

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Texas State Office

ACTION: NOTICE

Accepting applications to establish community and pollinator gardens and seasonal high tunnels through the Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NRCS-TX-UCP-18-01

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE: Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER: 10.902

DATES: Applications must be received by NRCS before 12:00 pm EST, December 15, 2017. Late applications will not be considered.

SUMMARY: The NRCS - Texas State Office, an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is seeking support from and opportunities to partner with likeminded natural resource conservation partners. The overall intent of this solicitation is to solicit partnerships to help enhance the implementation of key conservation objectives and priorities outlined further in this document.

Proposals will be accepted from eligible entities for projects located in Texas. NRCS anticipates that the total amount awarded under this announcement in Federal fiscal year 2018 will be approximately \$150,000. Proposals are requested from eligible non- profit organizations, independent school districts, institutions of higher education, and federally recognized Native American tribal governments for competitive consideration of grant awards for one year in duration.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The Texas State Conservationist reserves the right not to fund any or all applications. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for single year applications submitted by eligible entities.

ADDRESSES: Applications will be accepted via Grants.gov, email, or mail. Visit www.grants.gov/apply and follow the instructions for applying via Grants.gov. Emailed applications should be emailed to: bertha.venegas@tx.usda.gov. Applications sent via express mail, overnight courier service, or the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, Bertha T. Venegas, State Outreach Coordinator, 136 Old San Antonio Road, Suite 302, Boerne, Texas 78006.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Program Contact

Bertha T. Venegas, State Outreach Coordinator
USDA-NRCS
136 Old San Antonio Rd., Suite 302
Boerne, Texas 78006
Office: 830-249-3508 extension 103
Email: bertha.venegas@tx.usda.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Public Law 110-246; Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Section 1237, Public Law 99-198, 16 U.S.C 3831-3835a. Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, N/A Stat. N/A, 16 U.S.C 590 a-f. Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Section 2602, Public Law 110-246; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Section 2502, Public Law 107-171; Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Section 387, Public Law 104-127, 110 Stat. 888, 16 U.S.C 3836a. Subtitle I of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 as amended by section 2401 of the Agricultural Act of 2014.

CFDA 10.902 – Soil and Water Conservation (CTA): Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, N/A Stat. N/A, 16 U.S.C 590 a-f.

B. Overview

The Texas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with the people of Texas for the purpose of helping bring about the conservation and sustainable use of land, water, wildlife, and related resources.

The Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project is an effort to challenge community organizations, educational institutions and Indian tribes to establish community and school gardens across Texas. The simple act of planting a garden can help unite neighbors in a common effort and inspire locally-led solutions to challenges facing our state. Challenges that can be addressed with locally-led solutions can be diverse in an urban setting. Addressing hunger with an urban garden can bring communities together and initiate other positive outcomes for people. Pollinator habitat planned with urban gardens can provide an increase in harvest potential while providing food and habitat for declining insect communities in Texas.

As part of the USDA's Urban Agriculture toolkit, the Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project will provide technical and financial assistance to eligible entities to establish gardens for food production and for attracting and maintaining monarch butterflies and the establishment of seasonal high tunnels to extend the growing season of fruits and vegetables.

Conservation entities are invited to apply for NRCS assistance with the following key conservation objectives:

1. Provide learning experiences in natural resources conservation to urban communities.
2. Address food deserts.
3. Create urban gardening projects that develop urban properties into vegetable

- production sites.
4. Improve access to healthy, affordable food at a local level.
 5. Leverage non-Federal resources to achieve positive natural resources conservation outcomes.

C. Requirements

1. Eligible project grants for community gardens and seasonal high tunnels must be located in one of the following counties: **Bexar, Brazos, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Galveston, Harris, Hidalgo, Jefferson, Lubbock, Maverick, McLennan, Nueces, Polk, Potter, Tarrant, Travis, Webb and Wichita.**
2. Preference will be given to Monarch Butterfly gardens in the following counties because of their strategic location within the Monarch butterfly's flight paths during their spring and fall migrations: **Atascosa, Bastrop, Bell, Bexar, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Comal, Dallas, Ellis, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Hays, Johnson, Kaufman, Kendall, Kerr, Lee, Limestone, Llano, Navarro, McLennan, Palo Pinto, Parker, Tarrant, Travis, Williamson, and Wilson.**
3. Entities must have and maintain control of the land where the garden and/or seasonal high tunnel will be established for the duration of the agreement.
4. The applicant is responsible for maintaining the garden and/or the seasonal high tunnel once it is installed for the duration of the agreement.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

The NRCS anticipates that the total amount of funding available to be awarded under this announcement will be approximately **\$150,000** in Federal fiscal year 2018. Selected recipients will be notified by email. All awards are subject to the availability of funds appropriated by Congress.

