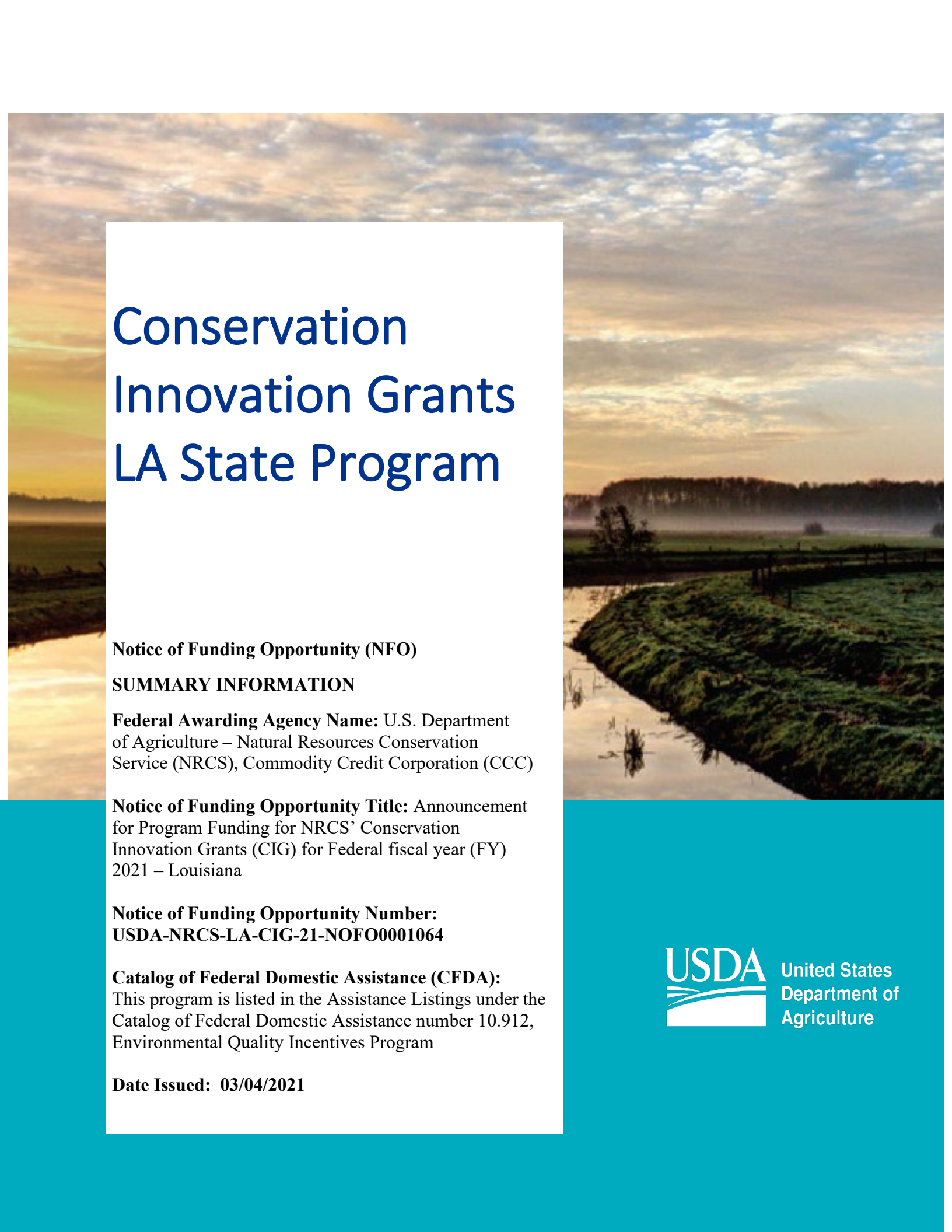




Conservation Innovation Grants LA State Program

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

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

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title: Announcement for Program Funding for NRCS' Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2021 – Louisiana

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number:
USDA-NRCS-LA-CIG-21-NOFO0001064

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA):
This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.912, Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Date Issued: 03/04/2021



Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary

NRCS is announcing the availability of CIG funding to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications are accepted from [eligible entities](#) for projects carried out in the state of Louisiana. A total of up to \$300,000.00 is available for the Louisiana CIG competition in FY 2021. 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 2021 is \$150,000.00.

For new users of Grants.gov, see Section D.1. for information about steps required before submitting an application via Grants.gov.

Key Dates

Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on May 03, 2021. For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts. Questions regarding this notice of funding opportunity (NFO) may be submitted until March 26, 2021. Responses to questions posed will be posted on Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the application due date.

Applicants can visit the Louisiana NRCS website where they can learn more about the CIG Program; <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/programs/financial/cig/>. Questions about this announcement can be directed to Dr. Craig Smith, NRCS Louisiana State Conservation Agronomist, at (318) 473-7805, craig.smith2@usda.gov for applications related to cropland, or Chris Ebel, NRCS Louisiana State Rangeland Management Specialist at (318) 473-7686, chris.ebel@usda.gov, for applications related to grazing lands.

The agency anticipates making selections by June 25, 2021 and expects to execute awards by September 3, 2021.

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The estimated funding floor for this opportunity is \$100,000.00, and the estimated funding ceiling is \$150,000.00. 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 agreement amount, not any specific budget period.

Federal Financial Assistance Training

The funding available through this NFO is Federal financial assistance. Grants 101 Training is highly recommended for those seeking knowledge about Federal financial assistance. The training is free and available to the public via <https://www.cfo.gov/grants-training/>. It consists of five modules covering each of the following topics: 1) laws, regulations, and guidance; 2) financial assistance mechanisms; 3) uniform guidance administrative requirements; 4) cost principles; and 5) risk management and single audit. FPAC agencies also apply Federal financial

assistance regulations to certain non-assistance awards (e.g., non-assistance cooperative agreements).

