Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) Pilot Projects Frequently Asked Questions Document

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General

Q: What support will USDA be able to offer applicants during the application process?

A: USDA is happy to field any general, high-level inquiries that grantees may have regarding the application process. However, USDA is unable to offer specific guidance or advice on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal. In an effort to provide unbiased support to all those interested in the funding opportunity, USDA will refrain from providing advice that cannot otherwise be obtained through the resources that have been made publicly available through the funding opportunity on Grants.gov.

Q: I am searching for the link to the FY2022 funding opportunity webinar and cannot find it. Where is it located?

A: The FY2022 webinar for the CFWR Opportunity is located at this link: https://youtu.be/61kOKn2rzUw

Q: Is this funding opportunity only available to organizations that participated in the webinar?

A: No. CFWR is open to all of the eligible entities listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO).

Q: Where can I get more help if I still have questions about the Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) Pilot Projects program or application?

A: Questions can be submitted to melanie.krizmanich@usda.gov with a copy to FPAC.BC.GAD@usda.gov.

Q: What are the legislative authorities guiding this program?

A: The Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreement pilot program is authorized by Section 222 of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, as added by Section 12302 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, 7 U.S.C. 6923. Funding was made available by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2.

Q: Who is the awarding agency for this grant program?

A: USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the awarding agency for this grant opportunity and is leading the USDA-wide Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP).

Q: What is the mission of OUAIP?

A: The Office's mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including -

- community gardens and farms;
- rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production, and green walls;
- indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical technology farms;
- hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic farm facilities; and
- other innovations in agricultural production.

Q: What is the purpose of this funding opportunity?

A: The purpose of CFWR is to provide assistance through a cooperative agreement to municipalities, counties, local governments, or city planners in the United States to carry out planning and implementation activities that will-

- generate compost;
- increase access to compost for agricultural producers;
- reduce reliance on, and limit the use of, fertilizer;
- improve soil quality;
- encourage waste management and permaculture business development;
- increase rainwater absorption;
- reduce municipal food waste; and
- divert food waste from landfills.

Q: Is this a one-time funding opportunity or will there be future opportunities for this program?

A: NRCS cannot provide an answer regarding funding beyond fiscal year 2022 at this time. Approximately $10.2 million is available for CFWR projects in fiscal year 2022.

Pilot Projects

Q: What are the program priorities?

A: Priority will be given for each of the following elements that are included in a project:

- Anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits for the targeted community;
- Incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners, school gardens, and producers;
- Integrate food waste reduction strategies, including innovative food recovery efforts such as, but not limited to, food gleaning, storage, and preservation techniques; and
- Include a robust plan that describes collaboration with multiple partners.

Q: Could you define “agricultural producer” as outlined in priority #2?

A. According to Part 530.20 of the NRCS Working Lands Conservation Programs Manual an agricultural producer is defined as:
B. Agricultural Producer.—To be considered an eligible producer, the applicant must be—
A person, legal entity, Indian Tribe, Alaska Native corporation, or joint operation with signature authority.
Engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or have an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment. Interest in the agricultural operation means one of the following:
(i) Owner or renter of the land in the agricultural operation;
(ii) Have an interest in the agricultural products, commodities, or livestock produced by the agricultural operation; or
(iii) Be a member of a legal entity or joint operation that either owns or rents land in the agricultural operation or has an interest in the agricultural products, commodities, or livestock produced by the agricultural operation.
Note: NRCS must not establish or use any additional criteria for determining that an applicant is an agricultural producer other than criteria that is cited in this section. Use of the following criteria to determine eligibility as an agricultural producer is prohibited:

- Type of operation or agricultural enterprise
- Size of operation
- Location of operation
- Income; profit or loss

Q: Must a project include all four components?

A: Pilot projects do not need to include all four components. However, projects that 1) anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits; 2) incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners; 3) integrate other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts; and 4) collaborate with multiple partners will receive higher consideration during the review process. Through these pilot projects, USDA is tapping into the creativity of communities across the nation to rethink the lifecycle of food in ways that minimize waste and maximize use.

Q: Can projects include food waste to energy facilities?

A: Yes. Project activities may include turning food waste into valuable resources including natural fertilizer, energy, and animal feed.

Q: How do you define community composting? Is there any consideration for size and scale within a project?

A: Composting can be small scale, large scale, and everything in between. Composting can take place at many levels – backyard, schoolyard, community, and regional – and in urban, suburban, and rural areas. There are many methods and sizes and no size or scale limit has been placed on CFWR Pilot Projects in FY 2022.

