out **Project Partner Contribution Form**.

Note: You only need to create a single line per partner per activity type. You do not need to break out contributions by the year.

Project Partner Contribution Form

* Partner/Entity Name

* Fund Year

* In-Kind vs Cash




* Contribution Category

* Proposed Typical Action

* Amount

- a. *Partner/Entity Name* – Select the partner, entity, or Federal Agency from the drop down. This drop down is populated by partners that have been added on the previous screen.
- b. *Fiscal Year* - Select the Fiscal Year for when this contribution will be completed, if a contribution will be delivered over several years select the final of this deliverable.
- c. *In-Kind vs Cash* – Select whether the contribution is In-Kind or Cash. If lumping contributions containing both cash & in-kind, select in-kind valuation methods (each of which must be tracked via a defensible method), select in-kind.
 - i. Cash, i.e., a cash contribution, can come from the partner’s own funds (general revenue), cash donations from non-federal third parties (i.e. partner organizations), or from grants.
 - ii. In-Kind contribution is any non-cash contribution of value provided by the partner or by third parties (or a blend of lumped cash and non-cash contributions). In-kind contributions are typically reported based on the calculated cost to the partner of providing personnel, goods, and services, including direct and indirect costs.
- d. *Contribution Category* – Select from the dropdown list of contribution categories. These categories mirror the types of financial assistance (see **Appendix A**) include just a single category for all technical assistance contributions.
- e. *Proposed Typical Action* – Provide a description of the activities covered in this contribution.
- f. *Amount* – Enter the value of the contribution in whole dollars.

Note: Contributions delivered after the date the Secretary announces approval of a proposal can be reported (though delivered prior to PPA execution) included in a project to the extent they are consistent with final negotiated project deliverables (i.e. NRCS will have input into reporting methods and tasks to ensure contributions are defensible and related to actual conservation benefits or project development and management).

- 21. Click  to save the contribution and return to the **Partner & Contributions** section.
- 22. Once all contributing partners and deliverables have been added and all contributions lists, click  to save the information for this section. If there are no errors a gray check mark will appear to the right of the section tab  on the left menu.
- 23. Click on the *Funding Request* tab to move to the next section.

3.3.6. RCPP Funding Request

RCPP funding is divided into five FA activity types and three TA activity types. The portal will automatically add NRCS TA to the proposal budget to ensure a 75/25 split between FA and TA activity types. Any partner TA added will reduce the amount of NRCS TA included. As noted in NFO, NRCS use RCPP TA funding is the only funding available to support NRCS engagement in a project, and must be sufficient to fully support NRCS roles, however, the portal does not enforce this requirement. Applicants should coordinate NRCS TA budget in proposal with lead state coordinator. Final TA budgets, and NRCS vs. Partner TA, will be established during proposal negotiation. Proposals must adhere to the 75/25 split, but a different allocation of FA and TA funds may be considered during agreement negotiation if the proposal is selected for funding. TA in excess of 25% maximum is rarely approved and require case specific justification e.g. additional TA-E needed to support delivery of contribution FA for which no alternative TA available.

FA activity types are covered in **Appendix A** of this guide. Proposed activity specific FA activity budgets (like balance of NRCS and partner TA) may require adjustment during PPA negotiation; such adjustments are allowable so long as they do not materially change proposal as selected as determined by NRCS.

Other Considerations:





- **Before starting your funding request table, partner should meet with lead state RCPP State Coordinator to discuss the anticipated NRCS and partner roles in providing implementation TA in the project. This discussion should help inform the proposal, as it will help identify the minimum NRCS use TA needed to support NRCS led TA activities.**
- TA cannot exceed 25% of the total project request.
- Some FA activity types have limited TA-I that can be delegated to a partner, see **Appendix B** for these limitations.

24. The **RCPP Funding Request** screen is displayed. At the top of the page is a summary of the requested funds as well as the maximum amount for each type of funds. If any category is out of alignment (i.e. requested more than 25% in TA). The section will not be marked complete until all rules have been followed.

Funding Request Summary	
Total Project Cost \$10,000,000.00	Partner Contribution Ratio 0.31
Total Financial Assistance Requested \$7,500,000.00	Total Technical Assistance Requested \$2,500,000.00
	Partner Enhancement TA \$700,000.00
	Partner Implementation TA \$800,000.00
	NRCS Implementation TA \$1,000,000.00

Below the summary chart is the **RCPP Financial Assistance Funding Request**. At the top is a summary of the total FA request by activity type.

REQUEST TYPE		TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED	
Land Management		\$4,500,000.00	
Easement - Entity Held		\$3,000,000.00	

ACTION	ACTIVITY TYPE	FUND YEAR	STATE	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
 	Land Management	2027	VA	\$4,500,000.00	Land Management Contracts for any practice that addresses water quality issues related to the Chesape
 	Easement - Entity Held	2027	VA	\$3,000,000.00	Federal share of easement acquisition

[+ Add Financial Assistance Request](#)

- Click [+ Add Financial Assistance Request](#) to open the **Financial Assistance Funding Request Form**.

Note: For RCPP Classic projects, keep it simple. You do not need more than one row per FA activity type. If your project requires a specific schedule, include a separate row per year. If your project timeline can be accelerated based on producer demand, include a single row for each FA activity type and use the final year in the *fiscal year* field. For RCPP AFA projects: fund year is expected year of implementation, not merely “obligation”; all RCPP funds in AFA projects **MUST BE EARNED** during the term of the project schedule accordingly.

- Fill out all fields in the **Financial Assistance Request Form**.

Financial Assistance Funding Request Form

* Activity Type

* Fund Year


* State

* Amount

* Deliverable Type

* Description

-
- a. *Activity Type* – Select between (1) Land Improvement, (2) Rentals, (3) Easements, U.S.Held, (4) Easements, Entity-Held, and (5) Public Works/Watersheds. For a definition of these activity types please see **Appendix A**.
 - b. *Fiscal Year* - Enter the year you expect to complete obligations (classic) or implementation (AFA) for that specific FA activity type. You do not need separate rows per year unless your project requires a specific schedule to be successful.