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A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1) 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). EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

2) 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 government 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.

3) 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

- Use a technology or approach that was 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.

4) State Component

For FY 2021, NRCS accepts proposals that address one or more of the State priorities listed below.

Louisiana CIG Priorities for FY 2021:

1. **Projects which increase knowledge and skills in management of native herbaceous vegetation utilizing prescribed burning and prescribed grazing.** Prescribed Grazing for the project will include a grazing rotation that provides proper grazing deferment for the regrowth and recovery of forage plants. Prescribed burns will be planned so that desirable plants are benefited, and undesirable plants are controlled. Management should consider wildlife and involve whole ecosystem function.
2. **Projects which evaluate Louisiana specific recommendations for biochar use in applicable Louisiana crops.** Biochar technology shows potential in improving soil quality, enhancing crop production, as well as reducing biproduct waste, such as sugarcane bagasse. Biochar is a charcoal-like substance that's made by burning organic material from agricultural waste products (organic biomass) in a controlled process called pyrolysis. Although it looks a lot like common charcoal, biochar is produced using a specific process to reduce contamination and safely store carbon. During pyrolysis organic materials, such as plant parts, wood chips, leaf litter or dead plants, are burned in a container with very little oxygen. As the materials burn, they release little to no contaminating fumes. During the pyrolysis process, the organic material is converted into biochar, a stable form of carbon that can't easily escape into the atmosphere. Biochar is by far more efficient at converting carbon into a stable form and is cleaner than other forms of charcoal. In terms of physical attributes, biochar is black, highly porous, lightweight, fine-grained and has a large surface area. Approximately 70 percent of its composition is carbon. The remaining percentage consists of nitrogen, hydrogen and oxygen among other elements. Biochar's chemical composition varies depending on the feedstocks used to make it and methods used to heat it. Sugarcane bagasse is the dry pulpy fibrous residue that remains after sugarcane stalks are crushed to extract their juice. There are often excess quantities of bagasse in South Louisiana following sugarcane process. Converting bagasse to biochar for use on low organic matter soils of southwestern and southcentral Louisiana potentially could enhance soybean, rice, milo, and sugarcane yields. There are few studies which provide information regarding specifications for biochar use in these areas for the named commodities. Application rates, methods, dates, and applicable associated management techniques are sought for use specifically in Louisiana.
3. **Projects which increase knowledge on and demonstrate regenerative techniques and management on grazing lands (native or introduced spp.) - to include Prescribed Grazing and Soil Health principles.** Prescribed Grazing for the project will include a grazing rotation that provides proper grazing deferment for the regrowth and recovery of forage plants. Soil Health Principles applied on project will include the four core principles of Soil Health: Provide Continuous Living Roots, Maximize Soil Cover, Minimize Disturbance, Maximize Biodiversity. Progression towards more intensive management preferred.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1) Available Funding

a. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this opportunity is \$300,000.00.

b. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be between 1 and 3 years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on an estimated project start date of November 8, 2021.

c. Number of Awards

The agency expects to make up to but no more than two (2) awards.

2) Type of Award

a. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award up to two (2) grant agreements pursuant to this opportunity.

b. Procurement Contracts

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

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1) Eligible Applicants

Applicants and applications must meet eligibility criteria by the application deadline to be considered for award. Eligible applicant type is determined by the implementing program statute. Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted, or excluded from receiving Federal contracts and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program (2 CFR 200.206(d)).

All U.S.-based non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals, with the exception of Federal agencies, are eligible to apply for projects carried out in Louisiana. The following entity types are eligible:

- a.** City or township governments
- b.** County governments
- c.** For profit organizations other than small businesses
- d.** Independent school districts
- e.** Individuals
- f.** Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- g.** Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- h.** Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)

- i. Nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
- j. Private institutions of higher education
- k. Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
- l. Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities
- m. Small businesses
- n. Special district governments
- o. State governments

2) Other

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

An applicant organization may submit more than one application.

Projects awarded pursuant to this NFO will be grant agreements. These agreements are not Farm Bill incentive contracts, therefore the awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation in Chapter 58 of 16 U.S.C. However, any agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a project awarded under this NFO must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR Part 12 and 7 CFR Part 1400 and have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed award period.

a. CIG Specific Eligibility

All CIG projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers that meet EQIP’s eligibility requirements 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.

b. 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 2019 and FY 2023.
- 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 1704 (a)(3) of the 2018 Farm Bill states the Secretary may waive the AGI limit on a case by case basis, if the Secretary determines that environmentally sensitive land of special significance would be protected as a result of such waiver. CIG grantees may request waivers once their project commences.
- 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.

c. 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 oversight 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.

3) Cost Sharing or Matching

This NFO requires applicants to share at least 50% of total project costs. Applications that do not include the required level of cost-sharing will be ineligible for award. Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash, services, materials, equipment, or third-party in-kind contributions. Recipients with unrecovered indirect costs may also use those to meet cost-sharing obligations. Refer to section D of this NFO for information about any required submittals related to match or cost-share requirements. While the pace of cost-sharing/matching may vary throughout the award period, the agency will actively monitor cost-sharing/matching levels as it receives payment requests to ensure

the total cost sharing/matching requirement is met by the award period of performance end date. Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions is located at 2 CFR 200.306.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1) How to submit an application

Applications must be submitted electronically through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) (see Section D.2.). Submissions must be received by the time and date due. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation for submission made.