Q: Would incorporating a gleaning program be appropriate under CFWR?

A: Projects should include innovative solutions for increasing access to compost and reducing municipal food waste through the integration of food recovery efforts such as gleaning and donations, secondary markets like produce delivery services, feeding animals, value-added products, on-farm storage, and others.

Q: Do you have examples of projects that have been funded under this program?

A: Yes to find examples of projects from FY2020 and FY2021 please go to USDA's CFWR Project Cooperative Agreements page.

Q: How many projects can I lead or participate in?

A: An applicant organization may submit more than one application as long as each proposal is for a different project or is proposing different approaches. In the case of applications submitted as revisions or corrections to a previously submitted application under this NFO, the agency will consider the last application submitted prior to the established deadline.

Q: What is the expected funding amount for a CFWR Project?

A: The funding floor for this opportunity is $45,000.00, and the funding ceiling is $300,000. 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. These numbers refer to the total federal share, not any specific budget period.

Projects will be categorized and ranked according to "Project Level" where level is determined according to the federal funding amount requested:
Level 1: $45,000 - $90,000
Level 2: $90,001 - $300,000

Q: What is the time period for execution of a CFWR Project?

A: Projects must be 2 years (24 months) in duration. Applicants should expect the grant life cycle to include start up activities, execution, and close out activities (final financial and program reports, accounting, etc.). Applicants are expected to plan accordingly in order to achieve project deliverables within the grant period specified.

Q: What should I put as my project's start and end date on the SF-424?

A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity states that applicants should plan their project with a start date of September February 8, 2023. All projects must be two years in duration. Therefore, use a project start date of February 8, 2023 and a project end date of February 8, 2025 on your Application Form (SF-424).

Q: Can a composting facility on private land or at a private home be considered an eligible site?

A: No, individuals including residential sites are not eligible beneficiaries under this program.

Subawards

Q: Can I subaward to another entity?

A: Subawards are allowed ONLY if an eligible entity subawards to another eligible entity as defined by authorizing legislative language. Subawards can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other on the form SF-424A and include the detailed subaward budget and scope in the Budget Narrative.

Q: Can I subaward to a partner?

A: Partners that are not eligible to receive a CFWR Cooperative Agreement cannot receive subawards. However, a project partner that is essential to the proposed project may be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual on the form SF-424A or receive a stipend in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other on the form SF-424A. Remember to include details about the contractor and/or stipend budget and scope in the Budget Narrative. USDA will review applicant's budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable, and necessary.

Q: If CFWR is awarded to a local government agency, can other local government agencies in that city be awarded subawards?

A: Yes. Only eligible entities can receive a CFWR Project award and/or subaward. Eligible entities are a unit of local government in areas of the United States as defined by authorizing legislative language.

Q: What rules apply to subawards?

A: NRCS does not require subawards to be awarded through a competitive process. Subawards must be managed in accordance with 2 CFR 200.331.

Partnerships

Q: What is the partnership requirement for CFWR?

A: Priority will be given to an applicant that collaborates with multiple partners (2 or more) on their CFWR Pilot Project. Partners may be eligible and/or non-eligible entities.

Q: Who can be a partner?

A: Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities including farms, institutions of higher education (IHEs), academic institutions (including minority-serving colleges and universities), cooperative extension, public and private schools, and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and Federal, state, local and Tribal government entities to achieve project objectives and outcomes. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements for CFWR. Eligible and non-eligible entities may be partners on a project.

Q: Can you clarify how "partnership" is defined?

A: Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities including farms, institutions of higher education (IHEs), academic institutions (including minority-serving colleges and universities), cooperative extension, public and private schools, and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and Federal, state, local and Tribal government entities to achieve project objectives and outcomes. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements for CFWR. Eligible and non-eligible entities may be partners on a project.

Q: Are letters of intent required to verify partners?

A: Yes. Documentation verifying support from EACH collaborator/partner is required. The agency may conduct reference checks to ensure that organization(s) identified are supportive and involved with the project. Letters documenting collaboration are not included in the 15-page limit of the Project Proposal Narrative.

Q: In addition to the narrative, is an MOU or other documentation required to verify the partnership?

A: No. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the applicant and partner(s) is not required.

Q: If I would like to include a letter, who should the letters of intent or support be addressed to?

A: Write a letter to Brian Guse, Director, Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.