Suggestion: The final year of a project should focus on outcomes assessment and implementation, so typically proposals which document understanding of Classic/AFA specific timing consideration will be recognized in the project evaluation.
 - c. *State* –
 - i. For RCPP Classic - Select the state from the dropdown where the work will be contracted. A separate line is needed for each state for each fiscal year for each FA activity type.
 - ii. For AFAs –Select state of NRCS state office which will manage FA awards e.g. multiple states indicated only if multiple supplemental agreements to be used to deliver AFA FA. If a multi-state project will include a pre-determined mix of FA in different states, “Description” field should be used to describe balance.
 - d. *Deliverable Type* – This column will be auto-populated based on the activity type entered in the first column.
 - e. *Description* – This field is optional but partners are encouraged, where applicable, to illustrate the relationship between requested financial assistance and partner contributions that compliment and amplify the impact of the financial assistance.
27. Click  to save the financial assistance funding request.
 28. Repeat 25-26 as necessary for each financial assistance need.
 29. Once all financial assistance funding requests have been entered, scroll down to the **RCPP Technical Assistance Funding Request** table. The top section is a summary of technical assistance requests by category.

Technical Assistance Requests

REQUEST TYPE	TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED
Enhancement TA	\$700,000.00
Partner Implementation TA	\$800,000.00
NRCS Implementation TA	\$1,000,000.00
Total TA Requested	\$2,500,000.00

ACTION	REQUEST TYPE	STATE OF PROPOSED TA PRACTICE	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
 	Enhancement TA	VA	\$700,000.00	Lead partner's project management, staff time spent on outreach, and reporting envi
 	Partner Implementation TA	VA	\$800,000.00	Pre-application, planning, and design for land management contracts

[+ Add Technical Assistance Request](#)

30. Click [+ Add Technical Assistance Request](#) to open the **Technical Assistance Funding Request Form**.
31. Fill out all fields in the **Technical Assistance Request Form**.

Technical Assistance Funding Request Form

* Technical Assistance Request Type

* State of Proposed TA Practice


* Amount(\$)

* Deliverable Type


Description

- a. *Activity Type* – Select between Enhancement TA and Partner Implementation TA. For a definition of these assistance types please see **Appendix B**.

- b. *State* – Select the state from the dropdown where the work will be contracted (see FA description above for additional discussion). A separate line is needed for each NRCS state (office) where contracts for a specific technical assistance type will be managed.
- c. *Amount* – Enter the total funding request for this activity type,
- d. *Deliverable Type* – This column will be auto-populated based on the contract type entered in the first column.
- e. *Description (formerly Relationship to project objectives and contributions)* – Briefly describe specific eligible activities for which funding is being sought (e.g. TA-E for outcomes assessment, TA-I by partner to provide conservation plans to – Briefly describe what type of practices or activities are expected in this deliverable.


32. Click  to save the technical assistance funding request.

33. Repeat 30-32 as necessary for all other technical assistance funding requests.

Are you requesting an FA/TA variance from the standard FA 75% / TA 25%? While variance requests will be considered as part of the proposal, a policy waiver will be required to update FA/TA allocations if the project is selected. 

No ▼

Describe how your organization has the capability and capacity to perform technical assistance deliverables included in the RCPP funding request table (i.e. the certifications, educational background, prior experience of individuals assigned to the task as well as the time and number of staff allocated to these tasks):


Supporting Documents for Technical Assistance Funding Request

Upload Files




Or drop files

Required Documents:

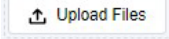
- Payment schedule based on proposed technical assistance activities
- Supporting documents needed to describe the capability and capacity of partners to perform the technical assistance activities listed above.
- For watershed activities you must upload a detailed watershed plan.

Save

34. *Are you requesting an FA/TA variance?* Select yes if you want NRCS funding to be allocated in a different manner than the proposal. For example, this might be more, more than 75% FA, or more than 25% TA. Note: selection of proposal that includes a variance request does not ensure variance will be approved for project; rather it merely advises NRCS that partner may seek a variance during project negotiations if proposal is selected.

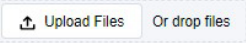
35. *Justification for FA/TA variance* – Provide basis for FA/TA variance e.g. proposed FA activity, Entity Held Easements, does not indicate need for maximum allowable RCPP project TA; final FA/TA split to be discussed during project negotiations if selected.
36. Enter a description for how your organization has the capability and capacity to perform technical assistance deliverables included in the RCPP funding request table.
37. Click  to upload supporting documents for the RCPP funding request, including any documents necessary to demonstrate the capability and capacity of individuals assigned to tasks within the RCPP funding request.
38. Click  to save the information for this section. If there are no errors a gray check mark will appear to the right of the section tab  on the left menu.
39. Click on the *Upload Map* tab to move to the next section.




3.3.7. Upload Map


40. Upload a map by clicking  or dragging a jpeg, png, or tiff file on the box shown below.

Upload Map

Upload any format (jpeg/pdf/etc) map of the proposed area of the RCPP project. Applicants may work with their local NRCS field office for help with project maps




	FILE NAME
  	Test Doc.pdf





41. Once a file has been uploaded a checkmark will be visible on the left menu next to the section header.

Things to consider:

- The map should clearly show the boundary of the project area so that reviewers can easily identify what land may enrolled in this project.
- Maps for proposals within a Critical Conservation Area can only include a single CCA, and cannot include any county that is not at least partially within the CCA area.

42. Click the  icon to delete the file.



43. Click  to save the information for this section. If there are no errors a gray check mark will appear to the right of the section tab  on the left menu.

44. Click on the *Narratives* tab to move to the next section.

3.3.8. Proposal Narrative Questions

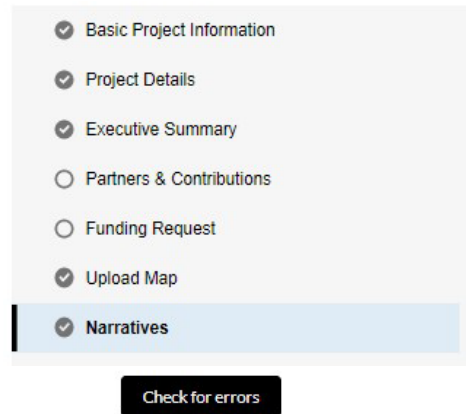
45. The *Proposal Narrative Questions* screen is displayed. Answer all questions within this section through the input box at the bottom of the page.