2) Information for New Users of Grants.gov

a. Overview

While a Grants.gov account is not required to download an NFO and related documents, it is required to submit an application. If your organization has never submitted an application via Grants.gov, please be aware that there are several steps you must take to register your organization before you can submit an application. **Completing those steps takes a significant amount of time.**

For information about the Grants.gov pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html>.

b. Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Carefully review the registration steps and gather information requested prior to beginning the registration process to avoid last-minute searches for required information. For assistance with the registration process, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Organizations must complete all steps to register (steps i. through v. below). Complete organization instructions are included on Grants.gov here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.

Although creating a Grants.gov account online can take only minutes, DUNS and SAM registrations may take several weeks. Therefore, organizations should begin the process early to ensure they have sufficient time to complete registration and meet required application submission deadlines.

Individuals are not subject to the DUNS or SAM requirement and may begin with step iii., Create a Grants.gov Account, listed below. (Note: Individuals are not eligible for all opportunities.)

c. Steps to Register:

- i. *Obtain a DUNS Number:* All entities applying for funding must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS Number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form. For more detailed instructions for

obtaining a DUNS Number, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

- ii. *Register with SAM:* All organizations must register with System for Award Management (SAM) in order to apply online through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. Part of the SAM registration process includes designating an Electronic Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC). **The EBiz POC plays an integral part in the organization's Grants.gov registration and application process.** The individual in that role must authorize all other roles in Grants.gov. For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>
- iii. *Create a Grants.gov Account:* From the Grants.gov webpage (<https://www.grants.gov/>), click "Register" in the top right-hand corner and follow the on-screen instructions or refer to the detailed instructions here:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>
- iv. *Add an Organization Applicant Profile to a Grants.gov Account:* A profile in Grants.gov corresponds to a single applicant organization the user represents (i.e., an applicant) or an individual applicant. If you work for or consult with multiple organizations and have a profile for each, you may log in to one Grants.gov account to access all of your grant applications. To add an organizational profile to your Grants.gov account, enter the DUNS Number for the organization in the UEI (Unique Entity Identifier) field while adding a profile. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html>
- v. *EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles:* After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, you must establish roles for individuals in the organization. The Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role is critical; it gives an individual permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. Without this role, the organization cannot submit any applications. The request for role assignment will be routed to the organization's EBiz POC for approval. Once approved, the AOR can submit an application online. For more detailed instructions about creating a EBiz POC authorized profile on Grants.gov, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>

Track Role Status: To track your role request, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>

- d. *Electronic Signature.* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize people who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role. **This step (step c.v. above) is often missed and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

- e. **Workspace.** Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each NFO, you can create individual instances of a workspace. An applicant can start an application in Workspace and return to work on it later within Workspace.
- f. **Apply for an Opportunity.** Below is an overview of applying on Grants.gov. For complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>
- i. **Create a Workspace:** Creating a workspace allows you to complete an application online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- ii. **Complete a Workspace:** Add participants to the workspace to work on the application together, complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the status of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.
- **Adobe Reader:** If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.
- NOTE: Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>
- **Mandatory Fields in Forms:** In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.
 - **Complete SF-424 Fields First:** The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS Number. Once it is completed, the information will transfer (i.e., prepopulate) to the other forms.
- iii. **Submit a Workspace:** An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.
- iv. **Track a Workspace Submission:** After successfully submitting a workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted workspace.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html>

3) Electronic Application Package

Applicants interested in submitting an application in response to this NFO must submit it via Grants.gov; the agency will not accept applications submitted via email or any other method. Applicants are urged to submit early to the Grants.gov system.

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

Address to Request Application Package

All information necessary to apply for this opportunity is included in the [Grants.gov](#) opportunity announcement.

4) Content and Form of Application Submission

The agency may choose not to consider applications that fail to comply with the required content, format, and page limits, or those that are incomplete.

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain the documents in a-n below.

a. Cover Page (1 page maximum).

On a single page, provide the following information:

- i. The applicant entity name.
- ii. The project title.
- iii. The proposed start and end dates and the project duration in months.
- iv. The amount of Federal funding requested.
- v. The amount of non-Federal contributions committed.
- vi. The applicant's technical contact (usually project director). (Provide name, phone, email.)
- vii. The applicant's administrative contact (provide name, phone, email) (usually an individual in a grants office or project manager working under a project director. The administrative contact often handles the budgetary and reporting requirements for a CIG project. NRCS will use the applicant's technical and administrative contacts identified as the primary applicant contacts throughout the life of the project, unless notified of personnel changes).
- viii. The geographic location of the project.
- ix. The state priority that is addressed by the project. List only one priority from [Section A. 4](#). If the proposal addresses more than one priority, **you must select a primary priority** for your application to be considered under.
- x. A brief description (1–3 sentences) of the innovative conservation approach or approaches that is the focus of the project—please be concise!

b. Project Abstract (1 page maximum)

Describe in nontechnical 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), the main project deliverables and anticipated project results, how the results will be quantified, and the predicted benefits to conservation more broadly.

c. Project Narrative

Each page must be numbered and have one-inch margins. The text of the project narrative must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Courier) with no smaller than 12-point font. The project narrative must not exceed 15 pages. This page limitation applies to the project narrative only.

The project narrative must cover all activities proposed to be carried out with both the Federal and non-Federal matching funds. Activities related but beyond the scope of the CIG project budget should be described in the background section only. A sample project description is posted to the CIG website at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=stelprdb1046235>.