Q: My project partner would like to mail their letter of support to USDA directly, what is the mailing address?

A: Attach a copy of the letter(s) to your application in Grants.gov. Do not send a letter by postal mail or email.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of partners that can collaborate on a project?

A: There is no limit. Priority will be given to an applicant that collaborates with two or more partners on their CFWR Project.

Q: How might I find others to partner with?

A: USDA recommends reaching out to public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, including academic institutions and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and government entities in your area of the United States. The USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement may have useful tools and information to assist with partnership development. You can find more information at www.usda.gov/partnerships.

Matching Funds

Q: Are matching funds required?

A: Yes. This opportunity requires applicants to match 25 percent of total project costs. Federal funds may constitute no more than 75 percent of the total project budget. For example, if the total CFWR project budget is $90,000, the applicant would request $67,500 in USDA funds (75 percent of the budget) and must provide a match amount of $22,500 (25 percent of the budget).

Q: What if I'd like to provide more than the 25 percent matching requirement?

A: There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a match that exceeds the required amount. If the project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary.

Q: What types of match will be accepted?

A: Matching may be achieved with contributions of cash, supplies, services, third party in-kind contributions, or a combination of both from sources other than funds provided through this funding opportunity. Cash can be the recipients cash outlay, or cash donations from non-federal third parties or non-federal grants. In-kind can be the value of non-cash contributions typically in the form of value of personnel, goods, and services.

Q: Do I need all the required matching resources secured prior to submission of an application?

A: Yes, in order for NRCS to issue the award, the applicant must meet the requirement of 25 percent

matching by providing information that they have secured the matching funds and by providing confirmation that the matching funds will be available during the award period. The match funds do not need to be in hand at the time of submission, but they must be confirmed as committed or secured for the project at the time of application. In addition, documentation of match must be maintained for audit or review of the project.

Q: What type of paperwork to verify matching funds is required?

A: Applications must include written documentation showing the amounts and sources of match (including both cash and in-kind contributions). Signed letters verifying matching funds for each cash and/or in-kind resource is required. For third-party contributions, a separate letter of support is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization.

Q: What if I do not include the required match with my application?

A: Applications that do not include matching will be ineligible for an award.

Q: Can unrecovered indirect cost be used as part of the matching?

A: No. It is unallowable to use unrecovered indirect costs as part of the match requirement. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount that could have been charged to the Federal award under the potential recipients approved negotiated indirect cost rate.

Q: Can municipal labor and equipment be used as part of the match?

A: Yes. A local government can use its own personnel or equipment to construct a facility as part of its match.

Q: How do I calculate staff hours as matching funds?

A: You can use staff hours (salary and fringe benefits) as matching; however, the cost must actually be incurred during the period of performance of the award. Staff hours cannot be used to prepare your CFWR application and counted as match. For example, if the signed agreement is received on February 8, 2023, the match calculation should begin no earlier than February 8, 2023 and end at the project end date, which would be two years from the project start date.

Q: Can volunteer hours count as a match? How do you calculate the rate?

A: Yes. Volunteer services provided by third-party professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor may be counted as match, if the service is an integral and necessary part of an approved project. Rates for third-party volunteer services must be consistent with those paid for similar work by the non-Federal entity. In those instances, in which the required skills are not found in the non-Federal entity, rates must be consistent with those paid for similar work in the labor market in which the non-Federal entity competes for the kind of

services involved. In either case, paid fringe benefits that are reasonable, necessary, allocable, and otherwise allowable may be included in the valuation under 2 CFR § 200.306.

Q: Does USDA have tips for calculating or tracking volunteer time, if this type of match is used?

A: The use of volunteer time as match must include the establishment of a wage scale based upon the applicant's internal scale or prevailing wages in the area. Salaries and wages used in meeting the matching requirements on Federal awards must be supported in the same manner as salaries and wages claimed for reimbursement from Federal awards. Supporting documentation should include:

- Volunteer's name
- The dates, including year, the volunteer provided services
- The duration of time of services the volunteer provided to the program
- The volunteer's supervisor's signature
- The volunteer's signature
- The volunteer activity
- The rate applied to this activity
- Total valuation for the time period

Documentation should be maintained on a regular basis. Programs may choose to use a monthly timesheet for regular volunteers or daily time sheets for occasional volunteers.

Q: Can other grants that a local government receives be used as match?

A: Yes, if the funds are not Federal in nature and are relevant to the CFWR project.

Q: Are there any types of Federal funds including Farm Bill funds that can be used as a match for CFWR?

