Summary Information

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department Of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)

Funding Opportunity Title: Announcement for Program Funding for NRCS' Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2018 – Pacific Islands Area (PIA)

Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-PIA-CIG-18-001

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 10.912, Environmental Quality Incentives Program

NRCS is announcing the availability of CIG to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications will be accepted from eligible entities for projects carried out in the state of PIA. A total of up to $300,000 is available for CIG in FY 2018. All non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals are invited to apply, with the sole exception of Federal agencies. Projects may be between one and three years in duration. The maximum award amount for a single award in FY 2018 is $75,000.

APPLICATIONS DUE DATE: Applications must be received by 5 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time on May 11th, 2018.

SUBMISSIONS: Applications must be submitted electronically through grants.gov. In addition, a PDF of the complete application must be emailed to adam.reed@hi.usda.gov. Both submissions must be received by the submission due date. Click here for more on how to submit an application.

Please note that the grants.gov electronic submission component has been updated. The updated component is called Workspace. Workspace is the standard way for organizations or individuals to apply for federal grants in Grants.gov. Workspace allows an applicant grant team to simultaneously access and edit different forms within an application. In addition, the forms can be filled out online or as a PDF.

Please allow extra time to register in the new Workspace. An overview of Workspace can be viewed at grants.gov (WEBINAR - Getting Started with Workspace: Become a Workspace Wizard). There are also several preliminary registration steps before the applicant can submit the application. To register, go to www.grants.gov, click on "Applicants", then click on "Get Registered."
If you have completed a prior grants.gov application, you may already have completed the registration process.
Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape) should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please visit the CIG web site by clicking here. Questions about this announcement can be directed to mailto: adam.reed@hi.usda.gov or 808-300-2938 phone number.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program is authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP, including CIG, to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who is Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems) to agricultural producers, into NRCS technical manuals and guides, or to the private sector. CIG generally funds pilot projects, field demonstrations, and on-farm conservation research. On-farm conservation research is defined as an investigation conducted to answer a specific applied conservation question using a statistically valid design while employing farm-scale equipment on farms, ranches or private forest lands.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

CIG funds the development and field testing, on-farm research and demonstration, evaluation, or implementation of:

- Approaches to incentivizing conservation adoption, including market-based and conservation finance approaches; and
- Conservation technologies, practices, and systems.

Projects or activities under CIG must comply with all applicable Federal, Tribal, State, and local laws and regulations throughout the duration of the project and:

- Make use of a technology or approach that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate, evaluate, and verify the effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of natural resource conservation technologies and approaches in the field;
- Adapt and transfer conservation technologies, management, practices, systems, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduce proven conservation technologies and approaches to a geographic area or agricultural sector where that technology or approach is not currently in use.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area using an EQIP contract for an established conservation practice standard are ineligible for CIG funding, except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation.

D. State Component

For FY 2018, NRCS accepts proposals that address one or more of the State priorities listed below. Proposals must explicitly state which priority(ies) and sub-priority(ies) are being addressed.

CIG Priorities for FY 2018:

1) Grazinglands

Grazing System Evaluation and Analysis

NRCS promotes a conservation standard for grazing management that includes evaluating whether a grazing strategy or grazing management decisions meet natural resource objectives on rangeland, pastureland and/or grazed forestland. Monitoring, evaluation and analysis is often difficult to establish even after significant investment in practices (such as fencing, water development or seeding and brush management). NRCS in PIA is seeking proposals that help livestock producers in a tropical context establish, obtain, maintain, and evaluate on-site data at the farm and ranch scale that quantify effects of their grazing management decisions, systems and strategies. Projects must:

- Demonstrate and evaluate techniques, approaches or incentives that encourage adoption of science-sound grazing land inventory and monitoring programs.
- Demonstrate how grazing land monitoring programs lead to grazing strategy evaluations that influence adaptive grazing management decisions to address natural resource goals and objectives. This includes stocking rate decisions, drought management and other mitigation plans that address wildfire, wet conditions and other events. Monitoring programs should evaluate grazing management effectiveness as well as explain why it is effective.
- Take into consideration economics of implementing new technology and the PIA's tropical context.

Methodologies for demonstrations may include case studies, surveys, and results from cooperatives. Projects can include existing tools and technology or the development of new ones that support any of the following project requirements:

- Decision support tools and guidelines that inform adaptive grazing management decisions, especially during critical events and seasons. The tools and technology should include comprehensive approaches for implementing dynamic stocking rate determinations. These tools and technologies must be able to be incorporated into management plans and monitored by landowners.
- Development of new tools and technology with guidelines that estimate actual forage utilization or grazing intensity allowing this information to be integrated into an adaptive management framework that emphasizes and supports flexible grazing management.