The NRCS has funding available for the Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project as follows:

1. Grants up to \$4,000 will be available for a community garden. Financial resources are to be utilized for garden supplies which can include tools, seed, fertilizer, soil and soil additives, irrigation materials and garden materials. Technical assistance by NRCS staff will be available to help determine site, slope, placement, etc.
2. Grants up to \$3,000 will be available for Monarch butterfly pollinator gardens. NRCS will provide technical assistance based on pollinator specifications.
3. Grants up to \$6,500 will be available for construction of a seasonal high tunnel. NRCS specifications for the construction of a Seasonal High Tunnel will be followed.
4. Grant applicants may request funding for a combination choice of the community garden, pollinator garden and seasonal high tunnel.

5. No matching funds are required.

Any grant funds received by the recipient will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and NRCS' **GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS**. A copy of this document may be obtained by contacting the Agency Contacts listed in Section VI.

Subject to the availability of funds, the resulting agreements are expected to fund single year projects. Applicants should submit budget applications that fully describe funding requests. Subject to the availability of funds, extensions may be granted by unilateral decision of the Government.

III. SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for this funding opportunity can be found on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). All standard forms necessary for application submission are posted on the following Web sites:

1. [Grants.gov – Forms Repository](https://www.grants.gov)

B. Applicant eligibility

Applicants must be a non-profit organization, independent school district, institution of higher education, or federally recognized Native American tribal government, each capable of providing support in the State of Texas.

C. Matching Funds Requirements

There is no designated match requirement for these agreements. However, proposals will be evaluated in part on the relative contribution of non-Federal resources to the project. See Section IV of this announcement to see how matching funds are weighted in the review and selection process. Non-Federal funds may be derived from any combination of cash, non-cash and in-kind sources. Proposals claiming matching funds must ensure funds are secured at time of application.

Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Additional information about matching funds can be found at 2 CFR 200.

D. Applying for assistance – Content and format

Applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project/workshop described in their application. Applicants must submit only one original copy of the application in the following format:

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

Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete and/or noncompliant applications will not be considered.

1. **Application Form:** (SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each application. SF 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](http://www.grants.gov/forms-repository).
2. **Proposal Description:** [Two (2)-page maximum] Applicants must submit a description including the information below:
 - a. Project title;
 - b. Project director/contact name, and contact information (including address, email, and telephone number);
 - c. Project objectives (purpose and goals);
 - d. Project geographic area/location (where application activities will take place);
 - e. Project proposed activities; and
 - f. Project deliverables and benefits.
3. **Budget Information:** [Four (4)-page maximum.] The budget portion of the proposal consists of the two parts described below:
 - a. **SF 424A Budget Information- Non-Construction Programs:** Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds. This form is the summary budget for the project. If there is a desire for the applicant to reach a long term partnership through this announcement, please indicate this using the SF 424A to indicate multi-year funding needs.
 - b. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed narrative in support of the form SF 424A budget for the project for the overall proposal period. Applicants must prepare this document to identify budget needs. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. Show all funding sources and itemized costs by the following line items on the budget form; personnel costs should include documentation supporting hourly rates. Equipment, supplies and materials need to be itemized with pricing data. Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds. The budget narrative should support the Federal funds requested and the applicant's matching funds (if applicable). The breakdown of the Federal share and matching funds should be shown separately as in the SF 424A, not combined.

Note: For further instructions on filling out the SF 424A Budget information, go to the following link:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html>

4. **Indirect Costs:**
 - a. Applicants wishing to claim indirect costs must have a federally approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement included in the application package.
 - b. Entities that have never established a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement may request, as part of the application, a de minimus rate of 10 percent applied to Modified Total Direct Costs
5. **Certifications:** All applications must include the document: SF 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. Applicant, by signing and submitting this application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following CFR:

- a. 2 CFR Part 417, Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension
 - b. 2 CFR Part 418, New Restrictions on Lobbying
 - c. 2 CFR Part 421, Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)
6. **Required Forms:** The following forms (referenced in above sections) are required:
- a. SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance
 - b. SF 424A Budget Information – Non-construction Programs
 - c. SF 424B Assurances – Non-construction Programs

These can be obtained from the issuing officer or the web sites listed below: [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) – [Forms Repository](#)

7. **Additional Pre-award Requirements:** The following items must be obtained prior to entering into an agreement with the Federal Government, but do not need to be provided with the application, unless applying via Grants.gov. Grants.gov requires a DUNS and SAM registration. Applicants are encouraged to apply early for their Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)/System for Award Management (SAM) number.
- a. **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. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
 - b. **SAM:** Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contract Registration/Federal Register, Online Registrations 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. Selected applicants must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during the period of performance of the Federal award

E. How to Submit an Application

Applications will be accepted via Grants.gov, email, or mail. Visit www.grants.gov/apply and follow the instructions for applying via Grants.gov. Emailed applications should be emailed to: bertha.venegas@tx.usda.gov. Applications sent via express mail, overnight courier service, or the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, Bertha T. Venegas, State Outreach Coordinator, 136 Old San Antonio Road, Suite 302, Boerne, Texas 78006.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or Web site problems related to Grants.gov or emailed submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process or send their email in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems.