The project description must include the following information, in this order:

- i. Project background: Describe the issue or problem driving the need for the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success.
- ii. Project goal/objectives: State the main goal of the project and then outline the supporting objectives to reach this goal. Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART¹). Provide supporting information that describes the innovative nature of the project and how this innovation could advance the field of conservation. If the project is addressing innovation of an NRCS conservation practice standard, or proposing a new standard, state this explicitly and identify the standard.
- iii. Project design and methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project. (We encourage new grant writers to consider using a logic model approach to improve clarity of this section.) For more on the logic model, see <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/logic-models/>.
- iv. Project outcomes and benefits: Identify the expected results and outcomes of the project and the anticipated impact on conservation and society and any other benefits derived from the project. Forecast the lasting impact of project results. Identify project beneficiaries, (i.e., agricultural producers) by type, region, or

¹ SMART objectives are described by several organizations. Here is an example from the Centers for Disease Control: https://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/resourcekit/evaluate/smart_objectives.html

sector; historically underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and/or municipalities.

- v. Geographic location and size of project or project area: Identify the geographic location and the estimated size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics) of the project area. Maps are recommended.
- vi. EQIP-eligible producer participation: Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers involved in the project and describe the extent of their involvement. Describe whether these producers have been identified, and if not yet identified clearly articulate the process that will be carried out to identify and attract producer participation.
- vii. Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that directly relate to the project objectives, outcomes, and benefits that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and approve payments. The proposal must include a set of technical deliverables that reflect the performance and broader applicability of the project.

In addition to project-specific deliverables, CIG grantees are responsible for:
 - a) Participating in at least one event (e.g., conference or workshop) during the grant period where the grantee presents on the activities of the project.
 - b) A final factsheet.
 - c) Closing event—this could be a webinar, field day, training event, etc., used to disseminate project results.
- viii. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a bulleted list of project actions and deliverables relative to timeframes and associated project milestones through to project completion. Applicants should develop their timelines based on a project start date of November 8, 2021.
- ix. Project management: Give a description of how the project will be organized and managed, including a list/description of project partners. Include a description of how communication will be structured within the project team to ensure effective project management.
- x. Technology transfer: Describe how the results will be transferred to producers and stakeholders through communications and outreach activities.
- xi. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology used to evaluate the project and describe how results will be quantified. It should be clear to the reviewers how project objectives relate to the evaluation.
- xii. Graphics, including pictures, charts, graphs, and similar items count towards the 15-page maximum.
- xiii. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, do not count towards the 15-page maximum.

The following documents do not count toward the above stated page limit.

d. Team Qualifications

Provide brief descriptions of key technical and administrative personnel qualifications, their experience managing Federal awards, and their anticipated contributions to the project. This does not count towards the 15-page maximum. Do not include resumes or CVs.

e. 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 on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation website at <https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/section-106-applicant-toolkit>.

f. Declaration of previous CIG projects involvement and past performance.

If the applicant has previously received a CIG award (either at the National or State levels), *list the following for each award and give a short summary of the completed project's results and impact. If the project is ongoing, provide the anticipated results. Each description should be no more than a half page:*

- Project title
- CIG agreement number
- Award funding amount
- Year of award expiration

g. Application Form: (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) See Instructions for Completing SF 424 located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.

h. Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.

Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the agency funds, and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds. This form is the summary budget for the project and should include the full project totals on pages one and two. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov. Refer to Section D of this opportunity for information regarding indirect costs.

i. Budget Narrative.

- i. In a separate document titled "Budget Narrative," explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency's approval and estimate its cost. The pages included as the budget narrative to not count toward the page limit. Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. The budget narrative must show the amounts and sources of match or cost share (including both cash and in-kind contributions. An example budget narrative can be found in Appendix B of this announcement. It should be in both narrative and table format as shown in the example.
- ii. For third-party contributions, a letter is required for each contribution, 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 will pay the contribution no later than the end of the award period. The agency may conduct reference checks to ensure that organizations identified are supportive and

involved with the project. Cost sharing/match letters should be addressed to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact in section G of this NFO and uploaded under Other Attachments in Grants.gov. A commitment letter template has been included in grants.gov along with this NFO.

- ii. **Note:** Please consider including \$3,000 in the budget for project travel required by NRCS in the Louisiana CIG. These funds 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.
- iii. As required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System.
- iv. All applicants are hereby notified of the following:
 - Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award. (Accepting the 10 percent *de minimis* rate as a condition of award constitutes establishing an approved rate.)
 - Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award.
 - Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

j. 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 amount 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. 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.

All matching funds must be identified in both the SF-424A and budget narrative components of the application. Project partners (other than the applicant) must provide commitment letters for all cash and in kind matching contributions. 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 and must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the project partner; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar value 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 covering the full value of the matching contribution 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.

k. Grants.gov Lobbying Form, Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.

Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 2 CFR Part 418, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with this application AND the Federal share exceeds \$100,000, you must also complete and submit the SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities located at 2 CFR 418, Appendix B. See 2 CFR, Subpart 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

l. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable).

If charging indirect costs (including for cost share), upload the agreement under Other Attachments in the Grants.gov Opportunity Application Package. See Section D for information regarding indirect costs.

m. 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. Support letters from NRCS staff should not be submitted.

n. Unique entity identifier/DUNS and System for Award Management (SAM).

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

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

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

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

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

The Government intends to replace the D-U-N-S® number with a “new, non-proprietary identifier” requested in, and assigned by SAM.gov. This new identifier is being called the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), or the Entity ID. See [Planned UEI Updates in Grant Application Forms](#) for UEI updates.

5) Submission Dates and Times and Correspondence

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov. Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time (ET) on April 30, 2021. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late (an application is considered on time at 11:59.59 pm ET, but it is late at 12:00 am ET). Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the Authorized Organizational Representative

(AOR) role attempting to submit the application. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process; be patient and give the system time to process the application.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any issues. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A for Grants.gov contact information.