- Development and refinement of innovative remote sensing tools for grazing land planning, including tools that help landowners predict vegetative production for grazing management and tools to help landowners adapt to, and plan for, drought and other extreme weather events.
- Development of innovative silvopastoral strategies that positively impact ecosystem services in hardwood and mixed-hardwood forest regions
- Development of new tools and technology that help land managers monitor residual forage. This monitoring must be at intervals and locations relevant to management objectives, follow a prescribed set of procedures and demonstrate how these estimates influenced site- and period-specific stocking rates and grazing intensities.

Any new tool(s) developed using CIG funding must: (a) be free for use by agricultural producers; (b) be your, your team or your organization's original work product; (c) be solely owned by you, your team, or your organization, with no other person or entity having any right or interest in it; and (d) not violate intellectual property rights or other rights including but not limited to copyright, trademark, patent, contract, or privacy rights, of any other person or entity. Applicants may contract with a third party for technical assistance to create the tool provided the tool itself is considered to be the applicant's deliverable and that the applicant owns all rights to the tool. Applicants may submit a proposal that includes the use of open source software or hardware provided that the effort complies with applicable open source licenses and, as part of the project, creates software that enhances and builds upon the features and functionality included in the underlying open source product.

Grazingland Information Access Systems

NRCS invites proposals that develop modern, efficient, innovative and affordable information access tool(s) or system(s) that can quickly locate, deliver and save selected sections of grazing land handbooks, technical notes, and associated reference materials used by conservation planners and clients. Applicants may propose tools or systems in the form of web-based software, for smartphone applications or other mobile applications. The tools or systems should be developed for conservation planners, technical specialists, agricultural producers, scientists and other grazing land stakeholders. Projects should provide information access in remote field situations where users are unable to access documents due to limited/no internet service.

2) Organic Agriculture Systems

NRCS supports natural resource conservation in organic farming systems. Because organic farming is a production system, it is not addressed by a single NRCS conservation practice standard, but is part of many standards that address natural resources concerns for soils, water, air, plants, animals, and energy across all land uses and agricultural sectors.

Development, evaluation and analysis of organic production systems is often difficult even after significant investment in practices such as conservation crop rotation, reduced tillage, pest management and cover crops. These and other NRCS conservation practices are intended to

conserve natural resources and can also help a producer meet organic standards. NRCS requests proposals that help organic producers establish, obtain, maintain and evaluate practices at the farm and ranch scale to support organic management decisions, systems and strategies.

2018 CIG proposals must address one or more of the following organic agriculture system priorities:

- Development and demonstration of cropping and tillage systems that build soil health and overcome negative effects of tillage for weed control. Systems should be evaluated with current or proposed soil assessment tools.
- Demonstration of no-till or reduced tillage systems for organic crops for improved weed and erosion control. Systems must note how nutrient management goals are met.
- Demonstrations of organic farms or ranches using edge-of-field monitoring. Voluntary edge-of-field water quality monitoring enables agricultural producers and scientists to quantify conservation work on water quality. Through edge-of-field monitoring, NRCS works with producers and conservation partners to measure nutrients and sediment levels in water runoff from a field and compare the improvements gained under different conservation systems.
- Development of innovative crop rotations for organic transition to build soil health and lead to organic certification. Systems should match the three year transition period and may or may not include cash crops.
- Development and demonstration of intercropping systems including cash crops, insectaries, and cover crops to increase biodiversity and manage pests. When using approved organic pesticides, include a pesticide hazard assessment and mitigation strategy.

3) Soil Health

Soil Health Management Systems
Soil Health Management Systems (SHMS) are a collection of NRCS conservation practices that focus on maintaining or enhancing soil health by addressing all four soil health planning principles: minimize disturbance, maximize soil cover, maximize biodiversity and maximize presence of living roots. A SHMS is a specific cropping system and contains practices that treat the entire field. When applied as a system, SHMS achieves the greatest soil health benefit by creating systemwide synergistic effects. Information obtained through soil health assessments can be used to develop a SHMS to target specific identified constraints. NRCS invites proposals that support the adoption of SHMS in the following areas:

- Economic/Financial case studies on successful Soil Health Management Systems across varied production systems that include quantifying on-site net profit and offsite impacts (e.g., soil erosion, nutrient losses, water and air quality).
- Develop, demonstrate, inform, and promote design and implementation of Soil Health Management Systems that are location- and production system-appropriate, economically viable, and improve soil health/soil functioning (e.g., optimize nutrient availability,

optimize productivity, control soil-borne diseases, increase plant available water, increase resilience to extreme weather), including:
    - Implementation strategies for feasible transition from degraded soils in varied production systems.
    - Innovative approaches for adopting soil health promoting practices in relatively cool and/or wet climates (e.g., zone tillage, short season cultivars, interseeding of cover crops).
    - Integration of livestock into existing cropping systems, including applicable technologies such as fencing and water system innovations.
    - Innovative approaches on irrigated lands, including adapted irrigation system design, consideration of soil sodicity, nutrient management, irrigation water quality and quantity issues, and/or transition strategies from irrigated to non-irrigated systems.
    - Transitions to more diverse cropping rotations and grazing systems.
    - Optimal species mixes, seeding rates and seeding methods (e.g., inter-seeding, inter-cropping, frost-seeding) to enhance cover crop establishment/survival, as well as management and termination.
    - Innovative approaches to incorporating cover crops in high intensity/high value cropping systems that address concerns such as delayed planting, pest issues, residue challenges and nitrogen availability challenges.
    - Establishment and management of grazing systems that incorporate multiple plant species (e.g., native warm season grasses in the southeast).
- Quantify and characterize the impacts of soil management practices (e.g., tillage, cover crops, crop rotations, soil amendments, grazing systems) across a range of soils, production systems, and climates on:
    - Yield, yield variability, crop quality and economics of crop production.
    - Key soil health attributes, properties and indicators including use of standard methods for physical, biological, and chemical measures for future consideration and potential adoption by NRCS , as well as other measures of soil functioning, (e.g., nutrient cycling, water availability, disease and pest suppression, plant growth promotion).
    - Environmental outcomes/ecosystem services (e.g., water quality/quantity, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, wildlife, etc.).
- Quantify the impacts of cover crop presence, species mix, and management (e.g., termination growth stage, tillage practice, grazing) on soil water content and subsequent crop yield across a range of climates and cropping systems, especially in water limited regions.
- Quantify and demonstrate the impacts of Soil Health Management Systems on nutrient losses through surface and subsurface pathways for tile-drained and non-drained soils. Proposals may also design and field test SHMS that avert such losses.
- Develop innovative ways to control slug and vole problems in long-term no-till and cover crop systems.
- Quantify the potential increases in water availability and reductions in nutrient losses projecting widespread adoption of soil health promoting practices such as cover crops and no-tillage over large areas or watersheds (e.g., river basin, aquifer, etc.).

- Demonstrate formation and support of innovative soil health social networks that promote producer opportunities to try new approaches and technologies before deciding on large purchases in support of long-term adoption of Soil Health Management Systems.

Soil Health Assessments
Soil Health Assessments use indicators that can be measured and interpreted through quantitative or qualitative analysis using established protocols. Indicators should be easy to interpret and sensitive to management and short-term changes. Assessments can be done either in-field and/or by a laboratory. Interpretation of how well a soil functions must consider soil and climate factors. NRCS invites proposals that support the use of soil health assessments in the following areas:

- Measure values in high functioning soils across the nation's agriculturally important soils to aid in the identification of the potential long-term upper soil health status limits possible in various soils, using standard methods for physical, biological and chemical soil properties/soil health indicators.
- Quantify potential values and rates of change of soil health indicators/attributes in response to climate, organic input chemical composition and placement and soil management, across a range of inherent soil properties (e.g., particle size, mineralogy), production systems, and climates. This will help develop regionally adjusted indicator thresholds and soil health management recommendation systems.
- Quantify--as a function of management practices, SHMS, inherent soil properties and/or climate--the rate of increase in infiltration, available root zone, plant available soil water and soil water retention.
- Quantify the impact on soil health by different types of grazing systems across a range of climates, soils, and livestock systems, including use of standard methods for physical, biological, and chemical soil properties/soil health indicators.

4) Forestry:

Agroforestry
The use of agroforestry has been utilized in the Pacific Islands for many generations, but its use has declined in recent decades. Much of the local knowledge of the value, how to establish, and properly manage a well-functioning agroforest has been lost. The PIA would like to promote the establishment and management of mixed agroforests in the Pacific Islands through its Forestry / Agroforestry Technical Note 11 via proposals that would lead to:

- Publication(s) for the public of the value of the agroforest in context of the Pacific Islands, for the purpose of promoting future agroforest.
- Development of Tools or guidelines that assist in mixed agroforest designs, layout and management:
    - Quantify number and composition of trees and shrubs to be planted based on anticipated plant sizes at different stages of plant growth – this process will drive planting spacing recommendations
    - Planning and managing species composition through three principal phases of agroforest succession: establishment, development, maturity

    - User-friendly booklet with a focus on images and suggested species lists to demonstrate different successional stages
- Develop curriculum and present at least one 2-3 day workshop regarding technical aspects of mixed agroforest ecology and management. Workshop must be held at location with existing mixed agroforest examples, and be geared for personnel who provide conservation technical assistance and advanced land managers.