Note: For the list of narrative questions, see **Appendix C**. The narrative questions will be different depending on whether the proposal is for an RCPP Classic project or an Alternative Funding Arrangement.

46. Click  to save the information for this section. If there are no errors a gray check mark will appear to the right of the section tab  on the left menu.

3.4. Checking for Errors

If all sections of the proposal have been completed, you will see checkmarks in every tab at the left side of the screen. In the screenshot below two sections are incomplete and will result in an error message.



To see what errors need to be fixed, click at the top right of the screen. A popup will give you detailed instructions to correct the proposal. If all errors are resolved the submit button will no longer be gray.

3.5. View/Editing a Proposal

47. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab. A list of the Partner’s proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.

The screenshot shows a table titled "Proposal/Project 2018 Farm Bill Partner Proposals". The table has 5 columns: Fiscal Year, Project Number, Project Name, Status, and Project Type. There are 5 rows of data. The first row has Project Number 2950 and Status Full Proposal In Progress. The second row has Project Number 2951 and Status Full Proposal In Progress. The third row has Project Number 2952 and Project Name Screenshots for Classic Guide 2023, with Status Full Proposal In Progress. The fourth row has Project Number 2959 and Project Name Test Project for FY 23 Proposal Guide, with Status Full Proposal In Progress. The fifth row has Project Number 2960 and Project Name AFA Test Project for FY 2023 Proposal Guide, with Status Full Proposal In Progress.

	Fiscal Year ↑	Project Number	Project Name	Status	Project Type
1	2023	2950		Full Proposal In Progress	RCPP Classic
2	2023	2951		Full Proposal In Progress	AFA
3	2023	2952	Screenshots for Classic Guide 2023	Full Proposal In Progress	RCPP Classic
4	2023	2959	Test Project for FY 23 Proposal Guide	Full Proposal In Progress	RCPP Classic
5	2023	2960	AFA Test Project for FY 2023 Proposal Guide	Full Proposal In Progress	AFA

48. Find the proposal in the *Full Proposal in Progress* status.
49. Click the project number to access the proposal. The proposal opens in the same screen.
50. Use the left side panel to navigate the various proposal sections to view and/or edit.

Please note: Proposals can only be edited while in the status “Full Proposal in Progress” and before the proposal submission deadline. If you want to edit your proposal after submission, please see instructions below for “un-submitting” your proposal.

3.6. Submitting a Proposal

51. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab. A list of the Partner's proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.
52. Find the proposal in the *Full Proposal in Progress* status.
53. Click the project number to access the proposal. The proposal opens in the same screen.
54. Click the **Submit** button to submit the proposal for review.

Please note: Upon submission, (1) the Status of the Proposal changes to Full Proposal Submitted, (2) the user receives an email confirmation for their submission, and (3) the pre-proposal is locked for editing.

The Submit button is only available if before the Proposal deadline, all Proposal sections are complete, and the Status is Full Proposal in Progress.

Upon approval or denial of the Proposal by the RCPP Team, the Partner will receive an email notification.

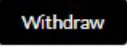
3.7. Un-Submitting a Proposal

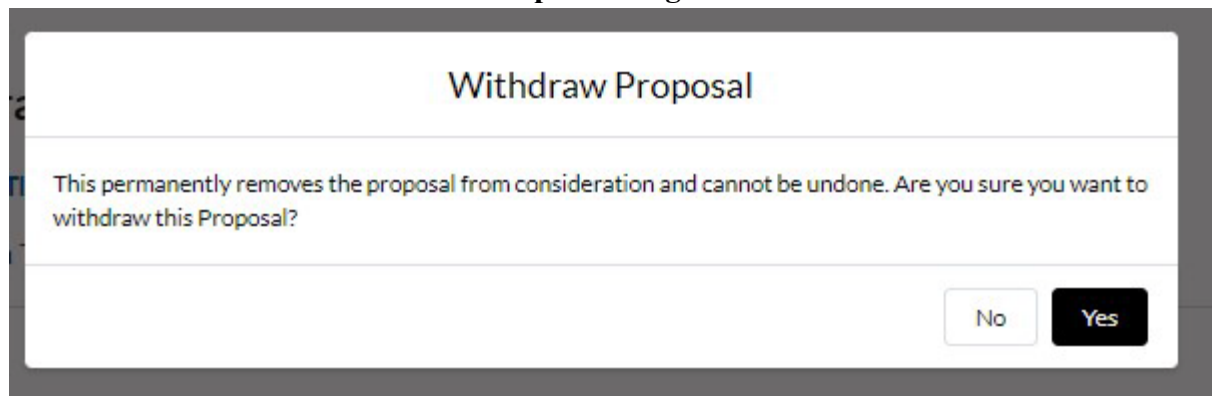
55. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab and select **2018 Farm Bill**. A list of the Partner's proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.
56. Find the proposal in the *Proposal Submitted* status.
57. Click the project number to access the proposal. The proposal opens in the same screen.
58. Click the button **Un-Submit** to un-submit the Proposal.
59. A message is displayed: Do you really want to un-submit this Proposal? Click the **Yes** button to continue.

Please note: Upon clicking the Un-Submit button, (1) the Status of the Proposal changes back to Full Proposal in Progress, (2) the user receives an email confirmation that their proposal was un-submitted, and (3) the pre-proposal is unlocked for editing.

The Un-Submit button is only available if before the Proposal deadline and the status is Proposal Submitted. User can make appropriate changes and re-submit before the Proposal deadline.