For applications successfully transmitted to Grants.gov before the deadline: The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive:

- an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov;
- an email with the official date/time stamp (this stamp is used to determine if the application was received prior to the deadline) and Grants.gov

When the agency successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will also provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the applicant.

6) Intergovernmental Review

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

7) Funding Restrictions

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

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award, including time spent applying for this opportunity;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. 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
- g. 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.
- h. Management fees and profit. Any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related direct and indirect costs only;

- i. Meals: Meals may be charged to an award only if they are necessary for the performance of the project. For instance, meals (normally only lunch) that are a necessary part of the costs of meetings and conferences (i.e., required attendance and continuity of a meeting), the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of information, are allowable, as are costs of transportation, rental of facilities, speakers' fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences. Note: Meals consumed while in official travel status do not fall in this category. They are considered to be per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization's established travel policies subject to statutory limitations or in accordance with Federal travel policies.
- j. Costs normally charged as indirect costs may not be charged as direct costs without proper justification and agency approval. Proper justification includes documentation that the costs meet the criteria for allowability (see 2 CFR 200.403). Examples of such costs include rent, utilities, depreciation on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.
- k. Salaries that are not commensurate with level of work: All costs must be reasonable to be allowable (CFR 200.403), and 2 CFR 200.404 defines a reasonable cost as one if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. Salaries determined not to be reasonable compared to the level of work will be unallowable.

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

8) Indirect costs limitations

- 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; or 2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). 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.
- b. Applicants not subject to a statutory limitation, which have a current NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. A recipient may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at its sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the agency. A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. Indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA. However, if an applicant with a current NICRA is subject to the statutory limitation, indirect costs must be calculated as follows. First, multiply the NICRA rate by the base stated in the NICRA to arrive at Amount A. Next, multiply the statutory limit of 10 percent by the total of all direct costs to arrive at

Amount B. The lower of Amount A and B is the amount of indirect cost to include on the budget.

- c. Entities that are eligible for the *de minimis* 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 and also excluding the amount of each subaward exceeding \$25,000. Note that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base to which the rate is applied. A copy of the applicant's *de minimis* rate agreement must be provided with the application. If a recipient 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 percent of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a *de minimis* rate agreement will be executed along with the award.
- d. If voluntarily reduced or waived, the recipient 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 recipient's approved negotiated indirect cost rate (2 CFR 200.306(c)).
- e. Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization they may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1) Review and Selection Process

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

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

2) Merit/Technical Criteria

The technical peer review panels use the following criteria, using a 100-point scale, to evaluate applications. These criteria will be applied to the whole project, including federal and non-federally funded parts:

a. Purpose, Approach, and Goals (25 points)

- i. The purpose of the project is clearly explained, the goals and objectives are clearly stated, and the rationale is explicit for why the innovative approach or technology is needed.
- ii. The design and implementation of the project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology;
- iii. The project outcomes are stated, measurable, and likely to be achieved; and
- iv. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered, and a significant level of improvement will be achieved.

b. Innovative Technology or Approach (25 points)

- i. The project is regionally or locally innovative to the criteria for innovation (see [section A. 3](#); and
- ii. The application describes the compelling need for the innovative technology or approach.

c. Project Management (25 points)

- i. Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable;
- ii. Project staff has necessary technical and administrative expertise;
- iii. The budget is adequately explained and justified, and expenses are allowable, allocable, and reasonable; and
- iv. Proposal includes robust partnership with entities that can substantially assist with delivery of project outcomes with clear project management structure and team communication laid out.

d. Benefits and Transferability (25 points)

- i. An evaluation plan is documented that clearly lays out how project work will be assessed, and the results transferred;
- ii. There is potential for producers and landowners to use or participate in the innovative technology(s) or approach(s);
- iii. There is potential for organizations 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.;
- iv. There is potential to transfer the approach or technology to a broader audience or to other geographic areas or agricultural sectors; and
- v. There is potential for successful transfer, through planned project activities, to historically underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and/or municipalities.

Partner matching contributions are considered an eligibility criterion as described in [Section C 3](#) of this notice and therefore are not listed in the merit criteria.

3) 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 Merit Criteria. 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.

4) Administrative and Risk Criteria

Notice of selection after merit/technical evaluation does not guarantee that an applicant will receive an award. Following notification of selection for funding (see section F), the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division's staff conducts a final administrative and risk review of those applications. The administrative review includes, but is not limited to, a check to ensure that NFO requirements were met (e.g., applicant meets eligibility criteria, application was submitted via Grants.gov by the established deadline), and proposed costs are allowable, allocable and necessary. During this process, it may be necessary to request further documentation from the applicant (e.g., organizational information as part of the risk assessment, more detail regarding proposed costs).

In addition, to comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.205, the agency will follow, at a minimum, the risk review process described below (additional steps may be taken).

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

An applicant must meet the following standards to be considered for award:

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

Submission of an application constitutes certification that an applicant meets these standards (items a through c. above). The agency may request documentation to substantiate the certification. Based on risk assessment, the agency may impose specific award conditions in accordance with 2 CFR 200.207.

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

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

5. Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by June 25, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 3, 2021.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1) Federal Award Notices

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

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

2) Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and the General Terms and Conditions, which are included in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity on Grants.gov.

Projects performed pursuant to this opportunity may be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If applicable, NRCS must work with awardees to complete an environmental review of each awarded project before project commencement. In addition, prior to any ground-disturbing activities related to NRCS funding, the awardee must work with NRCS staff to complete an environmental evaluation (EE) related to those activities. Awardees may be required to prepare or pay for preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), should any environmental review find that an EA or EIS is required.