A: No. Federal funds cannot be used as match.

Q: Can a loan such as a zero-interest loan be used as match?

A: Yes, as long as the loan is not from the Federal government nor a Federally guaranteed loan.

Eligibility

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: The following entities in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) are eligible to apply for either a Planning Project grant or Implementation Project grant:

- City or township governments

- County governments
- Independent School Districts
- State-designated Indian Tribes
- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally-recognized tribal governments)
- Special district governments
- Municipal Governments

Q: Is a description of the eligible applicant types available?

A: The following terms for local government, nonprofit organization and Tribal government are from the Common Data Element Repository (CDER) Library. The CDER Library is the authoritative, Federal-wide source of financial and business terms, which is based on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Uniform Grants Guidance and the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act).

Terms defined by the Common Data Element Repository (CDER) Library

Entity Type	Description
Local government	Any unit of government within a state, including a county; borough; municipality; city; town; township; parish; local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937 (50 Stat. 888 (P.L. 75—412); special district; school district; intrastate district; council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law; and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state or local government.
Tribal Government	Governing bodies or governmental agencies of any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community (including any native village as defined in Section 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, 85 Stat. 688 (43 U.S.C. § 1602)) certified by the Secretary of the Interior as eligible for the special programs and services provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Q: Who is not eligible to apply?

A: Individuals such as a farmer or gardener, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations and small businesses, Federal agencies, state governments, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) including extension programs, and foreign applicants are not eligible to apply for a CFWR Project (list is not all inclusive). It is important to note that non-eligible entities can be partners on a project.

Q: Can Individuals apply?

A: No. Individuals such as a farmer, gardener, etc. are not eligible to apply for CFWR. USDA offers a variety of funding opportunities to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners finance their businesses. Please visit farmers.gov/fund for information about programs that individuals are eligible for.

Q: I'm an individual; however, I have my EIN and DUNS number. Does that make me eligible?

A: No. Individuals are not eligible applicants for this opportunity. However, individuals can be a partner.

Q: I am a for-profit entity, am I eligible for this grant?

A: No. For-profit organizations and small businesses are not eligible to receive a CFWR project. However, for-profit organizations and small businesses can be partners.

Q: Can Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) apply for this funding opportunity?

A: No. IHEs as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001 are not eligible. However, IHEs can be a partner.

Q: If an institution of higher learning or extension program is considered a state or local agency; can they apply as a state or local agency?

A: No.

Q: Can a fiscal agent/sponsor apply on my behalf?

A: The fiscal agent or sponsor would need to be an eligible entity to apply for and receive CFWR funds as defined by authorizing legislative language and an active participant/partner on project activities. The fiscal agent or sponsor cannot provide a subgrant to a non-eligible entity.

Q: If we have received an audit, do we need to attach our Single Audit report to the application or provide documentation that it has been uploaded into the Federal Audit Clearinghouse?

A: No.

Budget

Q: What does CFWR fund?

A: Project activities that may be funded under CFWR include the following:

- Materials, supplies and other costs related to the development and testing of strategies to

generate compost and reduce food waste.

- Purchase, lease or rental of special purchase equipment, vehicles, land, and building space.
- Activities that encourage composting and food waste reduction.
- Construction such as building a permanent or a non-permanent, temporary or moveable structure such as fencing.
- Contractual costs including labor such as a consultant, engineer or other professional service.
- Personnel costs.

Q: What can I include in my budget?

A: Budget expenses can include personnel and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractors, construction, other (direct costs), and indirect charges.

Q: What should I include in the Budget Narrative?

A: In a separate narrative titled Budget Narrative justify all budget items and costs. Detail how the totals on the form SF 424A and SF 424C (if applicable) were determined and provide a description for every allowable cost line item. Descriptions should demonstrate a clear connection between the costs and the proposed project. For example, the narrative should describe the positions, related duties, rates, and the percentage of time to be spent on the project, the number of travel trips, rates, and the average cost per trip, the types of supplies to be purchased, the specific equipment to be purchased, contractor tasks, etc. This is described in greater detail in the NFO.

Q: Does the Budget Narrative have a specific page length?

A: No. The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not have a length for the Budget Narrative.

Q: Does the page limit also include the Budget Narrative?

A: No. NRCS includes instructions for completing the Budget Narrative in the funding opportunity under the "Related Documents" tab in Grants.gov.

Q: Are there any mandatory costs not mentioned in the Notice of Funding Opportunity that should be added to the project proposal such as mandatory grantee training or gatherings?