3.8. Withdrawing a Proposal

60. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab and select **2018 Farm Bill**. A list of the Partner's proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.
64. Find the proposal in the Proposal Submitted status, click on the project number to access and the proposal entry. The proposal opens in the same screen.
65. At the top of the screen click  to completely remove the proposal from consideration.
66. The message below will be displayed prompting users to confirm that they want to withdraw the proposal and understand this action is permanent. Click yes to confirm the proposal withdrawal. **If this is done in error, please contact your RCPP State Coordinator or submit a ticket to the help desk to get this corrected.**



Please note: Upon clicking the Withdraw button, (1) the Status of the Proposal changes to Withdrawn, (2) the user receives an email confirmation that their proposal was withdrawn, and (3) the Proposal is locked for editing.

Proposals can be withdrawn at any time. If the Status was Proposal in Review, an email notification is also sent to the RCPP Team.

Appendix A – Financial Assistance Activity Types

	Associated Covered Program Authorities
Land improvement / management/ restoration	EQIP, CSP, ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) (restoration), HFRP (restoration), Public Law 83-566
Land rental	CRP
Easement (U.S.-held)	ACEP-WRE, HFRP (easement), Public Law 83-566 (floodplain easement); expanded to include land uses other than those traditionally eligible under the covered programs (e.g. grasslands, agricultural lands, and riparian areas)
Easement (entity-held)	ACEP-ALE (currently); expanded to include easements on land uses other than those traditionally eligible under the covered programs (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, forest lands)
Public works/watersheds	Public Law 83-566

Land Improvement/Land Management/Restoration Activities

Land improvement/land management/restoration contracts will be offered based on an EQIP/CSP-like contracting model between NRCS and an eligible producer, including private landowners, committed to addressing RCPP project resource concerns on eligible lands. The conservation activities included under this category also include restoration and land management practices authorized under ACEP-WRE, HFRP, and Public Law 83-566 (land treatment).

Funds awarded for these purposes will utilize proven aspects of NRCS planning, implementation, and contracting methodology, and are expected to be based principally on NRCS conservation practice standards, existing CSP enhancements, stewardship activities, and existing payment schedules.

Application, ranking, and contracting will emulate similar aspects of EQIP and CSP program implementation. Producer and land eligibility restrictions tied to specific EQIP and CSP regulatory requirements, such as CSP “whole operation” requirements or EQIP irrigation history requirements do not apply to RCPP land management contracts.

Processes will be provided for consideration of adjustments to payment percentages, payment scenarios and/or the development and use of interim practice standards, subject to NRCS consideration and approval in accordance with Agency policy. Additional flexibilities that may be afforded to RCPP partners include project/partner-driven ranking pools, the potential for blending of previously distinct program activities in a single contract, and the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation benefits.

Land Rental Activities

Land rental activities will be offered based on a combination of the EQIP and CRP contracting model between NRCS and an eligible producer committed to addressing RCPP project resource concerns on eligible lands. Application, ranking, and contracting will emulate applicable aspects of NRCS ranking processes.

However, unlike the traditional CRP program, RCPP land rental authority is not generally expected to be used for landscape-scale soil erosion protection. Rather, NRCS will consider funding rental components of RCPP applications in which the lead partner is proposing that RCPP land rental activities focus on short-term, targeted rental needs in the context of a larger RCPP project. Examples include paying 1–3 years of foregone income to incentivize adoption of an innovative cropping system or to transition to an organic production system.

These awards will incorporate proven aspects of NRCS planning, implementation, and contracting methodology, and are expected to be based principally on an estimate of foregone income. Processes will be provided for consideration of partner-driven development of payment levels and payment standards. Anticipated flexibility and benefits of these awards, relative to existing covered program awards, will be in the possibility of project/partner driven ranking pools, potential for partner innovation in proposed conservation purposes warranting short-term rental payments, and in the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation benefits.

RCPP Conservation Easements

RCPP easements will retain some elements of ACEP and HFRP easements while differing in substantial ways. Both U.S.-held and entity-held easements are offered. Below is a table summarizing RCPP easements, with explanatory narratives below the table.

	U.S.-Held Easements (Classic Only)	Entity-Held Easements
Easement Holder	Acquired and held by the United States through USDA NRCS.	Acquired and held by an eligible entity that meets the requirements of 7 CFR Part 1468.3 .
Easement Deed Requirements	Must use one of three RCPP warranty easement deeds provided by NRCS and tailored to identify project-specific conservation values and easement-specific conservation activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> RCPP Warranty Easement Deed for Protection of 	<p>Classic Only: The RCPP minimum deed terms provided by NRCS must be attached to or incorporated into the eligible entity’s own conservation easement deed terms.</p> <p>NRCS minimum deed terms available: RCPP minimum deed terms for protection of conservation values (Highly Restrictive);</p>