In addition, a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106 review and consultation by an 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 WMBP project effects. More information on the applicant's role in the NHPA Section 106 process can be found on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation website at <https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/section-106-applicant-toolkit>.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service under the section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is also required for projects that may affect listed or proposed species or destroy or modify critical habitat. The ESA consultation in accordance with section 7 of the ESA and implementing regulations at 50 CFR Part 402 must be completed by NRCS prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact species or habitat protected under the ESA. More information on the section 7 consultation process can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/consultations-overview.html>.

3) 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. Get in touch with the [administrative contact](#) of this NFO with specific questions with regard to the applicability of this section.

4) Reporting

Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the agency's General Terms and Conditions, which are included in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity on Grants.gov.

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

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

Reporting details are included in the fully executed grant agreement. Reporting will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, annual financial status reports, and final reports.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact one of the following individuals with the NFO number in the subject line:

Administrative Contact (Primary Contact)

Name: Aziza B. Clark

Grants Management Specialist

FPAC Business Center

Email: aziza.clark@usda.gov with a copy to FPAC.GAD.BC@USDA.GOV

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1) Questions regarding this opportunity must be submitted to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact identified above via email with the NFO number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by March 26, 2021. A summary of questions and answers will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this NFO in Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the application due date.

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

3) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Applications are considered confidential information. Applications are not shared with individuals or entities seeking public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without the consent of the applicant. More specifically, Executive Order 12600 and USDA FOIA regulation 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A requires the awarding agency to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information, and requires the awarding agency to consult with applicants regarding the releasing their records.

4) Government Obligation

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

5) 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](#).

U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Statement

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

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

Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer> and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

APPENDIX A
APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

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

- ☐ ****DUNS and SAM Registration – should register at least 3 weeks before the application due date.**

PROPOSAL

- ☐ **1. Cover Page**
- a. Applicant entity name
 - b. Project title
 - c. Duration of project in months
 - d. Amount of Federal funding requested
 - e. Amount of non-Federal cost-share/match funding committed
 - f. Project contacts: One technical and one administrative
 - g. Geographic location of the project
 - h. National priority being addressed
 - i. Declaration of historically underserved (if applicable)
 - j. Statement of innovation
- ☐ **2. Project Abstract: (one page maximum)**
- ☐ **3. Standard Form (SF) 424, “Application for Federal Assistance”**
- ☐ **4. Project Narrative: (15 pages maximum)**
- a. Project background
 - b. Project goals/objectives
 - c. Project design and methods
 - d. Project outcomes and benefits
 - e. Geographic location and size of project area (include a map if possible)

- f. EQIP-eligible producer participation
- g. Project deliverables/products
- h. Project action plan and timeline
- i. Project management
- j. Project transferability
- k. Project evaluation

☐ **5. References/citations (if applicable)**

☐ **6. Team Qualifications**

☐ **7. Declaration of Previous CIG Awards (if applicable)**

☐ **8. Assessment of Environmental Impacts**

BUDGET INFORMATION

☐ **9. Completed SF-424A, “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs”**

☐ **10. Detailed Budget Narrative (see template in Appendix B); Maximum 12 pages**

☐ **11. Indirect Costs:** Submit documentation of a federally approved indirect cost rate (NICRA), a previous de minimis rate agreement, or a request to establish a de minimis rate agreement ([section IV\(B\)\(9\)](#)).

☐ **12. Matching Letters (see template in Appendix C):** (required for projects with matching funds coming from a third party). Submit signed commitment letters of matching support from each non-Federal third party providing matching funds. Include both cash and in-kind commitments.

OTHER

☐ **13. Certification Regarding Lobbying ([section IV\(B\)\(13\)](#)).**

☐ **14. Letters of Support: (optional)**

APPENDIX B

NOTE: This appendix includes tips and a sample budget table and budget narrative. To ensure consistency in proposals and proposal reviews, applicants are required to use the budget table and narrative format in their proposals. An Excel spreadsheet and editable document version of these files is attached to this proposal in grants.gov.

1. Creating a Budget Narrative

1. *A CIG budget narrative has two parts:*

- A table totaling all major budget line items (the major line items on the SF 424A are: salary, fringe, travel, supplies, equipment, contractual, construction, other, and indirect costs) by year. The table includes subcategories listed below each line item, giving a clear breakdown of project costs. The table should contain both Federal and non-Federal portions of the project budget.
- A written narrative that aligns with the budget table and provides descriptive details on the items listed in the table for both the Federal and non-Federal portion of the table.

2. *Level of Detail:*

A budget narrative outlines project details enough to allow reviewers to evaluate the integrity of the proposed spending and clarify project intent. The level of detail for each line item may vary, but applicants should consider the following:

- **Personnel.**—The description should include the general function or major tasks of each major team member and their time commitment to the project. Include a total cost listed for each project team member by year. If a project contributor has not yet been hired, the position title can be provided in lieu of a name. If available, include details on cost such as percent of effort, rate of pay, and estimated hours for each person.
- **Fringe Benefits.**—Include this separate from personnel in the budget. Provide the fringe benefit rate for each individual receiving benefits and how it was calculated alongside the total amount of funds provided per year to that individual.
- **Travel.**—Include the reason for the travel, the team members expected to travel, and the major costs (transportation, lodging, meals, or per diem, etc.) associated with each type of travel should be outlined. Provide the derivation of costs estimates should be provided (e.g., Federal General Services Administration per diems, university guidelines).
- **Supplies.**—List the general supply categories that will be charged. For instance, if the team will be doing soil health monitoring, include items such as soil sampling supplies, or instruments for measuring samples should be included. Smaller supplies (e.g., workshop printouts and markers) need not be broken down by individual units, but for larger supplies include a description with unit cost and intended use.
- **Equipment.**—This includes only tangible personal property over \$5,000 per unit with a lifetime over 1 year. Within this narrative, explain the reason for purchasing/renting any equipment, a description of the type of equipment and supplier, what it will be used for, who will be allowed to use it, why it is needed, and how long it will be used. Also identify what will be done with the equipment once the project is over. If rented, the

rental cost must be justified. Specific 2 CFR 200 provisions apply to equipment that equals or exceeds \$5,000 in value.

