SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Texas State Office

Funding Opportunity Title: Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-TX-UCP-19-01

Announcement Type: INITIAL

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.902

Dates: Proposals must be received by 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST), June 7, 2019

Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary

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

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

The Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project is an effort to challenge States, political subdivisions, or agency thereof, a public or private agency, organizations, educational institutions and federally recognized Native American tribal governments to establish vegetable and fruit gardens, rainwater harvesting systems, pollinator habitat and high tunnels across Texas. The simple act of planting a garden can help unite neighbors in a common effort and inspire locally-led solutions to challenges facing our state. Challenges that can be addressed with locally-led solutions can be diverse in urban settings. Addressing hunger with a garden can bring communities together and initiate other positive outcomes for people. Pollinator habitat planned with urban gardens can provide an increase in harvest potential while providing food and habitat for declining insect communities in Texas.

The Texas NRCS Urban Conservation Project will provide technical and financial assistance to eligible entities to establish or improve gardens for food production, rainwater harvesting systems, for attracting and maintaining pollinators like monarch butterflies and the establishment of high tunnels to extend the growing season of fruits and vegetables.

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

1. Provide learning experiences in natural resources conservation to urban communities.
2. Address food deserts.
3. Create urban gardening projects that develop urban properties into vegetable and fruit production sites.
4. Improve access to healthy, affordable food at a local level.
5. Water conservation.
6. Increase pollinator habitat.
7. Leverage non-federal resources to achieve positive natural resources conservation outcomes.

Proposals will be accepted from eligible entities for projects located in Texas. NRCS anticipates that the total amount awarded under this announcement in Federal fiscal year 2019 will be approximately $275,000. This opportunity is open to States, political subdivisions, or agency thereof, a public or private agency, organizations, educational institutions and federally recognized Native American tribal governments (7 USC 6962a) for competitive consideration of grant awards for one year in duration.

The NRCS has funding available as follows:

1. Grants up to $4,000 will be available for a vegetable garden.
2. Financial resources are to be utilized for garden supplies which can include tools, seed, plants, fertilizer, soil, soil additives, irrigation materials and other garden materials.
3. Grants up to $5,000 will be available for rainwater harvesting systems.
4. Grants up to $3,000 will be available for pollinator habitat.
5. Grants up to $6,500 will be available for high tunnels.
6. Some technical assistance by NRCS staff will be available to provide information on soil health, plant species for pollinator habitat and design criteria for high tunnels.
7. The applicant must have and maintain control of the land where the garden and/or high tunnel will be established for the duration of the agreement.
8. The applicant is responsible for maintaining the garden and/or high tunnel once it is established for the duration of the agreement.
9. Applicants may request funding for a combination choice of garden, pollinator habitat and high tunnel.

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant.

The Texas State Conservationist reserves the right not to fund any or all applications. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for a single year submitted by eligible entities.

Applications will be accepted via grants.gov, email or mail. Visit www.grants.gov/apply and follow the instructions for applying via grants.gov. Emailed applications should be sent to bertha.venegas@usda.gov. Applications sent via express mail, overnight courier service, or the

United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, Bertha T. Venegas, State Outreach Coordinator, 136 Old San Antonio Road, Suite 302, Boerne, TX 78006.

Key Dates

Application Period: May 13, 2019 through June 7, 2019

Deadline for Submitting Questions: May 31, 2019

Due Date: 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST) on June 7, 2019

Anticipated Selection Date: July 8, 2019

Anticipated Agreement Execution Date: August 15, 2019

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The funding floor for this announcement is $1,000, and the funding ceiling is $18,500. 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.

B. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are 7 U.S.C. 6962a and Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Public Law 110-246; Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Section 1237, Public Law 99-198, 16 U.S.C 3831-3835a. Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, N/A Stat. N/A, 16 U.S.C 590 a-f. Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Section 2602, Public Law 110-246; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Section 2502, Public Law 107-171; Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Section 387, Public Law 104-127, 110 Stat. 888, 16 U.S.C 3836a. Subtitle I of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 as amended by section 2401 of the Agricultural Act of 2014.

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

C. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this announcement is $275,000.

2. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be for one year in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of August 15, 2019.

3. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award a grant pursuant to this opportunity notice. A grant is a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal agency and a non-Federal entity that, consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302, 6304: (a) is used to enter into a relationship with the principal purpose of transferring anything of value from the Federal awarding agency to the non-federal entity to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and (b) is distinguished from a cooperative agreement in that it does not provide for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the award. It may not be used to procure products or services for the primary benefit of the government.

4. Number of Awards

The agency expects to make approximately 20 awards.

D. 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.

This opportunity is open to States, political subdivisions, or agency thereof, a public or private agency, organizations, educational institutions and federally recognized Native American tribal governments (7 USC 6962a) for competitive consideration of grant awards for one year in duration.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

No cost share is required.

3. Other (if applicable)

Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program.

The project must be located in an **urban** area that does not meet the following criteria: The term "rural" and "rural area" mean any open country, or any place,

town, village, or city which is not part of or associated with an urban area and which (1) has a population not in excess of 2,500 inhabitants, or (2) has a population in excess of 2,500 but not in excess of 10,000 if it is rural in character, or (3) has a population in excess of 10,000 but not in excess of 20,000, and is not contained within a standard metropolitan statistical area (MSA).

The OMB defines a Metropolitan Statistical Area as one or more adjacent counties or county equivalents that have at least one urban core area of at least 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties.

E. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Content and Form of Application Submission

a. **Grant Application**: Submit a two-page proposal (section E. 1 b Proposal) plus the additional documentation required (Section E 2).

b. **Proposal**
To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an applicant must submit a TWO Page maximum Proposal of your project that includes the following information:

- Project title
- Project Director/Contact name, and contact information including address, email, and telephone number.
- Project Objectives (purpose and goals).
- Project geographic area/location (where application activities will take place)
- Project proposed activities and timeline
- The audience that will benefit from this project (Example: students, young, beginning, small, minority, veteran and other underserved groups or producers, underserved communities)
- Project deliverables
- Resources required
- Technical experience and capability of the applicant organization.
- Any specific strategies developed to address the objectives described in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO).

2. **Additional Documentation Required from Successful Applicants** – Applicants must submit the following documents with their Two Page Proposal:
    - SF 424, Application
    - SF 424A, Budget Information
    - Budget Narrative (One Page MS Word or Excel file)
    - SF 424B, Assurances (Non-Construction Programs)
    - Required Indirect Costs Statement (If Applicable)

- Current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) or request for de minimis rate agreement (if eligible under 2 CFR 200.414(f)). (If Applicable)
- Certification regarding lobbying
- AD-3031 (required of all applicants, not just those which are corporations).

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

   A description of each is below. Entities are strongly encouraged to apply early for their DUNS number and SAM registration.

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

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

4. **Submission Dates and Times**

   Proposals must be received by 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST) on June 7, 2019. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine

whether applications meet the submission deadline. Applications will be accepted via grants.gov, email or mail. Visit *www.grants.gov/apply* and follow the instructions for applying via grants.gov. Emailed applications should be sent to *bertha.venegas@usda.gov*. Include the opportunity number in the subject line or the address. Applications sent via express mail, overnight courier service, or the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, Bertha T. Venegas, State Outreach Coordinator, 136 Old San Antonio Road, Suite 302, Boerne, TX 78006.

Applicants must contact Bertha T. Venegas at (830) 249-3508 extension 103 or e-mail *bertha.venegas@usda.gov* to confirm receipt.

5. Funding Restrictions

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

a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project:
b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
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.

This list is not exhaustive. See 2 CFR 200 Subpart E, Cost Principles for additional information. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person listed in this announcement.