	<p>Conservation Values (Highly Restrictive);</p> <p>2. RCPP Warranty Easement Deed for Protection of Conservation Values (Moderately Restrictive); or</p> <p>3. RCPP Warranty Easement Deed for Working Lands (Minimally Restrictive).</p> <p>Alternatively, a partner may request that NRCS use a preapproved, standard RCPP warranty easement deed that is prepopulated with conservation values and conservation activity terms based on habitat or land use: selecting either wetlands, floodplains, grasslands, forestlands, or agricultural land easement deed. Such deeds will not be tailored to include project-specific or parcel-specific provisions.</p>	<p>RCPP minimum deed terms for conservation use with compatible agricultural uses (Moderately Restrictive); or</p> <p>RCPP minimum deed terms for agricultural use (minimally restrictive).</p> <p>Note: Two versions of each set of the listed RCPP Minimum deed terms are available, one with and one without the terms related to the U.S. Right of Enforcement, posted on RCPP Easement Resources Library at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program/rcpp-easements.</p> <p>An eligible entity may propose using an easement deed template previously approved for use by NRCS for the use by the eligible entity for ACEP-ALE under the 2018 Farm Bill, with appropriate adjustments made for RCPP funding and project purposes. This template may only be used for RCPP entity-held easements with a purpose and conservation values similar to ACEP-ALE easements. Eligible entities must include the request to use such a template as part of its proposal.</p> <p>AFA Only: The eligible entity must incorporate the RCPP AFA minimum deed requirements into its own conservation easement.</p> <p>Entities may submit with their proposal a modified ACEP-ALE template deed or other proposed custom deed terms using the RCPP minimum deed terms as a guide. Approval of these deeds or deed terms will be documented in the PPA and Supplemental Agreement Type IV.</p> <p>Note: The RCPP AFA Minimum Deed Requirements and NRCS deed terms are posted on RCPP Easement Resources</p>
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		Library at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program/rcpp-easements .
Duration	Easements are perpetual or maximum duration allowed under state law.	
Potential Eligible Land Types	Private agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, or associated lands (e.g., riparian areas, floodplains, seasonal or flooded wetlands).	
Basis for RCPP Compensation Cap	<p>RCPP funds pay landowners up to 100 percent of the easement value as determined by the NRCS valuation methodology.</p> <p>A partner may pay a landowner additional compensation for an easement conveyance to NRCS.</p>	<p>The RCPP cost share (federal share) provided to eligible entities for their purchase of an entity-held easement is a percentage of the easement value (based on a before-and-after appraisal or approved alternative valuation method).</p> <p>Classic EHE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 50 percent of the easement value, with a U.S. Right of Enforcement • Up to 25 percent of the easement value, without a U.S. Right of Enforcement <p>AFA-EHE Only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 50 percent of the easement value with a U.S. Right of Enforcement for ACEP-ALE certified eligible entities acquiring 'ACEP-ALE like' easements • Up to 25 percent of the easement value without U.S. Right of Enforcement
Valuation Methodology*	<p>Easement value is generally determined through an appraisal. Alternative valuation methods may be considered (and may delay PPA negotiation and implementation) if included in the proposal.</p> <p>Alternative valuation methods may include the use of area wide market analysis (AWMA) or other market area valuations, existing partner appraisal processes, or other industry approved valuation methods. The proposal should include how the alternative method will establish the easement value. Prior to proposal submission, an applicant interested in using an alternate valuation easement method must first consult with the relevant RCPP coordinator and the Easement Programs Division valuation team at</p>	

	<p>NRCS.NationalAppraisers@usda.gov. The proposal must include how the alternative valuation methodology is appropriate and feasible for the lands and easement types targeted for enrollment.</p> <p>Acceptance of the alternative valuation method will be documented in the PPA and Supplementation Type IV agreement, when applicable.</p>	
Partner Match	Partner match is not required for acquisition of easements held by the U.S. Government.	Partner match is required for entity-held easement acquisition and may consist of any combination of landowner donation toward easement value or partner cash contribution toward payment of easement compensation to the landowner.
Partner Contribution	<p>Contributions are encouraged to further RCPP project objectives consistent with the partner contributing substantially towards the overall costs of a project.</p> <p>Only partner, in-kind, or cash contribution from sources other than the landowner may count towards the partner contribution for the project.</p> <p>Landowner cost-share (also known as a donation or charitable contribution) associated with easements held by the U.S.-Held cannot count as partner contribution for the project.</p>	Non-federal match as well as due diligence activities performed or procured by a partner.
RCPP Award Type for Easement Purchase	Producer contract entered into directly with eligible landowners.	Agreement entered into by NRCS with an eligible entity that will hold the easement on eligible land.
Allowed uses of RCPP Financial Assistance	Cost of easement itself, acquisition-related costs (e.g., appraisal, survey, due diligence, title, and closing services), and restoration implementation costs.	Cost of easement itself, cost for NRCS procured technical appraisal review and environmental database records search. RCPP financial assistance funds awarded for an entity-held easement may not be used for entity procured due diligence or any other purpose.

Entity Certification	N/A	Classic- N/A <u>AFA-EHE Only:</u> Eligible entities that are certified through ACEP-ALE may elect to use their certification on ALE-like easement transactions. The eligible entity must be certified at the time the proposal is submitted and include in the proposal the request to use this flexibility during easement acquisition.
Buy-Protect-Sell Transactions	Not an eligible transaction type.	

U.S.-Held Conservation Easements (RCPP Classic ONLY)

RCPP conservation easement awards are offered through producer contracts with eligible landowners on eligible lands. US-held easements are perpetual or for the maximum duration allowed under State Law.

Application, ranking, easement acquisition processes, and contracting of RCPP US-held easements emulate applicable aspects of ACEP and HFRP. The acquisition of a US-held easement under RCPP, like other NRCS easement programs that result in an easement held by the United States, are subject to U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) title standards and approval by the USDA Office of the General Counsel (OGC). Therefore, a US-held easement acquired under RCPP must use one of three standard warranty easement deeds provided by NRCS (the standard warranty easement deeds [are available on the RCPP website](#)). The standard warranty easement deeds each contain a set of terms that establish the level of restrictiveness of the easement by identifying the easement purposes, the rights being acquired by the United States, the rights being retained by the landowner, the allowable uses, restrictions, and prohibitions. The selected standard RCPP warranty easement deed may be tailored to identify project-specific and easement-specific conservation values and conservation activity terms. Such terms must be approved by NRCS on an individual project or easement basis. Alternatively, the partner may select a pre-approved standard RCPP warranty easement deed that is pre-populated with conservation values statement and conservation activity terms based on the habitat type or land use the easement will protect. Pre-approved standard RCPP warranty easement deeds are available for either wetland, floodplain, grassland, forestland, or agricultural land easements. The pre-approved standard RCPP warranty easement deed selected must be used in its entirety and may not be further tailored to include project-specific or easement-specific provisions.

The availability of these options allows NRCS, in consultation with the partner, to determine which of the standard warranty easement deeds is most appropriate to achieve the identified RCPP project purposes for a given project and protect the conservation values as stated in the easement deed.

Selection of the appropriate warranty easement deed is a foundational component of the project proposal, PPA, with confirmation of appropriateness at time of individual landowner applications, evaluation, and ranking.

NRCS will only acquire an easement on lands it has determined to be eligible and meet all applicable requirements, including appropriate statement of conservation values and use of the appropriate corresponding warranty easement deed, and on which OGC has approved the sufficiency of title to the land for the purpose for which the easement is being acquired.

RCPPI financial assistance that may be provided for the easement itself is based on the value of the easement as determined by a valuation methodology to be determined by NRCS. In general, the more restrictive the terms of the easement, the higher the easement value that may be provided for a particular parcel of land under RCPPI.