A: No.

Q: What rules apply to local government in regard to procurement?

A: Local governments must use their own documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable local laws under 2 CFR 200.318 through 2 CFR 200.326.

Q: Can CFWR funds be used to develop strategies, feasibility studies?

A: Leading feasibility studies or surveys, conducting outreach such as marketing campaigns, hosting demonstrations, job trainings or workshops, or developing educational materials are allowable activities, if they are necessary to achieve the scope and objectives of the CFWR Project. Marketing

activities cannot be used to solely promote the local government and must directly relate to the purpose and priorities of the CFWR Project.

Q: Can you provide examples of allowable supplies?

A: Supplies or materials necessary to generate compost such as bin systems, static pile and aerated static piles, passive aeration, in-vessel systems, or vermicomposting are allowable. Supplies or materials needed to collect food waste, reduce food waste or participate in food recovery efforts are allowable. Supplies and materials needed to host a demonstration or training are allowable. This list is not exhaustive.

Q: What is the maximum allowable amount for supplies?

A: The per unit cost of each supply item requested in the project budget must be below $5,000 dollars. Any item with a per unit cost of $5,000 dollars or above and having a useful life of more than one year is considered equipment under 2 CFR § 200.33 and not a supply.

Q: Can a project budget include equipment like a large scale in-vessel composting machine? Is there a maximum allowable amount for equipment?

A: Yes. The purchase, lease or rental of special purpose equipment is allowable and there is no maximum threshold. The purchase, lease or rental of general purpose equipment is unallowable.

Q: What type of equipment is considered “general purpose equipment”?

A: General purpose equipment means equipment which is not limited to research, medical, scientific or other technical activities under 2 CFR § 200.48. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicle.

Q: How is "special purpose equipment" defined?

A: Special purpose equipment is defined as equipment that is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activity under 2 CFR § 200.89.

Q: Is construction an allowable cost?

A: Yes. CFWR funds may be used to construct, alter, or repair (including dredging, excavating, and painting) of buildings, structures, or other real property. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be considered a construction project. Funds can be used to expand or improve current compost operations or facilities.

Q: Can land or building space be purchased under a CFWR Project?

A: Yes. However, an applicant that submits a budget that includes the rental or lease of land or building space during the length of the grant (instead of purchase) will be given higher consideration as listed under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Is it true that equipment must be leased or rented and not purchased?

A: No. An applicant may include the purchase of special purpose equipment in their project budget. However, an applicant that submits a budget that includes the rental or lease of special purpose equipment during the length of the grant (instead of purchase) will be given higher consideration as listed under the Application Review Information section of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q: Can an applicant rent equipment and lease land from a project partner?

A: Yes. An applicant can rent or lease equipment, building space, greenhouses, or land from a project partner and/or other. The cost of rental or lease can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual.

Q: If we are to rent a facility, equipment, etc. are we expected to terminate those contracts when the grant is over?

A: Yes. Any lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the award period.

Q: What if land is donated?

A: Project activities may occur on donated land. Please be clear in your submission who is donating the land and for what length and purpose.

Q: Why will Projects that include the lease or rental of vehicles, land, building space, and special purchase equipment receive higher consideration?

A: Each project proposal will be evaluated on its fiscal plan and resources. As part of the administrative review process, USDA will review applicants' budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Due to the high demand and limited ability of NRCS to manage the acquisition and disposition of real property, applications with budgets that include the rental or lease of land, special purpose equipment, building space, and vehicles will receive higher consideration.

Q: Will a project be negatively scored if it does not include the rental or purchase of vehicles, land, building space, and special purchase equipment in its budget?

A: No. Projects that do not include the purchase of or lease or rental of special purpose equipment, land, building space, or vehicles will not weigh lower under the Application Review Information section of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q: Can this grant cover insurance expenses as a part of the budget?

A: Yes. The cost of insurance can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other (direct costs).

Q: Are pre-award costs allowable such as paying for a grant writer?

A: No. Any pre-award costs incurred will not be reimbursed.

Q: Could an applicant be reimbursed if they need to purchase a state permit for their CFWR Project?

A: Yes. The cost of permits related to the project can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other (direct costs).

Q: Can I use grant funds to purchase food?

A: Food purchases should be limited to costs related to incidental food and refreshments for participants at workshops or trainings.

Q: Is construction an allowable cost?