II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

It is anticipated that a total of up to $300,000 in funding will be available for this announcement. The ceiling for a single award is $75,000.

NRCS accepts proposals for projects of one to three years in duration.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Applicant Eligibility

All NFE entities and individuals, with the exception of Federal agencies, are eligible to apply for projects carried out in PIA. Individuals and entities may submit more than one application. Individuals and entities may receive more than one award.

B. Project Eligibility

All CIG projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers that meet the eligibility requirements for EQIP listed in 7 CFR § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3):

- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 CFR Part 12).
- Be a person, legal entity, joint operation, Indian tribe, or native corporation who is engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or has an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation as defined in 7 CFR Part 1400.
- Have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed contract period.

C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

The following provisions apply to CIG funding:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements. These grant agreements are not EQIP contracts; thus, CIG awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation found at section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, which imposes a $450,000 payment limitation for all payments made to persons or legal entities under an EQIP contract entered into between FY 2014 and FY 2018.
- All agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a CIG project must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3) noted above. In addition, all CIG payments are subject to the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limitation. All agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a CIG project must have an AGI that does not exceed $900,000. If awarded a grant, grantees must self-certify and maintain records showing that participating producers receiving payments using CIG funding meet the EQIP eligibility and AGI requirements.
- Section 1240B of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-2, prohibits duplicative payments. Accordingly, direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which an individual or legal entity has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any USDA conservation program (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program, EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Stewardship Program). If awarded a grant, grantees must self-certify that payments to producers using CIG funding are not duplicative.

D. Cost Sharing/Matching Requirements

CIG recipients must provide a non-Federal funding match or cost-share at least equal to the amount of Federal funding requested. See Section IV, subsection 8 of this announcement for information on cost share/match.

E. Technical Assistance for CIG Projects

Conservation Innovation Grants are Grant Agreements and as such do not provide for substantial involvement between NRCS and the grantee in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award. The technical assistance required to carry out a project is the responsibility of the grantee. NRCS designates an NRCS employee as a Technical Contact for each grant award. Technical contacts provide normal management activities during the project, such as site visits, reviewing performance reports, financial reports, and audits to ensure that standards, objectives, terms, and conditions for the projects are accomplished, but will not be substantially involved in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

There is no pre-proposal process for this announcement. All standard forms necessary for CIG application submission are included in the Grants.gov application package.

A. Content and Format

Applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS

or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application. Applicants must submit a single copy of the application in the following format:

- Each page must be on numbered, letter-sized (8½" x 11") paper utilizing a white background that has one-inch margins; and
- The text of the application must be typed, single spaced, black, and in a font no smaller than 12-point.

Applications that are incomplete or fail to comply with the required content and formatting requirements will not be considered for funding.

1. *Executive summary (1 page maximum).*

On a single page, provide the applicant entity name, duration of project in months, amount of Federal funding requested, amount of non-Federal cost-share/match funding committed, and project title. Identify the category of the project, the geographic location, and describe in non-technical language the issue or problem, the objectives to address the issue or problem, the innovative approach to be employed (including the role of participating partners, if applicable), how impact will be quantified, and the predicted benefits or deliverables of the project. The executive summary must include both a technical and administrative contact for the application (if both are the same person, please note this). NRCS will use the technical and administrative contacts identified as the primary applicant contacts. A sample executive summary is included in the application package on grants.gov.

2. *Standard application form.*

"Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance" is included as part of the application package posted on Grants.gov. Instructions for completing the form are also included.

3. *Project description (15-page maximum).*

The project description must include the following information in order. A sample project description is included in the application package on grants.gov.:

a. Project background: Describe the issue or problem, and the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success of the project.
b. Project objectives: Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose and goals. Describe how the project is innovative. If the project is addressing a NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, or proposing a new standard, please state this explicitly and identify the standard.
c. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project.
d. Geographic location and size of project or project area: Identify the geographic location and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map if possible.
e. EQIP eligible producer participation: Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers involved in the project, and describe the type and extent of their involvement.

f. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Applicants should develop their timelines based on a project start date of September 30, 2018.
g. Project management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed, including a list/description of project partners. Include a list of key technical and administrative personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Resumes and CVs are not required, if submitted they will count towards the 15-page maximum.
h. Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and approve payments. The proposal must include a set of technical deliverables designed to evaluate the performance and broader applicability of the project. In addition to project-specific deliverables, selected grantees are responsible for:
    1. Participation in at least two events (e.g., conference or workshop) during the grant period where the grantee presents on the activities of the project, with prior notification of the NRCS technical contact;
        A. The first event will be for the public sharing the progress of the CIG and how this innovation will result in additional or improved conservation;
        B. The final event will be a PIA-NRCS conference call from the NRCS State Office in Honolulu sharing the final products/innovation from the CIG;
    2. Innovative conservation products which streamline conservation activates such as:
        A. Monitoring Tools
        B. Evaluation Tools
        C. Assessment Tools
        D. Record Keeping
    3. Technology Transfer
        A. A final fact sheet for use in public settings;
        B. A final technical report of the conservation innovation product being delivered to NRCS.
i. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits derived from the project. Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; Historically Underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and/or municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. Describe how the results will be communicated to others via outreach activities. Forecast the lasting impact of project results.
j. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology or procedures used to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project.
k. Graphics--including pictures, charts, graphs and similar items--count towards the 15-page maximum.
l. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, do not count towards the 15-page maximum.

4. *Assessment of environmental impacts.*

If implementation of the proposal is anticipated to have physical, chemical, or biological impacts on the environment, please describe the impacts and their extent. The description of the potential environmental impacts must address both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. The length of the description should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the natural environmental resources impacted directly, indirectly, or cumulatively. Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc. Natural environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other resources protected by law, regulation, executive order, and agency policy. NRCS may choose not to approve funding for projects that may result in unacceptable adverse environmental impacts.

Every funded CIG project that involves ground disturbance activities is subject to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). NRCS must complete an environmental review of each awarded project before project commencement. Applicants may be required to prepare and pay for preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), should the environmental review find that an EA or EIS is required.

In addition, a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review and consultation by NRCS State or area office with consulting parties (such as the pertinent State Historic Preservation Officer and federally recognized Indian Tribes) may be required prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact cultural resources. NHPA Section 106, its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800), and other related authorities, require Federal agencies to determine if a project has the potential to cause an effect to historic properties and, if so, if they are adverse and how the effects may be addressed. The NHPA review and compliance in accordance with Section 106 of NHPA and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 must be completed by NRCS and applicants may be required to pay for any cultural resource surveys needed for NRCS to assess CIG project effects. More information on the applicants role in NHPA Section 106 process can be found at this website.

5. *Budget Information, (12-page maximum).*

The budget portion of the application consists of two parts, as described below:

a. Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs. The SF-424A is included as part of the application package posted on Grants.gov.

b. Detailed Budget Narrative. Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. Statement(s) of work for any subcontractors and consultants must be included as part of the application. The budget narrative should include both the Federal funds requested and the applicant's matching funds.

The format of the budget narrative can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc. It should be readable on letter-size, printable pages. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the reviewers can readily understand what expenses are incurred to support the project.

Note: Please include $3,000 in the budget for project travel required by NRCS. These funds are required and can be part of the Federal portion, the applicant's matching funds, or a combination of both. Any additional travel required for completion of the project must be considered additional to this $3,000.

6. *Funding Restrictions*

CIG 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:

1. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
2. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant (preaward costs);
3. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
4. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
5. Compensation for injuries to persons or damage to property arising out of project activities;
6. 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
7. 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.

This list is not exhaustive. For more details, refer to 2 CFR 200.

7. *Indirect (F&A) costs.*

In order to be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, the NFE must either 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired or 2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). In order to qualify for the de minimis rate, the NFE must have never had a NICRA. A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than $35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the de minimis rate.

NFEs with a NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. Costs from both the Federal and non-Federal shares are used. The resultant total amount of indirect costs is entered in Section B, Row J, of the SF-424A (Budget Information). A NFE may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at their sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the NRCS. If voluntarily reduced or waived, the NFE may choose to apply any unrecovered indirect costs as part of their cost share or match. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount which could have been charged to the Federal award under the non-

Federal entity's approved negotiated indirect cost rate (2 CFR 200.306(c)). A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. If the NFE does not have a current NICRA, indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA.

NFEs that are eligible for the de minimus rate who already have a de minimis rate agreement must use the rate and base specified in the agreement, which is modified total direct costs (MTDC) as defined by 2 CFR 200.68. Note, that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base the rate is applied to. See the instructions for completing the SF-424A "Budget Information" form and budget narrative in section IV below for additional details. A copy of the applicant's de minimus rate agreement must be provided with the application. If an NFE is eligible to use the de minimis rate, but does not have a de minimis rate agreement, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10% of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed at the same time the grant agreement is. Applicants wishing to use the de minimis rate must submit a signed statement certifying that the entity 1) has never had a NICRA previously and 2) specifically request a de minimis rate agreement.