NRCS may use agreements to procure easement related surveys, appraisals, closing services, or other realty-related services consistent with applicable DOJ acquisition processes and requirements. Partner contributions may be used to complement NRCS funding and provide additional compensation to a landowner.

Please note: US-Held Easements are not available in Alternative Funding Arrangements.

Entity-Held RCPPI Conservation Easements

RCPPI awards for cost-share assistance for the purchase of entity-held easements will be offered through agreements and require collaboration between NRCS, an eligible entity, and an eligible landowner. Only an eligible entity which meets the requirements of 7 CFR §1468.3 may apply to be the holder of an RCPPI entity-held easement.

Partners and landowners must follow easement acquisition and closing processes similar to ACEPALE and must attach or incorporate the NRCS-provided RCPPI minimum deed terms to their conservation easement deeds. The RCPPI minimum deed terms provided by NRCS establish one of three levels of restrictiveness of the easement (categorized as highly, moderately, or minimally restrictive) by identifying the easement purposes, the allowable uses, the limitations on use, and prohibitions. Additionally, each set of minimum deed terms has two versions, one that includes a U.S. right of enforcement and the associated provisions and one that does not include such terms (with reduced compensation cap as shown in the table in section V.). Additionally, if consistent with the project purposes, a partner may, as part of the proposal and PPA development process, request the ability to use a template deed used in one of the covered easement programs with appropriate adjustments made to address authorization, funding source, etc.

The availability of these options allows the partner, in consultation with NRCS, to determine which of set of RCPPI minimum deed terms (categorized as highly, moderately, and minimally restrictive or applicable covered program easement deed terms) and which version (with or without a U.S. right of enforcement) is most appropriate to achieve the identified RCPPI project purposes on a particular property. Selection of the minimum deed terms that will be used is a foundational component of the

project proposal, PPA, with confirmation of appropriateness at time of individual landowner applications, evaluation, ranking, and determining valuation.

RCPP financial assistance that may be provided for the easement itself is based on the value of the easement as determined by a before-and-after Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) appraisal. This is considered the standard valuation method. In order to determine the value of the easement, the appraisal must consider the terms of the conservation easement, including the conservation values the easement will protect and the level of restrictiveness of the easement. The more restrictive the easement, the greater the value difference between the before-and-after conditions, which results in a higher easement value than a less restrictive easement would on the same piece of land. Use of an alternative valuation method may be requested in the proposal but should be discussed with the State Conservationist and the Easement Programs Division valuation team at NRCS.NationalAppraisers@usda.gov prior to proposal submission to vet the viability of the proposed method. The proposal must include how the alternative valuation methodology is appropriate and feasible for the lands and easement types targeted for enrollment.

Similar to ACEP-ALE, non-federal share of easement cost, other easement acquisition-related costs and easement management costs are the responsibility of RCPP partners and cannot be reimbursed by NRCS. These costs may be counted as partner contributions based on final agreement terms and negotiated project deliverables.

Public Works/Watersheds

Through the public works/watershed projects component of RCPP, eligible partners may receive financial assistance awards to support immediate or future implementation of structural works of improvement to address watershed-scale issues for the benefit of eligible land, similar to many projects completed under Public Law 83-566. Watershed activity in support of design, design and construction, or construction-only projects developed consistent with NRCS Watershed Manual and National Engineering Manual will be considered. Primary consideration among watershed projects may be afforded construction only projects, with secondary and tertiary consideration provided for design plus construction, and design only projects respectively. Projects without an NRCS approved watershed plan will not be considered for watershed activity funding under this NFO. (Note: RCPP funding is NOT available to support rehabilitation of any NRCS assisted watershed structure, as that component of PL-566 authority expressly prohibited by RCPP statute.)

RCPP project proposals must detail proposed public works/watershed activities to the fullest extent possible to provide project reviewers with the information needed to assess project viability. While RCPP projects could design, and/or installation of proposed public works/watershed projects, timing is critical to fully complete a project from start to finish in the 5 (or potentially longer) years of an RCPP project, so details of both TA and FA requests associated with public works projects must be included in the questionnaire section of the proposal in the RCPP portal.

NRCS retains approval authority for planning, design, and environmental responsibilities (including adherence to NEPA and the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines for Federal Water Resource

projects) for RCPP public works activities. NRCS will generally satisfy these responsibilities by following NRCS watershed and engineering policy, except when negotiated otherwise. Note: infrastructure projects which meet NRCS requirements for Land Management activity type are not necessarily subject to the same requirements as full water resource projects; please consult RCPP coordinator in your state for additional information on how to determine which activity type is the best fit for any given situation.)

RCPP project proposals containing public works activities should identify: 1) any proposed deviations from NRCS policy, 2) NRCS approved watershed plan (name, and date of approval) and 3) existing designs that might help accelerate implementation of RCPP public works activities. Final disposition of any deviations or prior approved plans and designs are subject to both project negotiations and individual NRCS review and evaluation processes.

NRCS may discontinue assistance if the negotiation, or design (in design plus construction projects) phase of a project indicates that timely project completion is unlikely. It is NRCS's intent that only those proposals with robust active plans, detailed cost proposals, and proven partner capacities advance for funding consideration.

Applicants are reminded that all RCPP public works/watershed projects must have demonstrable ties to proposed RCPP project conservation benefits and eligible agricultural lands. In contrast to Public Law 83-566, for example, RCPP program purposes do not include as eligible purposes recreation or municipal water supply.

When RCPP public works/watershed financial assistance funds are budgeted and awarded in a project, actual agreement match (vs. project-level contributions) may be required. Public works improvements targeting non-flood control purposes have a minimum 35 percent cash-match requirement. Flood control projects may request up to 100 percent RCPP financial assistance, though ranking may preclude their selection without substantial partner contributions (a feature of all RCPP projects). Similarly, RCPP TA funding could potentially pay for entirety of design, but particularly in design only projects, contributions would necessarily need to provide meaningful conservation benefits, because a design by itself is unlikely compete well against projects with more direct benefits. With NRCS approval, public works project match may be counted as RCPP project contributions, but proposed partner contributions not directly associated with the public works activities cannot be counted toward public works match requirements.