Indirect costs limitations:

a. A non-profit organization or institution of higher education awarded a grant will be limited to a 10% indirect cost rate in accordance with the Agency's annual appropriations act. The 10% indirect cost rate applies to both federal and non-federal funds. Other types of entities are not subject to this statutory limitation.

b. 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). In order to qualify for the de minimis rate, the recipient must have never had a NICRA. A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than $35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the de minimis rate.

c. Applicants not subject to the statutory limitation stated above, 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. 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)). 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% 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.

d. 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 subcontract 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% of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award. Applicants wishing to use the de minimis rate must submit a signed statement certifying that the entity 1) has never had a NICRA previously and 2) specifically request a de minimis rate agreement. (These documents need not be submitted with applicant's initial proposal. See section D2 above.)

e. For Profit Entities are not eligible to apply. Profit is not an eligible project cost.

f. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Merit/Technical Criteria

a. The extent to which the proposal supports conservation objectives of soil health, organics, pest management, and water conservation.
b. The extent which the proposal places emphasis to enhance community access to technical assistance to address food deserts.
c. The extent which the proposal places emphasis on creating urban gardening projects that develop urban properties into vegetable production sites or pollinator habitat.
d. The extent which the proposal places emphasis on leveraging non-federal and non-government resources to achieve positive natural resources conservation outcomes.
e. Evidence in the proposal that the design and implementation of project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
f. Measurability of project outcomes.
g. Potential for successful completion.
h. Project benefits young, beginning, small, minority, veteran and other underserved producers, historically underserved people or communities, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these groups.
i. Milestones and timelines are clear and reasonable.
j. Project staff has the technical expertise needed.
k. Budget is adequately explained and justified.
l. Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions, and agencies.

2. Review and Selection Process

Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by a technical review team, which will submit recommendations to the approving official based on the criteria listed in Section F1 above. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the State Conservationist.

The project must be located in an **urban** area that does not meet the following criteria: The term "rural" and "rural area" mean any open country, or any place, town, village, or city which is not part of or associated with an urban area and which (1) has a population not in excess of 2,500 inhabitants, or (2) has a population in excess of 2,500 but not in excess of 10,000 if it is rural in character, or (3) has a population in excess of 10,000 but not in excess of 20,000, and is not contained within a standard metropolitan statistical area (MSA).

The OMB defines a Metropolitan Statistical Area as one or more adjacent counties or county equivalents that have at least one urban core area of at least 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties.

In addition, the 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 may review information in FAPIIS accessible through SAM and comment on any information about it that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. 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.

3. **Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates**
   The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by July 8, 2019 and expects to have Federal awards in place by August 15, 2019.

G. 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 (form NRCS-ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency representative is the only authorizing document and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized representative for signature.

   Both successful and unsuccessful applicants with 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 NRCS's General Terms and Conditions; a copy of the General Terms and Conditions may be obtained by contacting the Federal Awarding Agency Contacts listed in this announcement.

3. **Reporting**
   Reporting will follow NRCS' General Terms and Conditions but will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, quarterly financial status reports, and final reports.

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

H. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

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

Administrative Contact
Name: Kristee Hall
Grants Management Specialist
USDA-FPAC Business Center
Mailing Address: 501 W. Felix Street, Bldg 23
Phone Number: (817) 509-3757
Email: Kristee.Hall@usda.gov

Technical Contact
Name: Bertha T. Venegas
State Outreach Coordinator
USDA-NRCS
Mailing Address: 136 Old San Antonio Road, Suite 302, Boerne, TX 78006
Phone Number: (830) 249-3508 extension 103
Email: bertha.venegas@usda.gov

I. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions

Questions regarding this announcement must be submitted to the Administrative or Technical Contact identified above. Submission via email is preferable with the Opportunity Number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by May 10, 2019. A questions-and-answers document addressing all questions will be posted to the Texas NRCS website where this NFO is initially published by May 15, 2019.

2. Amendments

Any amendments to this NFO will be posted only at the Texas NRCS website page https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/tx/programs/landscape/?cid=nrcseprd1411072 where this NFO is initially published.

3. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Proposals to NRCS are considered to be confidential information. Proposals are not shared with individuals or entities seeking public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without the consent of the applicant. More specifically,

Executive Order 12600 and USDA FOIA regulation 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A requires the NRCS to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information and requires NRCS 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 the announcement. Only authorized federal officials can bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds.

Information for NRCS NFO's can be found at Grants.gov or https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/tx/programs/landscape/?cid=nrcseprd1411072 .

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

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

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

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

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

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

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

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