- **Contractual.**—If contractors will be doing multiple tasks for the award, use separate line items. If a contractor will just be serving one project function, is not considered part of the project team, and will not require a subcontract, a simple description of the contracted work is sufficient. Be sure to identify the name of the contractor, the method of procurement, and the scope of work for the services if not in the proposal narrative.
- **Other.**—This is a general line item that covers expenditures that do not fit in other categories. This is where subawards are to be included. This category often includes fees like laboratory analysis/rental costs. Be sure to identify the individual costs and provide sufficient description to justify the costs.
- **Indirect.**—Identify the NICRA or *de minimis* rate as applicable.
- **Program Income.**—If the awardee plans to accrue income from grant-supported activities (e.g., workshop registration fees), this program income must be estimated and added to the budget. Other examples of program income include fees for services performed and the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award.

3. *Additional Guidance:*

- Sub-budgets are not required for contractors or sub-awardees. Give details on the contractor or sub-awardee costs in the “Contractor” section or the “Other” section of the budget. Be sure to identify and include separate NICRA paperwork and percentages when a contractor’s rate differs from the awardee’s rate.
- Budget narratives may reference information included in other parts of the proposal; do not repeat the information as part of the budget narrative.
- While drafting the budget, keep in mind that an agreement amendment is not required for post-agreement budget changes of 10 percent or less of the total project budget (Federal and non-Federal portions). However, all budget changes do require notice to NRCS contacts and submittal of updated budget documents as necessary.
- All figures in the budget must be rounded to the nearest dollar.

Sample budget table—a downloadable Excel spreadsheet of this budget table is available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=stelprdb1046235>.

FEDERAL BUDGET					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Total
Personnel	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000		\$40,000
Name of team member	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000		\$20,000
Name of team member	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000		\$20,000
Fringe	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000		\$6,000
Faculty	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000		\$4,000
Technician	\$500	\$500	\$1,000		\$2,000
Travel	\$3,360	\$3,360	\$6,750		\$16,860
Plot prep and data collection	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000		\$9,000
Demo plot overnight trips	\$360	\$360	\$360		\$1,080
Conference trips	\$0	\$3,390	\$3,390		\$6,780
Supplies	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$3,000		\$11,000
Field Supplies	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$2,000		\$8,000
Lab Supplies	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000		\$3,000
Contractual	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000		\$21,000
Contractor Name	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000		\$21,000
Other	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000		\$18,000
Testing and analysis	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		\$15,000
Publication and copying	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000		\$5,000
Indirect	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$8,000		\$18,000
See NICRA (X%)	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$8,000		\$18,000
TOTAL	\$36,860	\$36,860	\$53,750		\$129,470
NON-FEDERAL BUDGET					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Total
Personnel	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000		\$24,000
Name of team member	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000		\$9,000
Name of team member	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		\$15,000
Fringe	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000		\$3,000
Faculty	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000		\$3,000
Contractual	\$23,000	\$25,000	\$28,000		\$76,000
Contractor Name	\$18,000	\$20,000	\$23,000		\$61,000
Contractor Name	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		\$15,000
Equipment	\$2,000	\$500	\$500		\$3,000
Equipment Rental	\$2,000	\$500	\$500		\$500
Other	\$6,000	\$1,500	\$1,500		\$9,000
General services	\$500	0	0		\$500
Land rental	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500		\$4,500
Legal Fees	\$4,000	0	0		\$4,000
Indirect	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$8,000		\$18,000
See NICRA (X%)	\$5,000	\$8,000	\$8,000		\$18,000
TOTAL	\$45,000	\$41,000	\$47,000		\$133,000

SAMPLE BUDGET NARRATIVE

NAME OF AWARDEE

Project Title

PROJECT TOTAL: \$XXX

Federal Portion: \$XXX

Non-Federal Contribution: \$XXX

A. FEDERAL BUDGET:

1. Personnel

Tom Smith, Project Director, full time, 70% paid by Federal Funds, will advise the project team, assist with demonstration plot establishment, data collection and analysis, and participate in project field days.

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$5,000 Year 3: \$10,000

Mary Johnson, research technician, 20% time (6 calendar months) for 3 years, 67% paid by Federal funds. Establish the field and demonstration plots, function as the project manager, coordinate sub-award work, draft reports and publications, and participate in all project field days.

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$5,000 Year 3: \$10,000

2. Fringe benefits

67% fringe benefits paid by Federal funds. Fringe benefits rates are 35% for faculty and permanent staff..

Total Fringe Benefits:

Year 1: \$1,500 Year 2: \$1,500 Year 3: \$3,000

3. Travel

Funds are requested to support travel for plot preparation and data collection trips, and travel to four field days within the States of New York and Pennsylvania. Estimated 5,000 miles per year at a rate of \$0.60/mi.

Year 1: \$3,000 Year 2: \$3,000 Year 3: \$3,000

Funds are requested for overnight hotel stays at demonstration plot locations at the State hotel rate of \$90 per night, 4 times per year (\$360/yr).

Year 1: \$360 Year 2: \$360 Year 3: \$360

Funds are requested in the second and third year for three individual trips each year to scientific conferences based on the following estimates: Lodging - 3 nights × \$150 per night (\$450); Per-diem \$50/day × 4 days (\$200); Transportation: Airline travel to conference location - \$400/flight + ground transportation - \$50 + parking at airport - \$30 (\$480).