Matching funds requirements may be reduced or waived if funding is awarded to a project in which the benefits will principally accrue to communities or regions where most residents meet limited resource or socially disadvantaged criteria as included in the 1985 Act, as amended by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018.

Additional flexibilities associated with these awards include the potential for innovative contracting for experienced partners with demonstrated design, contracting, and implementation skills, and the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation and/or participants benefit.

As a reminder, Public Law 83-566-like land treatment activities will be funded under land improvement/ management/restoration contracts with the producer rather than public works agreements.

Appendix B – Technical Assistance

NRCS Technical Assistance

NRCS maintains substantial responsibility for ensuring that RCPP conservation activities are implemented consistent with Federal and agency statutes, regulations and policies. Some of NRCS's responsibilities are non-delegable, meaning that they must be performed by NRCS. For these nondelegable responsibilities, these responsibilities **are not** part of an RCPP project funding request.

NRCS Non-Delegable TA Responsibilities

Collaborate with lead partners to develop and manage RCPP agreements and associated components.

HEL/WC, AGI and NEPA-related compliance activities.

Eligibility determinations and other producer contract activities.

Project-related communications and coordination activities.

Implementation Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is required for conservation planning, practice design, installation and verification, U.S.-held easement due diligence and other needs associated with supporting the implementation of RCPP FA conservation activities. For RCPP, these activities are known as Implementation Technical Assistance, or TA-I.

For RCPP Classic:

TA-I funding defaults to NRCS but may be awarded, during agreement negotiations, to qualified partners to provide eligible TA-I services. Whether TA-I activities are carried out by NRCS or by partners or a third party, they must be carried out according to applicable Federal requirements, including NRCS planning procedures, conservation practice standards, and job approval authority.

For AFAs:

Partners are expected to deliver all TA-I required for the implementation of AFAs except for tasks that NRCS cannot delegate (see section above).

Implementation Technical Assistance—Eligible Activities

Pre-application activities related to RCPP producer contracts, watershed activities or easements. This can include completion of inventories or data collection to support environmental evaluations and other NEPA-related activities.

Conservation planning to producers or landowners directly related to installation or management of eligible conservation activities.

Practice design related to land management, rental or watershed activities.

Assistance with practice installation and verification.

FA contract support services (i.e., securing and managing contracts for third-party services like engineering studies, surveys, appraisals, etc.).

TA-I budgets in project proposals are tentative. The flexible RCPP agreement structure allows for TAI to be either expended by NRCS or obligated to a partner at any time during the life of a project. At the start of PPA negotiations, all TA-I will be allocated for NRCS use. During both PPA and any subsequent supplemental agreement negotiations, NRCS will work with lead partners to refine proposal budgets so that TA-I is expended as efficiently as possible to ensure project success. This could include the allocation of TA-I funding to partners that have the capacity and capability to perform the work according to NRCS planning and practice standards.

Additional Considerations

- Land Management Activities typically have the greatest potential for TA-I to be delegated to an eligible partner.
- For Entity-Held Easements, it rarely generates need for partner provided TA-I. Rather, participating entities are required to provide parcel level TA and due diligence, consistent with ACEP-ALE.
- For US-Held Easements, most TA-I is performed by NRCS and cannot be delegated.
- For Watershed Projects, most TA-I is expected to be performed by an eligible partner according to an approved Watershed Plan.

Enhancement Technical Assistance

Enhancement TA (TA-E) can be earned by partners for project-level activities—all field-level and producer/landowner-level conservation implementation activities are funded by TA-I. Enhancement activities include things such as project management, outcomes assessment and others listed in the table below. Like other RCPP funding, TA-E awards are not grants and payments are only made for verifiable completion of eligible, negotiated tasks. During PPA and subsequent supplemental agreement negotiations, NRCS will work with partner(s) to establish eligible TA-E deliverables and valuation methods.

If applicants do not request TA-E as part of their proposal, that TA funding will be folded back into program funding as determined by NRCS. Proposals submitted without TA-E requests may be allowed to convert unneeded TA-I to TA-E during proposal negotiations, but such conversions are at the sole discretion of NRCS.

The table below (and the Portal’s TA deliverable table) includes eligible TA-E activities.

Enhancement Technical Assistance—Eligible Activities
Develop and manage RCPP agreements with NRCS.
Other RCPP project-related producer outreach and education, including inventories, analyses, and tools needed to inform outreach.
Project-related communications and coordination activities.
Development and calculation of quantifiable project outcomes.
Development of innovative conservation approaches such as pay-for-performance or environmental credit markets.
Project management and partnership development to accomplish project goals.

IMPORTANT: Official NRCS approval of reimbursable TA activities included in an RCPP proposal does not occur when RCPP project selections are announced. RCPP financial awards are not grants and function similarly to contracts. Specific TA funding, deliverables and valuation methods are negotiated between NRCS and partners following project selection. All TA payment rates and performance standards will be specified and agreed to as part of these negotiations and may be subject to additional documentation requirements or approvals beyond those included in a selected proposal.

Appendix C – Proposal Narrative Questions

RCPP Classic Narrative Questions

1. Describe the resource concerns impacting producers in the proposed project area and how this project will benefit and/or address one or more of the national priorities as listed in the NFO. If the proposed project is within a CCA, identify how the project will specifically address one or more of the CCA priority resource concerns.
2. Explain how the project will use one or more financial assistance activity types (e.g. land management and/or rental contracts with eligible producers, entity-held and/or US-held easements, or watershed infrastructure projects) to achieve project area conservation benefits. If the proposed project is within a CCA, identify how each financial assistance activity will specifically address one or more of the CCA priority resource concerns.
3. In RCPP Classic, land management (LM) financial assistance (FA) funding is typically contracted by NRCS via program contracts directly with eligible producers, including landowners. If this project proposal anticipates partner delivery of RCPP funded LM FA, additional program requirements apply. If this project will include partner delivery of LM FA in addition to producer contracts, document why partner delivery is being proposed, including efficiencies gained.
4. Elaborate on the basis for the proposed project area boundary (map). Does the proposal include prioritizing project funding for specific locations or producers based on scientific assessment or research-based plan? If so, describe how the approach will be implemented within the producer application ranking model.
5. What is the estimated number of eligible producers and acres to be treated within the project area? What percentage of those producers are expected to receive direct benefits from the project? What, if any, efforts have been made to gauge interest in participation by eligible producers? Will this project benefit from the inclusion of specific properties or beneficiaries for RCPP funded FA activities (i.e. are specific participants' lands targeted for land management, rental, specific parcels targeted for easements, or watershed activity?) List proposed "pre-selections" by Farm Service Agency Farm and Tract number, Assessor Parcel number, or equivalent property boundary identification and include the owner/operator names.

