

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service

Funding Opportunity Title: Conservation Technical Assistance in Vermont for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-VT-RCPP-20-NOFO0001023

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number (also known as Assistance Listing): 10.932 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Section 2301 of the 2014 Agricultural Act -Public Law 113-79, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)- Section 2101 of the 2014 Agricultural Act - Public Law 113-79 - Regulations at 7 CFR Part 1466, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Section 1265 of the 2014 Agricultural Act - Public Law 113-79

Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) seeks eligible applicants to provide assistance with continued delivery of conservation assistance in support of covered program contracts entered into under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill.

RCPP promoted coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand the collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS and partners implemented projects that demonstrated innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provided measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns addressed through the covered programs. RCPP used covered programs to accomplish purposes and functions similar to those of the following conservation programs:

- 1) The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- 2) The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- 3) The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- 4) Watershed Authorities (i.e. PL-566)

NRCS Vermont is looking for eligible applicants to assist with the following activities to support continued implementation of the RCPP covered programs through managing completion of existing contracts. Activities include: 1) Conducting on-site visits with RCPP participants to provide technical assistance (T/A) in order to achieve practice implementation according to the contract/agreement timelines and in accordance with NRCS practice standards. Upon completion of conservation practices, final practice certification will be completed to document that practices meet (or do not meet) NRCS standards. 2) Providing administrative support to

complete required documents and contract management including but not limited to: contract modifications, annual reminders of scheduled practice implementation, and notices of non-compliance.

Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to the following entity types:

- *City or township governments*
- *County governments*
- *Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)*
- *Nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)*
- *Private institutions of higher education*
- *Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education*
- *Special district governments*
- *State governments*

Key Dates: Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on July 12, 2020. For technical issues with Grants.gov, please contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The funding floor for this opportunity \$120,000, and the funding ceiling is \$235,000. The funding floor means the minimum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. The ceiling is the maximum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Section 2301 of the 2014 Agricultural Act -Public Law 113-79, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)- Section 2101 of the 2014 Agricultural Act - Public Law 113-79 - Regulations at 7 CFR Part 1466, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Section 1265 of the 2014 Agricultural Act - Public Law 113-79.

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- 5) The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- 6) The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- 7) Watershed Authorities (i.e. PL-566)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) seeks to continue delivery of conservation assistance in support of covered program contracts entered into under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill. RCPP covered program contracts seek to address the RCPP identified resource concerns of water quality and soil erosion. The project will include planning and implementation of conservation practices. This will require coordination with NRCS while assisting landowners in applying and certifying completion of conservation practices on their land as listed in the Conservation Plan and associated Program Contracts.

The project involves providing continued technical and administrative support to assist NRCS in delivering the RCPP program by reducing the administrative, planning, and implementation burden on NRCS field staff. This will enable the field staff to maximize their technical expertise in other areas, and improve the delivery of technical assistance to landowners benefiting from other (non-RCPP) NRCS Conservation Programs. Technical support for RCPP is needed within the RCPP project area of the Lake Champlain basin and serviced by the following NRCS field Offices. St. Albans, Middlebury, and Newport.

Covered Program: RCPP-EQIP (The Environmental Quality Incentives Program):

This voluntary conservation program promoted agricultural production and environmental quality to address the RCPP resource concerns of water quality and soil erosion. Through RCPP-EQIP farmers received financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural or management practices on eligible agricultural land. Applicants will provide Technical Assistance toward implementation and continued support for existing RCPP-EQIP participants and contracts. Activities include:

- 1) Conservation Practice Implementation** - Conducting on-site visits with RCPP-EQIP participants to provide technical assistance (T/A) in order to achieve practice implementation according to the contract/agreement timelines and in accordance with NRCS practice standards. Upon completion of conservation practices, final practice certification will be completed to document that practices meet (or do not meet) NRCS standards.

