

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department Of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Funding Opportunity Title: Announcement of Program Funding (APF) for Conservation Implementation Acceleration Technician Positions

Funding Opportunity Number: *USDA-NRCS-CON-KY-18-01*

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: CFDA 10.069, CFDA 10.902, CFDA 10.912, CFDA 10.924

Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary

The purpose of this announcement is to advertise opportunities to Kentucky Conservation Districts who are interested in partnering with NRCS to provide technical services to enhance or accelerate implementation of NRCS conservation programs. These services include activities related to developing information for conservation program applications and contracts, installing conservation practices, and certifying and reporting progress. Specific tasks are described in the attached Soil Conservation Technician position description.

Key Dates

[NFO will be posted on May 16, 2018, deadline for submitting questions regarding the NFO is May 31, 2018 and the date responses will be posted KY NRCS website is June 5, 2018. Application submission due date is 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, June 15, 2018, the anticipated selection date is July 9, 2018, and the anticipated agreement execution date is August 1, 2018.]

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The funding floor for this announcement is \$ 16,500, and the funding ceiling is \$95,000. The funding floor means the minimum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. The ceiling is the maximum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded.

A. 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, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, Section 1231, 16 U.S.C 3831-3835a, 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, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): This program is authorized by Chapter 4 of Subtitle D of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 USC 3839aa-- 3839aa-8), effective February 7, 2014., Executive Order Executive Order , Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Public Law 99- 198, 16 U.S.C 3830, Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) - Food Security Act of 1985, Public Law 106- 224, NA Stat. NA, 16 U.S.C 3838h

The NRCS - Kentucky State Office, an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is seeking support from and opportunities to partner with Kentucky Conservation Districts. The overall intent of this solicitation is to build partnerships to help enhance conservation delivery through increased conservation implementation. Proposed activities should be related to developing information for conservation program applications and contracts, providing technical assistance to ensure conservation practices meet NRCS standards and specifications, and certifying and reporting progress. Proposals will be accepted from Kentucky. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2018 will be approximately \$500,000. Proposals are requested from Kentucky Conservation Districts for competitive consideration of contribution agreements for projects up to 5 years in duration. This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The Kentucky State Conservationist reserves the right not to fund any or all applications. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for single or multiyear applications submitted by eligible entities.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this announcement is \$500,000.

2. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be between one and five years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of August 1, 2018.

3. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award a contribution agreement pursuant to this opportunity notice. A contribution agreement is a unique non-assistance cooperative agreement type available only to NRCS established by 7 U.S.C. 6962a. NRCS may enter contribution agreements for acquisition of goods or services when the objectives of the agreement will: (1) serve a mutual interest of the parties to the agreement in carrying out NRCS programs; and (2) all parties will contribute equal resources to the accomplishment of these objectives. NRCS policy requires a 50 percent contribution by the recipient.

4. Number of Awards

The agency expects to make approximately six award(s).

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.

This opportunity is normally open to States, political subdivisions, or agency thereof, a public or private agency, organization, or any other person. (7 USC 6962a) However, this opportunity is open to Kentucky Conservation Districts only who are interested in partnering with NRCS to provide technical services to enhance or accelerate implementation of NRCS conservation programs. These services include activities related to developing information for conservation program applications and contracts, installing conservation practices, and certifying and reporting progress. Specific tasks are described in the attached Soil Conservation Technician position description.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

This opportunity requires applicants to cost share at least fifty percent (50%) cash match of total project costs. The contribution ratio in the award must remain consistent throughout the duration of the award. Applications that do not include the required cost-sharing will be ineligible for award. Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash. Refer to section D of this opportunity for required submittals related to match or cost-share requirements. Recipients with unrecovered indirect costs may also use those to meet cost-sharing obligations.

Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions is located at 2 CFR 200.306.

3. Other (if applicable)

There is a limit of one proposal per applicant. A reasonable proposal is expected to cost between \$33,000 to \$38,000 per year (2080) hours or about \$14.50 to \$18.50 per hour to employee a Soil Conservation Technician. A 50% cash match of the total project cost is required for the agreements. For example if the total cost of an agreement is \$38,000, NRCS will provide \$19,000 and the partner will provide \$19,000. The matching funds must be in cash, and not in kind services. Partners will be allowed to be reimbursed at up to 10% of the federal project cost for administrative costs incurred supervising the employee.

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.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Content and Form of Application Submission

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain:

- a. **Contribution Agreement Application:** Use Attachment 1 to this NFO to provide basic information about the applicant entity as well as summary budget information for the proposed work.