Note: Inclusion here does not guarantee a future award but may eliminate need for further program competition. If project partners, members or relatives own any of these properties, document those relationships here to mitigate potential conflict of interest.

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6. Explain the partnership's capacity to manage the project, provide outreach, collect and analyze outcomes data for reports, enhancement technical assistance (TA-E) and conservation planning and implementation services to producers (TA-I). Describe how the partnership will use NRCS guidance materials to provide implementation technical assistance.
 7. What resources and expertise will each partner contribute to the project (provide examples)? Specifically address if contributions include:
 - a. Cash as financial assistance to producers.
 - b. Experience applying NRCS planning procedures and Conservation Practice Standards to assist producers.
 - c. Eligible entities with experience acquiring and holding conservation easements
 - d. Established relationships with producer communities.
 - e. Data collection, analysis and modeling expertise, including GIS Skills for outcomes reporting.
 - f. Lead partner experience and success in managing federal awards for similar sized projects, including tracking and delivery of third-party contributions.
 8. Describe the baseline condition including data and/or analysis tools that were used to define the need to address current environmental conditions identified in question 1. What are the expected accumulated impacts of the project that will be reported using the described metrics and model(s)? Social or economic outcomes may also be included if considered a key metric to project success.
 9. Explain the partnership capacity to identify, inform, and enroll eligible agricultural producers and entities who have not participated in NRCS programs. If historically underserved (HU) producers are present within the proposed project area, describe how they will be encouraged to participate in the project. Describe your outreach plan to encourage their participation in the proposed project under an RCPP contract.
 10. Is this a brand-new project or is this part of an existing effort? Describe the extent of project activities completed to date, and how the proposed activities relate to any existing efforts. Include a brief description of any recent or historical coordination with NRCS staff or programs.

RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangement Narrative Questions

1. Describe the resource concerns impacting producers in the proposed project area and how this project will benefit and/or address one or more of the national priorities as listed in the NFO. If the proposed project is within a CCA, identify how the project will specifically address one or more of the CCA priority resource concerns.
2. Explain how the project will use one or more financial assistance activity types (e.g. land management and/or rental contracts with eligible producers, entity-held easements, or watershed infrastructure projects) to achieve project area conservation benefits. If the proposed project is within a CCA, identify how each financial assistance activity will specifically address one or more of the CCA priority resource concerns.
3. Describe how the lead partner intends to work with NRCS to verify producer and land eligibility, and convey data needed for NRCS to manage environmental compliance.
4. Explain why this project would be more effectively carried out through a partner-led AFA rather than through the traditional RCPP Classic approach. Describe how financial assistance will be delivered via partner-producer contracts or partner contracted work on behalf of eligible producers. Include details on the proposed process for producer application solicitation, ranking, and funding selection. Highlight the partners' qualifications and capacity to provide conservation technical assistance to producers (e.g. planning, design, and checkout.) Describe the lead partner's financial capacity to deliver the program on a reimbursement basis.
5. Elaborate on the basis for the proposed project area boundary (map). Does the proposal include prioritizing project funding for specific locations or producers based on scientific assessment or research-based plan? If so, describe how the approach will be implemented within the producer application ranking model.
6. What is the estimated number of eligible producers and acres to be treated within the project area? What percentage of those producers are expected to receive direct benefits from the project? What, if any, efforts have been made to gauge interest in participation by eligible producers? Will this project benefit from the inclusion of specific properties or beneficiaries for RCPP funded FA activities (i.e. are specific participants' lands targeted for land management, rental, specific parcels targeted for easements, or watershed activity?) List proposed "pre-selections" by Farm Service Agency Farm and Tract number, Assessor Parcel number, or equivalent property boundary identification and include the owner/operator names.

Note: Inclusion here does not guarantee a future award but may eliminate need for further program competition. If project partners, members or relatives own any of these properties, document those relationships here to mitigate potential conflict of interest.

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7. Explain the partnership’s capacity to manage the project, provide outreach, collect and analyze outcomes data for reports, enhancement technical assistance (TA-E) and conservation planning and implementation services to producers (TA-I). Describe how the partnership will use NRCS guidance materials to provide implementation technical assistance.
 8. What resources and expertise will each partner contribute to the project (provide examples)? Specifically address if contributions include:
 - a. Cash as financial assistance to producers.
 - b. Experience applying NRCS planning procedures and Conservation Practice Standards to assist producers.
 - c. Eligible entities with experience acquiring and holding conservation easements
 - d. Established relationships with producer communities.
 - e. Data collection, analysis and modeling expertise, including GIS Skills for outcomes reporting.
 - f. Lead partner experience and success in managing federal awards for similar sized projects, including tracking and delivery of third-party contributions.
 9. Describe the baseline condition including data and/or analysis tools that were used to define the need to address current environmental conditions identified in question 1. What are the expected accumulated impacts of the project that will be reported using the described metrics and model(s)? Social or economic outcomes may also be included if considered a key metric to project success.
 10. Explain the partnership capacity to identify, inform, and enroll eligible agricultural producers and entities who have not participated in NRCS programs. If historically underserved (HU) producers are present within the proposed project area, describe how they will be encouraged to participate in the project. Describe your outreach plan to encourage their participation in the proposed project under an RCPP contract.
 11. Is this a brand-new project or is this part of an existing effort? Describe the extent of project activities completed to date, and how the proposed activities relate to any existing efforts. Include a brief description of any historical coordination with NRCS staff or programs.