Conservation practice job sheets will be completed, where necessary, to provide the customer with specific implementation guidelines. Examples of conservation measures which will be designed or installed include conservation crop rotations, pasture and hayland planting, cover crops, field stripcropping, riparian forest buffers and other practices requiring tree planting, field borders, nutrient and pest management plans, fences, pipelines, and watering facilities. Implementation assistance will be provided for prescribed grazing systems and various other agronomic practices associated with riparian buffers, as necessary. As necessary, and where justified and approved, revise established conservation plans and contracts to better meet the landowner objectives and/or to address unanticipated site conditions.

Technical staff who will provide technical assistance within the RCPP project area will perform functions of resource conservationists and must meet at least one of the two requirements as follows:

- a. Degree: soil conservation or related agricultural or natural resource discipline such as agronomy, soil science, forestry, agricultural education, agricultural engineering, or environmental science. The study must have included 30 semester hours in a natural resource or agricultural field, including at least 12 semester hours in a combination of soils and crops or plant science. Of the 12 semester hours, a minimum of 3 semester hours must have been in soils and 3 semester hours in crops or plant science.
- b. Combination of education and experience--at least 30 semester hours in one or more of the disciplines as shown in A above, including at least 12 semester hours in a combination of soils and crops or plant science, plus appropriate experience or additional education. Of the 12 semester hours, a minimum of 3 semester hours must have been in soils and 3 semester hours in crops or plant science.

PLUS

One year of experience as described below.

Evaluation of Education: Education that provided specialized knowledge and skills in soil and water conservation is more valuable than education that imparted broad but general knowledge and skills. Courses in soil fertility, soil chemistry, soil genesis, plant physiology, plant science, and field crops are examples of specialized courses that contribute towards meeting the required 12 semester hours as described above. Courses in the physical sciences or engineering such as geology, civil engineering, and hydrology also meet the soils, crops, or plant science course requirements where such courses included a complete introduction to the physical, chemical, and biological properties of soils.

Evaluation of Experience: Experience that included the application of techniques, principles, and methods from a variety of agricultural and natural resource fields is appropriate, given the interdisciplinary character of the soil conservation occupation. For example, experience gained in a specialized field such as soil science, forestry, or agronomy is as fully acceptable as experience directly obtained in soil conservation work.

- 2) **Contract Support Services** – Applicants may be required to provide assistance toward RCPP-EQIP contract support. Activities may include
- a) Assisting NRCS field staff with planning workload by maintaining customer files;
 - b) Processing payments by reviewing and assembling documentation and certification reports;
 - c) Drafting and finalizing contract administration letters and documents related to status reviews, contract implementation, contract modifications, potential cancellations and

termination, and maintaining contract documents in case files including the web-based case file system titled the Document Management System (DMS).

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this opportunity is \$235,000.

2. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be between 3 and 5 years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 15, 2020.

3. Type of Federal Award

The USDA NRCS will award a cooperative agreement under this Announcement for Funding. By statute, the federal awarding agency must be substantially involved in the project to enter into a cooperative agreement to provide assistance. The USDA NRCS anticipates the following involvement which it has deemed substantial, in carrying out projects funded with federal assistance provided through a cooperative agreement under these programs:

- 1) NRCS will conduct an initial briefing at NRCS State Office in Colchester, Vermont within 30 days after the award. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the goals and objectives of the project.
- 2) NRCS will provide program and administrative contacts to participate in the planning and management of the cooperative agreement and coordinate activities between the cooperator and NRCS.
- 3) NRCS will provide, at no cost to the cooperator, training in specific Vermont program procedures.
- 5) NRCS will provide program oversight.
- 6) NRCS will provide necessary forms and other resource information.
- 7) NRCS will provide for state level management and guidance of the program.

Number of Awards

The agency expects to make 1 award(s).

4. Procurement Contracts

The agency does not expect to award procurement contracts associated with this opportunity.

5. Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications

Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are not eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards. An application for renewal means an application submitted to continue an existing agreement that meets the

objectives and requirements of this NFO. An application for supplementation of an existing project means an application to add components to an existing agreement so that it would meet the objectives and requirements in this NFO.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants and applications must meet eligibility criteria by the application deadline to be considered for award. Eligible applicant type is determined by the implementing program statute. Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program (2 CFR 200.205(d)).

Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to the following entity types:

- *City or township governments*
- *County governments*
- *Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)*
- *Nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)*
- *Private institutions of higher education*
- *Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education*
- *Special district governments*
- *State governments*

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity.

3. Other (if applicable)

Any individual award made pursuant to this opportunity will be made to a single entity. Applicants that apply as “partnerships” or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the “partner” parties. In all but exceptional cases, it must be reflected in the award as an awardee/subawardee relationship.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

For technical issues with Grants.gov, please contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.

1. Address to Request Application Package

All standard forms necessary for this opportunity announcement are included in the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) opportunity package. Applicants may request paper copies of materials by contacting Obediah Racicot at (802) 951-6796 Ext. 228 or by written request mailed to USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 356 Mountain View Drive, Colchester, VT 05446.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain:

Proposal

The application shall include a program narrative statement of not more than ten pages that address the following (as a minimum):

- a) A description of the resources and experience of the organization necessary to successfully perform these services.
- b) The proposed price per hour for technical and administrative services provided per the stipulations in the project description.
- c) The organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the project.
- d) A description of the capabilities to fulfill the terms of the cooperative agreement including a brief description of the organizational entity and the qualifications, employment status, current responsibilities, and proposed level of effort for staff responsible for implementation. Resumes for key personnel should be included in the appendix.
- e) List of past experiences with providing, RCPP and EQIP technical services.
- f) The application shall include an appendix. Material should be included only when necessary to support information provided in the narrative. Copies of documents, brochures, etc., are encouraged to demonstrate experience, knowledge, skills and abilities.

FORMAT

For opportunities that include multiple possible instrument types (e.g., grant or cooperative agreement), applications must clearly indicate which instrument type is proposed.

The text of the proposal must be no smaller than 12-point font, must be a minimum of one-inch margins and must not exceed ten (10) pages.

Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. **Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered.** Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered.

- a. **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance)
See Instructions for Completing SF 424 located in the Related Documents tab

of this opportunity on Grants.gov.

- b. **Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.** Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the agency funds, and Column 2 should reflect any applicable applicant's matching funds. This form is the summary budget for the project and should include the full project totals on pages one and two. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.
- c. **Budget Narrative.** In a separate narrative titled "Budget Narrative", explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency's approval and estimate its cost.
 - i. As required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System.
- d. **Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 2 CFR Part 418, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with this application AND the Federal share exceeds \$100,000, you must also complete and submit the SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities located at 2 CFR 418, Appendix B. See 2 CFR, Subpart 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.
- e. **Post Award Documentation.** N/A

3. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the agency is ready to make an award, it may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

Entities must obtain a DUNS and register in SAM prior to registering with Grants.gov. A description of each is below. Entities are strongly encouraged to apply early for their DUNS number and SAM registration.

Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number: A Dun and Bradstreet DUNS number is a unique, nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. Applicants must obtain a DUNS number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711.

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration: SAM is the official Federal system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registry, Federal Agency Registration, Online Representations and Certifications Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov>. The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance, and can be contacted via the Help tab at the website listed above.

Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding DUNS or SAM issues.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov. Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on July 12, 2020. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received.

5. Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.”

6. Funding Restrictions

Funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs:

- Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
- Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; and
- Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces, the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces, and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.
- Management fees and profit

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person listed in this opportunity announcement.

Indirect costs limitations: No indirect costs are allowed under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Merit/Technical Criteria

- a) Project personnel. The reasonableness and feasibility of the applicant’s approach for successfully achieving the objectives of the work within the required timeframe.
- b) Understanding of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and covered programs (the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)).
- c) Ability to be certified by NRCS to receive clearance for access to client data files; Ability to demonstrate past history and credibility of working with clients.

2. Risk Criteria

The awarding agency will check SAM to ensure the applicant is not suspended or debarred, which would preclude receiving an award. In addition, prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a)).