A: Yes. CFWR funds may be used to construct, alter, or repair (including dredging, excavating, and painting) of buildings, structures, or other real property. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be considered a construction project.

Q: Is building a permanent structure an allowable cost?

A: Building a non-permanent, temporary or movable structure is an allowable cost. Building a permanent structure, which may include, but not limited to, pouring concrete, laying asphalt or installing plumbing is also an allowable cost.

Q: Would it be allowable to use funds to hire an engineer or composting consultant?

A: Yes. Contractual costs such as hiring a consultant or labor can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual. Contractual costs are expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship.

Q: Would the CFWR Project provide funding for personnel to lead job trainings or educational demonstrations that encourage or teach community composting techniques?

A: Yes. It is allowable to fund personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Q: Is the creation of a new position for project coordination an allowable cost?

A: CFWR Project funds may be used for personnel whose time and effort can be specifically

identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Q: Does the Budget Narrative have a specific page length?

A: No. The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not have a length for the Budget Narrative.

Q: Does the page limit also include the Budget Narrative?

A: No. NRCS includes instructions for completing the Budget Narrative in the funding opportunity under the "Related Documents" tab in Grants.gov.

Q: If the project includes construction costs such as the building of a compost facility should we submit both the form SF-424A and form SF-424C?

A: Use the form SF-424A for projects that include construction and non-construction. Put the construction costs in the Construction Object Class category in Section B of the form and include the detailed construction budget in the Budget Narrative.

Q: How do I determine where to input salary costs on the SF-424A?

A: Salaries for personnel that are employed by the applicant would go on the Personnel line and all other labor costs from sources outside the organization would go under the Contractual section. Any associated fringe benefits should be separated from personnel costs on the SF-424A.

Q: What rate should I use for indirect costs?

A: To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either 1) have a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; 2) have an existing De Minimis Agreement; or 3) qualify for use of the De Minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). If requesting indirect costs, use the rate and base specified in your organization's NICRA or existing De Minimis Agreement. The NICRA or De Minimis Agreement must be in PDF format and attached to the Grants.gov application package.

Applicants requesting indirect costs who do not have a NICRA or De Minimis Agreement can use an indirect cost rate of 10% with a base of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). Such applicants selected for an award will be required to execute the 10% De Minimis Agreement with NRCS, which constitutes establishing an approved rate. Recipients who do not request indirect costs are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award.

Q: Can the compost generated be sold?

A: Yes. Compost produced during a CFWR Project can be sold to generate program income. Program income is the gross revenue generated by a Federally funded activity earned during the length of the award. Program income may be earned by recipients from fees charged for conference or workshop attendance, from rental fees earned from real property or equipment acquired with Federal funds, or from the sale of commodities or items developed under the grant. Any program

income generated during the grant period must be used to further the objectives of the project. All program income must be recorded on the Federal Financial Report (SF-425) for the period in which it was earned. Recipients are not accountable for program income earned after the grant period.

Q: Can compost generated with a CFWR Project be provided for free?

A: Compost produced with award funds can ONLY be made available to agricultural producers or community and school gardens free of charge in lieu of sale. However, a nominal fee may be charged to generate program income.

Q: Is the creation of a new position for project coordination an allowable cost?

A: Grant funds may be used for personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Q: How do I determine where to input salary costs on the SF-424A?

A: Salaries for personnel that are employed by the applicant would go on the Personnel line and all other labor costs from sources outside the organization would go under the Contractual section. Any associated fringe benefits should be separated from personnel costs on the SF- 424A.

Grants.gov Information

Q: How do I find the CFWR funding opportunity on Grants.gov?

A: You can find and download the Notice of Funding Opportunity and related documents by going directly to Grants.gov and either 1) conduct a keyword search for the program acronym "CFWR"; 2) enter the Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CFWR-22-NOFO0001179 or 3) search the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.935.

Q: Is the CFWR Notice of Funding Opportunity available in Spanish?

A: Not at this time.

Q: If I have problems with Grants.gov, will USDA staff help me submit or accept my application package?

A: No. USDA cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts or provide applicants technical assistance with the Grants.gov system. The Grants.gov technical support center can be reached at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov.

Q: Do I have to register with Grants.gov before submitting an application through Grants.gov?

A: Yes. The applicant must be registered with Grants.gov. There is a free, one-time registration for using Grants.gov, regardless of the Federal agency you may be submitting an application to through Grants.gov. Information about how to register is included on the Grants.gov registration page.

Q: What is involved in the Grants.gov registration process?