8. *Cost Share or Matching Funds.*

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost. CIG recipients must provide a non-Federal funding match or cost-share at least equal to the amount of Federal funding requested. For example, if an applicant requests $50,000 in CIG funding, at least $50,000 in non-Federal cost-share or matching funds must be committed by the applicant.

Matching funds may be committed by the applicant, project partners, or both and can be a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Examples of in-kind contributions include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions identified in the project budget must be quantifiable, verifiable, and necessary to accomplish program activities.

Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. Applications must include written verification of commitments of cost sharing or matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Cost sharing or matching funds must meet the criteria stated at 2 CFR 200.306 and be valued in accordance with 2 CFR 200.306(d). Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions is located at 2 CFR 200.306.

Applicant matching funds are included in the budget narrative. For matching funds offered by project partners, a separate commitment letter is required for each cash and/or in-kind match contribution. Commitment letters must be signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the contributor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar amount of the contribution; and (5) a statement that the contributor commits to furnish the contribution during the grant period. A sample commitment letter is included as part of the application package on grants.gov.

Applications without signed written commitments are deemed incomplete.

The value of applicant contributions to the project is established according to Federal cost principles. Applicants should refer to 2 CFR 200.306 for additional guidance on matching funds, in-kind contributions, and allowable costs.

9. *Declaration of previous CIG projects involvement and past performance.*

A) If the applicant has previously received a NRCS CIG award:

Identify the current or past CIG award(s). Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous project(s). For any project(s) that are either in progress or have been completed within the past 2 years, indicate whether the project was managed successfully, and whether the desired outcomes of the project(s) were met, by providing information on the following:

1. Expenditure of CIG funding (i.e., the balance of grant funds currently remaining for active projects or that were unspent in a completed project); and
2. Describe compliance with grant requirements, including the planned deliverables, timeline, terms and conditions, and timely reporting (e.g., semiannual progress reports, financial status reports, final report).

B) If the applicant has not received a CIG award but has received other Federal or non-Federal assistance related to this application:

Identify the source of funding supporting work related to this application. Describe your history of successfully managing these funds and carrying out the requirements related to the funding agreement(s).

10. *Certifications.*

All proposals must include the following signed certification forms, which are available at Grants.gov:

- AD-3030 Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. Must be submitted if entity is a corporate non-profit or for-profit corporation as indicated in the applicants SAM registration.
- AD-3031 Assurances Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. Must be submitted if entity is a corporate non-profit or for-profit corporation as indicated in the applicants SAM registration.
- SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs. Must be completed by all applicants.
- Certification Regarding Lobbying. Must be completed by all applicants.

11. *Letters of support.*

Letters of support for the project from individuals or entities that are not project partners may be submitted and should be placed at the very end of the application package.

12. *Risk Review Documentation*

NRCS may request additional documentation from selected applicants in order to evaluate the financial, management, and performance risk posed by awardees as required by 2 CFR 200.205. Based on this risk review, NRCS may apply to a CIG award special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed.

13. *Fact Sheet (maximum 2 pages)*
All applicants must fill out this template, which will be used by NRCS in public settings should the application be selected for an award. The fact sheet template is available on grants.gov as part of the application package.

B. DUNS and SAM Numbers

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. NRCS 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 NRCS is ready to make a Federal award, NRCS 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.

NFEs must obtain a DUNS and register in SAM prior to registering with Grants.gov. NFEs are strongly encouraged to apply early for their DUNS number and SAM registration.

1. **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. CIG 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. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
2. **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/portal/public/SAM/. Please allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration.

C. How to Submit an Application

Applications must be submitted:

- Through the Grants.gov web portal; and
- By emailing a pdf copy of the full application to adam.reed@hi.usda.gov.

Submitting a CIG application through www.grants.gov requires completing a variety of tasks and steps. There are also several preliminary registration steps before the applicant can submit the

application. To register in the grants.gov system, go to www.grants.gov, click on "Applicants", then click on "Get Registered."

If you have completed a prior grants.gov application, you may already have completed the registration process.

Please allow sufficient time to register in grants.gov, and for possible system delays.