To further comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.205, the agency has established the following risk review process and related standards that an applicant must meet to be considered for award:

- a. **Financial Stability.** The applicant certifies that it maintains adequate financial resources or cash flow to meet its financial obligations on a routine basis and successfully complete any agreement it may be awarded.
- b. **Quality of Management Systems and Ability to meet Management Standards** prescribed in 2 CFR Part 200. The applicant certifies it has a financial management system adequate to segregate and track federal funds. It further certifies it has adequate systems in place for proper agreement administration; compliance with the standards outlined in 2 CFR Part 200 Section D for procurement, property, and records management; and required financial and performance reporting.
- c. **History of Performance.** If the applicant has previously obtained Federal financial assistance award, it certifies that it has never failed to materially comply with the Federal award terms and conditions and further that it has never had an award terminated on that basis.

Submission of an application constitutes certification that an applicant meets these standards.

3. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or applications not meeting the formatting criteria will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The agency intends to make a selection and award without conducting any discussions or allowing applicants to correct deficiencies or omissions in their applications. Consequently, they must ensure their applications are complete and accurate. However, while the agency intends to make a selection without contacting applicants, it reserves the right to request applicants to revise their applications to correct deficiencies or omissions identified by the awarding agency. If this is done, the agency will conduct discussions with all applicants and identify deficiencies and omissions and give applicants an opportunity to submit a revised application by a common cut-off date. The agency may also contact individual applicants to clarify certain components of their application.

Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by a technical review board nominated by the approving official. Risk reviews will be conducted by the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the State Conservationist in Vermont.

4. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (if applicable)

Notice to applicants:

- a. Prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a));
- b. An applicant may review information in FAPIIS accessible through SAM and comment on any information about it that a Federal awarding agency previously entered;
- c. The agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR 200.205, Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

5. Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 1, 2020 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 15, 2020.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The agency will provide notice that an application has been selected before it actually makes the Federal award. As such, the selection notification is not an authorization to begin performance. Any pre-award costs incurred by the awardee will not be reimbursed. The Notice of Grant and Agreement Award (ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency representative is the only authorizing document, and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized representative for signature.

Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the award decision via letter.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and the General Terms and Conditions; a copy of the General Terms and Conditions may be obtained by contacting the Federal Awarding Agency Contacts listed in this opportunity announcement.

3. Reporting

Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the General Terms and Conditions but will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, quarterly financial status reports, and final reports.

If the Federal share of any agreement awarded under this opportunity notice may include more than \$500,000 over the period of performance, recipients must also comply with the post award reporting requirements reflected in Appendix XII of 2 CFR Part 200 —Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

Applicants that receive awards pursuant to this opportunity and any sub awardees must comply with the reporting requirements described at 2 CFR Part 170, unless an exception applies. Applicants must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with those requirements. A list of exceptions can be found at 2 CFR 170.110(b).

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact one of the following individuals:

Administrative Contact (Primary Contact)

Name: Shynika Loften

Grants Management Specialist

FPAC Business Center

Mailing Address: 355 E Street SW, Suite 11-147B, Washington, DC 20024

Phone Number: (2020) 572-5851

Email: Shynika.loften@usda.gov

Program Contact

Name: *Obediah Racicot*

Assistant State Conservationist Programs

USDA Awarding Agency

Mailing Address: *356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105 Colchester, VT 05482*

Phone Number: *802-951-6796 x 228*

Email: *Obediah.Racicot@USDA.gov*

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions regarding this opportunity must be submitted to the Administrative Contact identified above via email with the Opportunity Number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by June 26, 2020. A questions and answers document addressing all questions will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this opportunity in Grants.gov by July 3, 2020.
2. For technical issues with Grants.gov, please contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.
3. **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**
Applications are considered confidential information. Applications are not shared with individuals or entities seeking public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without the consent of the applicant. More specifically, Executive Order 12600 and USDA FOIA regulation 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A requires the awarding agency to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information, and requires the awarding agency to consult with applicants regarding the releasing their records.
4. **Government Obligation**
The Federal Government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of this opportunity. Only authorized federal officials can bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer> and at any USDA office or write a letter

addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.
To request a copy of the complaint form, call

(866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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