A: More detailed information is included on the Grants.gov registration page and the Grants.gov Online User Guide. The following information is a general overview.

1. Obtain a TIN/EIN from the IRS (if your organization does not have one).

2. Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier/DUNS number (if your organization does not have one).

3. Register with SAM.gov (if your organization does not have an active account)

4. Create a Grants.gov username and password. You will need to create a Grants.gov user profile by visiting the Get Registered section of the website.

5. The E-Business Point of Contact (POC) at your organization must respond to the registration email from Grants.gov and login at Grants.gov to authorize you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Note there can be more than one AOR for an organization.

6. At any time, you can track your AOR status by going to the Applicant Login with your username and password.

Important Note: These steps are a general overview and include the main steps a new organization or organizations that have never applied for a Federal grant before must complete outside of Grants.gov prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov.

Q: Does USDA have any helpful tips when seeking assistance on registration steps?

A: Begin the application process early. Don't wait until the last minute to apply at Grants.gov. Keep a record of any correspondence with Grants.gov or other helpdesks, including any ID or case numbers provided.

Q: How long does the registration process take?

A: The time it takes to complete each step varies. Don't wait until the last minute to complete the steps listed above. The Grants.gov registration process must be completed prior to submission of an application. You should allow two full weeks to register with Grants.gov, but additional time may be required.

Q: Who should I contact for help if I need assistance or have technical difficulties while trying to complete any of the registration steps?

A: These systems are not owned or managed by USDA. You must contact the applications directly for assistance.

1. IRS TIN/EIN issues or questions: Businesses: 1-800-829-4933 and Non-profit taxes: 1-877-829-5500

2. DUNS Number issues or questions: 1-866-705-5711 (U.S. Only) or SAMHelp@dnb.com

3. SAM.gov assistance and user guides: Go to the Help tab on the SAM.gov website

4. Grants.gov support: 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov

Q: Can you get an EIN within minutes through IRS.gov?

A: Please send issues or questions regarding an Employer Identification Number (EIN) also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number (TIN) to the Internal Revenue Service.

Q: Is there a cost to use the System for Award Management (SAM)?

A: No. SAM.gov is an official website of the U.S. government. There is no cost to use SAM. You can use the site for free to register to do business with the U.S. government; update or renew your entity registration; check status of an entity registration; and search for entity registration and exclusion records. More detailed information on how to use SAM is included on the SAM.gov Help page.

Q: Why does my organization need to register with SAM.gov?

A: Registering with the System for Award Management (SAM) is a required step in order for your organization to be able to apply for Federal grants. The registration process is free. In order to register for a SAM account, you must have either EIN, TIN or a DUNS number. If you don't have a DUNS, you cannot register in SAM. If your organization previously registered in SAM and has received Federal grants in the past, check to make sure your organization's SAM account is active.

Application

Q: Will all the specifics for submitting a CFWR Project application be on the website?

A: All instructions and requirements for this funding opportunity are posted on Grants.gov under the Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CFWR-22-NOFO0001179 . Once you click on the opportunity, there are four tabs. The very first tab on the left is the "Synopsis" tab, which is an overall view and summary of the grant opportunity. The main information is located under the "Related Documents" tab – where you can find and download the full Notice of Funding Opportunity with details and instructions along with the Frequently Asked Questions (PDF), General Terms and Conditions, supporting documents and forms, and other instructions. When ready to apply, select the "Package" tab and click on apply.

Q: What do I need to include in my grant application?

A: Please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov.

Q: Is the application downloadable before logging into Grants.Gov?

A: Yes. You do not need to be logged into Grants.gov to find and download the Notice of Funding

Opportunity and related documents.

Q: Can you start the application, save and go back in to work on it in Grants.gov?

A: Yes. You can start the application at Grants.gov and return to work on it within the workspace feature.

Q: Where can I find instructions for the Project Narrative?

A: Please refer to Section D. Application and Submission Information of the Notice of Funding Opportunity in Grants.gov for the content and format of the application submission, which includes page limits, fonts, structure, and the project narrative headings.

Q: Does the grant require specific headings in the Project Narrative?

A: Yes. Please refer to Section D-4b. Application and Submission Information of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the content and format of the Project Narrative, which includes headings for both Planning Projects and Implementation Projects. Each grant type has different required headings.

Q: Is there a Project Narrative template required or provided?

A: A template is not provided or required. Applicants should follow the guidance in the NFO.

Q: Is it okay to use a 10-point font for tables, charts, and footnotes?