Below are instructions for accessing the forms necessary to complete an application in grants.gov:

- Go to www.grants.gov. Information about submitting an application using grants.gov is located on the grants.gov website, along with supplementary materials.
- Select the "Applicants" tab.
- Select the "Apply for Grants" heading.
- Click on "Get Application Package." Follow all steps.
- Provide the "Funding Opportunity Number" or return to the "Search Grants" section.
- All necessary forms are included within the grants.gov "Application Package."

Please note that the www.grants.gov electronic application submission component has been updated. The updated component is called Workspace. Workspace is the standard way for organizations or individuals to apply for federal grants in Grants.gov. Workspace allows an applicant grant team to simultaneously access and edit different forms within an application. In addition, the forms can be filled out online or as a PDF.

Please allow extra time to register in the new Workspace. An overview of Workspace can be viewed through grants.gov (WEBINAR - Getting Started with Workspace: Become a Workspace Wizard).

Applications not received through both avenues by the submission due date and time are not accepted for consideration. The emailed application must be assembled into one pdf file document in the order specified in section IV, part A. All applications must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described in this announcement. Grants.gov provides instructions for submitting the required application items through the portal. Application receipt date and time will be determined by the respective system-generated documentation of receipt date and time (Grants.gov provides date and time stamps for all proposals submitted through the portal).

NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grants.gov or emailed submissions. If you encounter issues with Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov help desk at (800) 518-4726 or support@grants.gov. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application submission through Grants.gov.

D. Due Date

Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time on May 10th, 2018. Application receipt date and time will be determined by the respective system-generated documentation of

receipt date and time (Grants.gov provides date and time stamps for all proposals submitted through the portal). The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application receipt.

E. Acknowledgement of Submission

Grants.gov provides receipt of application submissions. NRCS acknowledges receipt of proposals received by the submission deadline via email. An applicant who does not receive such an email acknowledgement within 15 business days of the submission deadline, but believes the proposal was submitted in within submission deadline, must contact the CIG program within 30 business days of the submission deadline. Failure to do so may result in the proposal not being considered.

F. Withdrawal

Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before award execution. Written notice of withdrawal must be signed by the applicant or an authorized representative.

G. Patents, Inventions, and Copyrights

Allocation of rights to patents, inventions, and copyrights shall be in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States must normally manufacture it domestically. With regard to copyright, the grant recipient may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed, or for which ownership was acquired, under an award. USDA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for Federal purposes and to authorize others to do so.

All tools produced must meet the accessibility of Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) requirements as specified in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d) as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220). Specifically, subsection 508(a)(1) requires that when the Federal government procures EIT, it must allow Federal employees and individuals of the public with disabilities comparable access to and use of information and data that is provided to Federal employees and individuals of the public without disabilities. All EIT that is subject to the 36 CFR 1194 standards will have a Section 508 acceptance test and will be validated upon acceptance. All maintenance for EIT that requires upgrades, modifications, installations, and purchases will adhere to the Section 508 standards and 36 CFR 1194. Contact the CIG program contact with specific questions with regard to the applicability of this section.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Proposals will be initially screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this announcement. Incomplete or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition prior to initiation of the peer review process.

C. Application Evaluation Criteria

Risk Criteria Evaluation

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.205, NRCS will review risk posed by applicants. This screening process includes:

1) Confirming the NFE does not have an active "exclusion" in SAM precluding it from being eligible for recipient of an award (i.e., suspended or debarred; see 2 CFR Part 180 and 7 CFR Part 417).
2) Confirming the NFE does not have an adverse information located in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS).

NRCS may request additional documentation from selected applicants in order to evaluate the financial, management, and performance risk posed by awardees as required by 2 CFR 200.205. Based on this risk review, NRCS may apply to a CIG award special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed.

Merit Criteria Evaluation

The technical peer review panels use the following criteria, using a 100 point scale, to evaluate applications:

1. Purpose, Approach, and Goals (25 points)
   a. The purpose of the project is clearly explained and the rationale is explicit for why the innovative approach or technology is needed.
   b. The design and implementation of the project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology;
   c. The project outcomes are stated, measurable, and likely to be achieved; and
   d. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and a significant level of improvement will be achieved.
2. Innovative Technology or Approach (25 points)
   a. The project is innovative (national, regionally, and/or local in nature) according to the criteria for innovation in the CIG funding announcement; and
   b. The project addresses one or more of the priority categories listed in the CIG funding announcement.
3. Project Management (20 points)
   a. Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable;
   b. Project staff has necessary technical and administrative expertise;
   c. The budget is adequately explained and justified, and expenses allowable; and
   d. Proposal includes robust partnership with entities that can substantially assist with delivery of project outcomes.
4. Benefits and Transferability (30 points)
   a. The potential for producers and landowners to use or participate in the innovative technology(s) or approach(s);
   b. The potential for NRCS to benefit from the innovative approach or methods, including (if appropriate) the development of materials such as technical standards, technical notes, handbooks, technology tools, etc.;
   c. The potential to transfer the approach or technology to a broader audience or to other geographic areas or agricultural sectors; and

d. The potential for successful transfer, through planned project activities, to Historically Underserved producers and communities.

Cost sharing will be treated as an eligibility criterion as described in this section of the notice, and will not be considered in the evaluation.

D. Review and Selection Process

Proposals that pass the initial screening are then evaluated using a two part process:

- Technical peer review panels composed of subject matter experts evaluate the proposals. Proposals are evaluated against the CIG Proposal Evaluation Criteria listed here. The technical peer review panels forward their recommendations to the State Conservationist.
- The State Conservationist makes the final award selections based on the recommendations of the peer review panels.

E. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NRCS anticipates announcing CIG selections through a USDA press release no later than June 15th, 2018. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 30, 2018.

VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notices

Successful Applicants
A successful applicant can expect to receive official notification by email from the State CIG Staff following selection. It is NRCS practice is to 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. The notice of Federal award form (ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency official is the only authorizing document, and will be provided electronically to the applicant's authorized official.

Unsuccessful Applicants
Applicants whose proposals are not selected for funding will receive NRCS's evaluation of the significant weaknesses or deficiencies in the applicant's proposal. This evaluation will be emailed to the technical and administrative contacts listed in the proposal within 90 days of the announcement of CIG selections. Please do not contact NRCS requesting an evaluation prior to the end of this 90-day period.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and NRCS' General Terms And Conditions Grants And Cooperative Agreements. A copy of the General Terms And Conditions Grants And Cooperative Agreements document may be obtained by contacting the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII below.

C. Reporting

Reporting will follow the NRCS General Terms And Conditions Grants And Cooperative Agreements, but will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, quarterly financial status reports, and final reports.

VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT:

The NRCS CIG staff will be the agency contact for answering questions or helping with problems while this funding opportunity is open.

Phone: 808-300-2938
Email: adam.reed@hi.usda.gov
USDA-NRCS
300 Ala Moana Blvd, Room 4-118
Honolulu HI 96850

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

CIG proposals are considered to be confidential information. Proposals 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 §1.12 requires the NRCS to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information, requires NRCS and to consult with applicants regarding the releasability of their records.

B. National Component

The USDA NRCS CIG program has two components – the "National Competition" and the "State Competition." This announcement is for the "State Competition" component. More information about the National Competition is available here.

C. Notice to Applicants

The Federal Government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of this announcement. Only authorized federal officials can bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds.

Signed this 12th day of February, 2018 in Honolulu, Hawaii

TRAVIS L. THOMASON
Director
Pacific Islands Area

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2018 APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

Important: Proposals Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered

☐ **1. Project Executive Summary**— On a single page, provide the applicant entity name, duration of project in months, amount of Federal funding requested, amount of non-Federal match committed, and project title. Identify the category of the project, the geographic location, and describe in non-technical language the issue or problem, the objectives to address the issue or problem, the innovative approach to be employed (including the role of participating partners, if applicable), how impact will be quantified, and the predicted benefits or deliverables of the project. The executive summary must include both a technical and administrative contact for the proposal (if both are the same person, please note this). These contacts will serve as the primary contacts for CIG staff

☐ **2. Application Forms (in grants.gov application package)**

☐ **3. Project Description:** (15 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)

a. Project background
b. Project objectives
c. Project methods
d. Geographic location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
e. EQIP eligible producer participation
f. Project action plan and timeline
g. Project management
h. Project deliverables/products
i. Benefits or results expected and transferability
j. Project evaluation

☐ **4. Assessment of Environmental Impacts**

☐ **5. Budget Information:** (12 pages maximum)

a. Complete SF-424A
b. Detailed budget narrative

☐ **6. Indirect Costs:** Submit documentation of federally approved indirect cost rate or indirect cost rate proposal if claiming indirect costs.

☐ **7. Matching:** Submit written signed verification of commitments of matching support from non-Federal third parties. Include both cash and in-kind commitments.

☐ **8. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement and Past Performance**

☐ **9. Certifications:** Complete all required certifications.

☐ **10. Letters of Support:** Include entity name, location and role.

☐ ****DUNS and SAM Registration**

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USDA
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Or by email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities and you wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

Equal Employment Opportunity Data Posted Pursuant to the No Fear Act -
This is the reporting page for the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (NO FEAR Act), Public Law 107-174.