- b. **Proposal**

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

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

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

1. Proposal Summary: (template is attached) Applicants must submit a project description including the information below:

- a. Lead Conservation District
- b. Collaborating Conservation Districts
- c. Service Area/geographic area
- d. Proposed funding amount by program and year. Available funding sources are CTA, CRP, CStP, and EQIP. The requested funding should match the proposed work.
- e. Employee Reimbursement Rate (include an explanation if the rate exceeds that which is described in II. Funding Availability)
- f. Project director/contact name, and contact information (including address, email, and telephone number)
- g. Description of work to be performed under the agreement. Include the current unmet need and explain how the proposed agreement will address that need. Indicate whether the work is associated with Farm Bill programs (specify the programs) or with State Cost Share.
- h. Proposal timeline (e.g., proposal start date, projected start date for new employee(s), proposed duration of work – e.g., two years.)
- i. Provide a description of the work proposed by the applicant. Include details regarding any specific personnel to be assigned to perform the work, resources that will be required, the technical experience and capability of the applicant organization, and any specific strategies developed to address the objectives described in this NFO. Please limit the proposal length to 3 pages.

2. Additional Documentation Required from Successful Applicants –

- SF 424, Application
- SF 424A, Budget Information
- Budget Narrative
- Instructions for completing SF 424, SF 424A and budget narrative
- SF 424B, Assurances (Non-Construction Programs)
- Required Indirect Costs Statement
- Current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) or request for de minimis rate agreement (if eligible under 2 CFR 200.414(f)).
- 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 sent via express mail, overnight courier service, or the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, Wayne Mattingly, Suite 300, 771 Corporate Drive, Lexington, KY 40503. Applicants must submit proposals via e-mail to the following address: wayne.mattingly@ky.usda.gov.

Proposals must be received by **[4:00 pm, Eastern Time zone]** on **[June 15, 2018]**. 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. Applicants must contact Reed Cripps at 859-224-7373 or reed.cripps@ky.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 contribution agreement 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. Profit is not an eligible project cost. Therefore, any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of direct and indirect costs only.

- f. Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she 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.
- g. Applicants of the program will be allowed to be reimbursed at up to 10% of the federal project cost for administrative costs incurred supervising the employee.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Merit/Technical Criteria

Applications will be evaluated against the specific objectives identified in the opportunity titles identified above, including the ability to provide the services identified in the attached Soil Conservation Technician position description.

Applications will be prioritized based on:

- Geographic scope. Priority will be given to proposals that provide service to a multi-county area.
- Farm Bill Workload. Priority will be given to proposals in locations with significant Farm Bill workload.
- Collaboration. Priority will be given to proposals with collaboration between multiple Conservation Districts.
- State Cost Share Workload. Priority will be given to proposals in locations with significant State Cost Share workload.
- Additionality. Addition of a staff to the service area.

2. Review and Selection Process

Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by Reed Cripps, Assistant State Conservationist, which will submit recommendations to the approving official based on the criteria listed in Section E1 above. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the Karen Woodrich.

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 9, 2018] and expects to have Federal awards in place by [August 1, 2018].

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 (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 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 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.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

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

Administrative Contact

Name: George Wilson

Grants Management Specialist

USDA-NRCS

Mailing Address: 501 W. Felix Street, Building 23, Fort Worth, Texas 76115

Phone Number: 817-509-3503

Email: george.wilson@wdc.usda.gov

Technical Contact

Name: Reed Cripps

Assistant State Conservationist

USDA-NRCS

Mailing Address: 771 Corporate Drive

Phone Number: 859-224-7373

Email: reed.cripps@ky.usda.gov

H. 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 31, 2018. A questions-and-answers document addressing all questions will be posted to the [Kentucky NRCS website where this NFO is initially published by June 5, 2018.

2. Amendments

Any amendments to this NFO will be posted only at the [Kentucky] NRCS website 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.

1. This is a one-time initiative.

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, 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.

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

Proposal Summary: Applicants must submit a project description including the information below:

- a. Lead Conservation District
- b. Collaborating Conservation Districts
- c. Service Area/geographic area
- d. Proposed funding amount by program and year. Available funding sources are CTA, CRP, CStP, and EQIP. The requested funding should match the proposed work.
- e. Employee Reimbursement Rate (include an explanation if the rate exceeds that which is described in II. Funding Availability)
- f. Project director/contact name, and contact information (including address, email, and telephone number)
- g. Description of work to be performed under the agreement. Include the current unmet need and explain how the proposed agreement will address that need. Indicate whether the work is associated with Farm Bill programs (specify the programs) or with State Cost Share.
- h. Proposal timeline (e.g., proposal start date, projected start date for new employee(s), proposed duration of work – e.g., two years.)