A: No. The text of the proposal must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Courier) with no smaller than 12-point font, and must not exceed 15 pages. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages of written text, and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (15 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. This page limit only applies to the Project Narrative.

Q: Will NRCS accept applications that do not follow the required format?

A: No. 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.

Q: When are applications due by for CFWR?

A: USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:59 P.M. Eastern Standard Time (i.e. 8:59 P.M. Pacific Time) on Thursday, September 1, 2022.

Q: Can I apply through the mail instead of electronically?

A: No. Only applications submitted through the electronic Grants.gov system will be considered.

Q: Will applications submitted after the deadline be reviewed?

A: No. Applications must be received by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time on September 1, 2022 through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

Q: How will the agency know if my application was submitted on time?

A: NRCS 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.

Q: Can I apply for a CFWR Project and a grant from a different USDA agency and/or Federal agency?

A: Yes. If the projects have specifically different objectives, you may apply for and receive both a CFWR Project and a grant from a different USDA agency or other Federal agency. Please check with the other Federal programs to ensure that you are not violating their terms and conditions.

Priority Consideration

Q: How would an applicant receive higher consideration?

A: Priority will be given for each of the following elements that are included in a project:

- Anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits for the targeted community;
- Incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners, school gardens, and producers;
- Integrate food waste reduction strategies, including innovative food recovery efforts such as, but not limited to, food gleaning, storage, and preservation techniques; and
- Include a robust plan that describes collaboration with multiple partners.

Q: In terms of the higher consideration, does the level of experience apply only to the applicant or can it be collective experience of the group (applicant and partners)?

A: The four criteria for higher consideration listed above apply solely to the CFWR applicant. The applicant will be given high consideration if they have experience in the area of agriculture and/or innovative production for three years or more.

Q: Does CFWR give preference to disabled individuals or veterans?

A: No. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has other programs that offer preference to veterans. More information is available on the NRCS Outreach & Advocacy website.

Q: Is higher consideration given to projects that scale versus projects focused on a single location?

A: No.

Evaluation and Notification

Q: What happens after I submit my application?

A: USDA will conduct an initial screening of all applications to ensure they are eligible and fully responsive. Eligible and responsive applications are those that meet the following requirements:

1. Submitted by eligible applicants
2. Meet all other eligibility criteria
3. Submitted on or before the required deadline
4. Are complete
5. Meet required content, format and formatting structure.

Q: How will my application be reviewed?

A: After initial screening, applications that meet the administrative review requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel. Appropriate members of NRCS and other USDA agencies will review all applications submitted, and where necessary, also may seek the opinions of others who are qualified to give expert advice on that specific topic. Reviews will be conducted by teams comprised of three USDA employees who represent different agencies, subject areas and geographic locations.

Q: Can you elaborate on the specific weights and scoring of the evaluation criteria?

A: Applications will be evaluated on a 100-point scoring scale based on information provided in your application. Refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity under Section E.2. for the specific weights and evaluation criteria.

Q: How will applications be selected for funding?

A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity contains the specific weights and evaluation criteria that reviewers will be considering when evaluating each proposal. Be sure to review the five criteria yourself so that you can understand what you should address in your project and budget narratives. After reviews have been completed, Pilot Projects recommended for funding will be submitted to the approving official – who is the Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service – to make the final award decisions.

Q: How many grants will be awarded?

A: There is no commitment by NRCS to make a specific number of awards.

Q: Will my application be funded at the amount requested?

A: As part of the technical review process, USDA will review applicants' budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Applications selected and approved for

funding with budgets that are realistic, well justified, and supported will likely be funded at the requested amounts. However, USDA reserves the right to fund applications at a lower amount if USDA determines that the project can be implemented with less funding; or at lesser amounts if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards. This is subject to availability of funds.

Q: Will grant funds be provided to awardees as a lump sum, or will they be reimbursed?

A: This depends on the agencies business evaluation of your organization and risk assessment. Recipients will either receive reimbursement or advances using a properly completed and executed SF-270, submitted with supporting documentation to either the ezFedGrants system or to the e-mail address specified in the grant agreement.

Q: Can I be an application reviewer?

A: USDA is not seeking external reviewers for this funding opportunity. Applications submitted to NRCS for the FY 2022 CFWR Pilot Project program will be evaluated by a panel of internal USDA reviewers to ensure that applicants receive full and uniform consideration, and that the selected proposals merit receipt of Federal funds.