F. Due Date

Applications must be received **no later than 12:00 p.m. EST on December 15, 2017**. Late applications will not be considered. The applicant assumes the risk of delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early to ensure

timely receipt by NRCS.

G. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via email. An applicant who does not receive such an email acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission, but believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below within 30 days of submission deadline. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered.

H. Withdrawal

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

I. Funding Restrictions

The funds granted through this announcement may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing via the funding instrument 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;
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.

Applicants should refer to 2 CFR 200 for additional guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

IV. APPLICATION REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Review and Selection Process

Initially, all application packages will be reviewed to confirm that applicants are eligible recipients. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this announcement. Applications will be evaluated against the specific objectives and requirements identified in Section I of this announcement.. Business evaluations are performed by the grants and agreements or contract specialist. Technical reviews are performed by the program manager. Failure to identify the specific opportunity title may result in a determination of ineligibility.

An NRCS staff selection review committee will evaluate complete proposals based on the Special Award Selection Factors below (120 points possible), make a recommendation to the NRCS Program Manager, with the final decision for selections made by the NRCS Texas State Conservationist.

B. Special Award Selection Factors

1. (0 to 10 points) The extent to which the proposal supports one or more of these conservation objectives:
 - Soil Health
 - Organics
 - Seasonal high tunnels
2. (0 to 20 points) The extent which the proposal places emphasis to achieve any of the following:
 - Enhance community access to technical assistance to address food deserts.
 - Create urban gardening projects that develop urban properties into vegetable production sites.
 - Leverage non-Federal and non-government resources to achieve positive natural resources conservation outcomes.
3. (0 to 15 points) Partner match contribution.
4. (0 to 10 points) Evidence in the proposal that the design and implementation of project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
5. (0 to 10 points) Measurability of project outcomes.
6. (0 to 10 points) Potential for successful completion.
7. (0 to 10 points) Project timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
8. (0 to 15 points) Project staff has technical expertise needed.
9. (0 to 10 points) Budget is adequately explained and justified.
10. (0 to 10 points) Project benefits the Historically Underserved, Veterans, beginning or new farmers, or community based organizations comprised of or representing these groups.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants will be notified of their application status within approximately 30 days from the deadline date. Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification. Award dates will be determined by the availability of funds and NRCS workloads. Proposals should have flexible start dates with timelines shown relative to the execution of a grant agreement.

D. Unsuccessful Applications

Applicants whose applications are not selected for funding will be notified of their status within 30 days of the announcement of selections.

V. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive official notification from the USDA NRCS Texas State Office. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the technical review process and financial review. The official notice will also indicate the need to work with the administrative contact to develop an agreement (under Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977). Notification for selection is not an authorization to begin performance. A Notice of Grant and Agreement Award (NRCS-ADS-093) signed by the Texas State Conservationist and the selected recipient is the authorizing document. NRCS will not distribute any funds, and grantees cannot begin work to be funded under the award until the

parties execute the authorizing document.

Note: Appropriations Restrictions: Awards made under this solicitation are subject to the provisions contained in the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. No. 112-55), Division A, Sections 738 and 739, regarding corporate felony convictions and corporate Federal tax delinquencies.

B. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Applicants should be aware that some or all of the information submitted in their application may be subject to public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act. Applicants are advised to mark confidential information, such as proprietary information, to prevent disclosure.

C. Other Requirements

Selected applicants will be required to comply with 2 CFR 200, and with the NRCS'GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, A copy of this document may be obtained by contacting the Agency Contacts listed in Section VI.

VI. AGENCY CONTACTS

Program Contact

Bertha T. Venegas
State Outreach Coordinator
136 Old San Antonio Road, Suite 302
Boerne, TX 78006
Office: 830-249-3508 extension 103
bertha.venegas@tx.usda.gov

VII. OTHER INFORMATION

The USDA prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign and mail the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form \(PDF\)](#), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at:

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.

Signed the ____ day of October in Temple, Texas.

Salvador

Salinas

Salvador Salinas

Texas State Conservationist

Natural Resources Conservation Service

 Digitally signed by Salvador
Salinas
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