Year 2: \$3390 Year 3: \$3390

Total Travel:

Year 1: \$3,360 Year 2: \$6,750 Year 3: \$6,750

4. Equipment - none

5. Supplies

Field and lab supplies: Funds are requested for the purchase of soil temperature and moisture probes and data logging systems (\$2,000). Funds are also requested to purchase weed suppression technologies, seeds, and irrigation supplies for field plots (\$6,000). Funds are also requested for various lab supplies and sampling equipment (\$3,000).

Total Supplies:

Year 1: \$4,000 Year 2: \$4,000 Year 3: \$3,000

6. Contractual

Two separate contractors:

Contract with Amazing Graphics and Marketing (\$5,000)

Marketing team will use innovative digital marketing tools to reach producers and help gain interest. Team will develop graphics and video production to support program recruitment and teaching tools.

Contract with Innovative Technology (\$16,000)

Contractor will help develop online tools to assist producers with conservation practices.

Total Contractual:

Year 1: \$7,000 Year 2: \$7,000 Year 3: \$7,000

7. Construction - None requested

8. Other

Sample Testing & Analysis: Basic nutrient testing and soil health testing will be done annually for all plots. Roughly 20 samples a year at \$250/sample (\$5,000/year).

Publication Costs: Funds are requested for the development and publication of various materials including extension publications, costs associated with peer reviewed journals, in addition to costs associated with copies of brochures made in house. (\$1,000/year)

Total Other Costs:

Year 1: \$6,000 Year 2: \$6,000 Year 3: \$6,000

9. Indirect Costs – Note if NICRA negotiated or if it is the 10% De Minimis rate

Attached to this proposal is a NICRA negotiated rate agreement for 15%.

Total Indirect Costs:

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$5,000 Year 3: \$8,000

B. NON-FEDERAL BUDGET:

1. Personnel

Tom Smith, Project Director, full time, 30% paid by non-Federal funds, will advise the project team, assist with demonstration plot establishment, data collection and analysis, and participate in project field days.

Year 1: \$3,000 Year 2: \$3,000 Year 3: \$3,000

Mary Johnson, research technician, 20% time (2.5 calendar months) for 3 years, 33% paid by non-Federal funds. Establish the field and demonstration plots, function as the project manager, coordinating sub-award work, drafting reports and publications, and participating in all project field days.

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$5,000 Year 3: \$5,000

Total Personnel:

Year 1: \$8,000 Year 2: \$8,000 Year 3: \$8,000

2. Fringe benefits

33% fringe benefits paid by non-Federal funds. Fringe benefits rates are as follows: 35% for faculty and permanent staff.

Total Fringe Benefits:

Year 1: \$1,000 Year 2: \$1,000 Year 3: \$1,000

3. Equipment

Field equipment rental. This is match donated by the partner community groups (see in-kind letter). Will provide all farming equipment (tools, planters, harvesters) for on-farm demonstrations.

Year 1: \$2,000 Year 2: \$500 Year 3: \$500

Total Equipment:

Year 1: \$2,000 Year 2: \$500 Year 3: \$500

4. Supplies - none

5. Contractual

Contract with Super Non-Profits (\$61,000)

Personnel:

Elizabeth Smith will oversee the outreach to farmers. She will devote 20% of her time all 3 years of the project. 100% of her time will be non-Federal. She will oversee all elements of this part of the project, including contacting and recruiting farmers, organizing outreach events such as field days, and on-farm assistance.

Temporary half-time admin support to help support program facilitation.

Other:

Workshop rental space will be donated by contractor, with an estimated value of \$100 per day.

Year 1: \$18,000 Year 2: \$20,000 Year 3: \$23,000.
Soil Conservation District

The local soil and water conservation district will support the project by helping to build partner relationships with local producers.

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$5,000 Year 3: \$5,000

Total Contractual:

Year 1: \$23,000 Year 2: \$25,000 Year 3: \$28,000

6. Construction - None requested

7. Other Costs:

General services (web development, printing, accounting, administrative, and project management) \$5,000.

Land rental – demonstration plots on farmer land will have a rental cost of \$50/acre/year totaling \$1,500 annually.

Legal Fees: Community support groups will pay all legal fees regarding the research of any legal implications on the project. \$4,000.

Total Other:

Year 1: \$6,000 Year 2: \$1,500 Year 3: \$1,500

8. Indirect Costs – Note if NICRA negotiated or if it is the 10% De Minimis rate

15% NICRA indirect rate applied, see NICRA agreement

Total Indirect Costs:

Year 1: \$5,000 Year 2: \$8,000 Year 3: \$8,000

APPENDIX C

Pledge Agreement

Applicant Cash/In-kind Contribution Commitment

1) Donor Organization: Name

Address

City, State, Zip code

2) Applicant Organization: Name of applicant

3) Project Title: *Name of project title*

4) Description of cash contribution: *Add clear statement the organization is committing, such as:* “The X Trust is committing \$182,000 in cash and in-kind support to this project from general fundraising support (corporate giving, foundations, fundraising events, etc.). Funds will be used to support the five farmers to attend state meetings and also contractor work to support website development and app development.” The funding breaks down into the following budget line items:

- Travel: \$2,000 - in-kind
- Contractual : \$180,000 – cash”

5) Pledge Statement: The [add name of organization] pledges to make this contribution over the USDA NRCS 2021 Conservation Innovation Grants funding period as cash/in-kind match to USDA NRCS CIG grant funds awarded to [name of applicant] for Innovative Conservation project, [*project title*].

Signature of Donor Organization Authorized
Representative:

Signature of Applicant Organization Authorized
Representative: