Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Outreach Funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 – NORTH CAROLINA

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NC-MULTI-21-NOFO0001082

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number (also known as Assistance Listing):
10.902 – Soil and Water Conservation
10.912– Environmental Quality Incentives Program
10.069– Conservation Reserve Program
10.924 – Conservation Stewardship Program

Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service -North Carolina, an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture, is announcing potential availability of funding for agreements for the purpose of leveraging NRCS resources to promote public awareness of Farm Bill activities throughout North Carolina. Proposals must be for projects based in North Carolina and focus on Farm Bill conservation. Research proposals or proposals that do not meet the needs will **not** be accepted, nor considered as part of this announcement.

Proposals will be accepted from eligible entities, including individuals, city or township governments, county governments, Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized), Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments), nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education), nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education), private institutions of higher education, Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education, and State governments for competitive consideration of awards for projects between 1 and five years in duration. The funding available for this announcement shall not exceed a total of $200,000.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions. Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The North Carolina State Conservationist reserves the right not to fund any or all applications.

Key Dates

Applicants must submit their proposals via Grants.gov. All applications must be received by **11:59 pm, EST, May 29, 2021.**

Proposals must be received by May 29, 2021, 11:59 p m EST. **Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.** The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation for submission made both via Grants.gov and email to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received. Applicant will receive an email receipt within 48 hours of submitting their emailed applications. An applicant who does not receive a receipt of confirmation within 2 business days of the submission deadline, but believes the proposal was submitted by the submission deadline, must contact the North Carolina State Office within 3 business days of the submission deadline. Failure to do so may result in the proposal not being considered.

NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grants.gov or emailed submissions. Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time. 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.

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The funding floor for this opportunity $25,000, and the funding ceiling is $200,000. 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 under: Conservation Technical Assistance: Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law (P.L.)74-76, N/A Statute N/A, 16 United States Code (U.S.C) 590 a-f. Environmental Quality Incentives Program: This program is authorized by Chapter 4 of Subtitle D of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa--3839aa-8), effective February 7, 2014, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, P.L. 99-198, 16 U.S.C. 3830. Conservation Stewardship Program: 16 USC 3839aa-21 et seq. Conservation Reserve Program: 16 U.S.C 3831-3835a

The purpose of this announcement is to seek potential agreements with entities whose mission is natural resource conservation to promote public awareness of Farm Bill activities including, but not limited to, conducting conservation outreach workshops, conferences, and training, that will

help educate North Carolina's farm community, private landowners, conservation organizations, cooperating agencies, and general citizenry. The focus areas are described below. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for one to five proposals submitted by eligible entities.
Upon final award, activities shall be coordinated based on priorities and in conjunction with NRCS.

Entities are invited to apply for NRCS assistance for the following opportunities:

Farm Bill Outreach: Promote public awareness of NRCS Farm Bill programs and further the development of NRCS relationships with conservation partners and participants, women agricultural producers, veterans, minority and limited resource landowners, beginning farmers, and historically underserved agricultural producers. Applicant will demonstrate their ability to connect with NC producers, and how they intend to reach multiple groups.

Soil Health Strategies Outreach: Provide educational opportunities to North Carolina agricultural producers and the public regarding soil health. Opportunities can include general information, technical guidance, and NRCS programmatic applications and components of soil health. Topics of education and demonstration include but are not limited to: soil health concepts among land uses, soil health field assessments, management techniques and implements, effects of conservation practices on soil properties and resource concerns, other natural resource benefits from improved soil health, and implications of native plant community adoption on soil biology. Applicant must demonstrate the capability to unite members of the agriculture, science, and technology communities. Applicant must also be able to demonstrate their ability to develop strategic outreach plans in order to target audiences with appropriate educational opportunities.

Organic Outreach:
Provide opportunities to educate North Carolina agricultural producers who are following or considering the use of organic principles or considering transitioning to an organic production system in North Carolina. Opportunities include: promotion and expansion of field-to-market efforts; voluntary landowner supported efforts to educate producers on implementing organic farming techniques and improving the understanding of organic labeling, marketing, and associated benefits. Encourage technical assistance, education, research, technology transfer, and public awareness in North Carolina food deserts. Show the economic and environmental sustainability of organic crops in both communities with large diverse populations and socio-economically challenged populations, to provide continuity of learning and sustainability throughout North Carolina.

Specialty Crop Outreach:
Provide opportunities to educate North Carolina agricultural producers who are beginning and expanding specialty crop production in North Carolina. Example crops include: fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture production in North Carolina. Opportunities include: promotion and expansion of field-to-market efforts; voluntary landowner supported efforts to educate producers on crop rotations, integration with high tunnel systems, irrigation, marketing, and associated benefits. Encourage technical assistance, collaborate on education, research, technology transfer, and public awareness of the

benefits of transitioning or integrating specialty crops. Show examples and demonstrate economic and environmental sustainability in both communities with large diverse populations and socio-economically challenged populations throughout North Carolina.

Urban Agriculture Outreach

To address food deserts and educate urban citizens and youth on the benefits of locally grown fresh produce and greening of the urban landscape. Provide learning opportunities that encourage requests for technical assistance, education and public awareness of economically and environmentally sustainable agricultural in urban settings.

Forestry Outreach

Promote sustainable and science-based forest management practices to family forest owners, focusing on USDA NRCS programs and tools that help overcome barriers to forest stewardship and engage more forest owners in conservation impact on the ground. Outreach should emphasize the ability of healthy working forests to provide aesthetics, clean air and water, recreation, wildlife habitat, forest products, and other services. Provide practical solutions to contemporary forest resource concerns, including degraded plant condition and inadequate wildlife habitat due to unsustainable forest management practices, widespread non-native invasive plants, animals, and diseases, and a general lack of natural and anthropogenic disturbances. Make efforts to unite family forest owners with professional foresters and local markets for forest products. Applicant should demonstrate beneficial outcomes for family forest owners (e.g., enrollment in USDA NRCS financial assistance programs; access to professional foresters to assist with developing forest management plans and implementation), professional foresters (e.g., certification as USDA NRCS Technical Service Providers; continuing education credits), and end users (e.g., assurance of forest products to local markets; assurance of workload for forest management contractors).

Wetland Reserve Easement Outreach:

Promote participation in the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). WRE easements enable landowners to adopt a variety of conservation practices that improve the ecological functions and values of wetlands. The voluntary nature of WRE allows effective integration of wetland restoration on working landscapes. These integrations provide benefits to farmers, ranchers, landowners, and their local communities.

The WRE program provides important habitat for wetland wildlife, retains floodwater and recharges groundwater, protects native vegetation, and has great educational value. Protecting and restoring wetlands assists landowners in improving water quality by reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff into local waterways. It is also a viable alternative for landowners seeking financial assistance in return for removing marginal lands from production.

Guidelines are available at:
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1242695

A Wetland Reserve Plan of Operations (WRPO) will be developed on WRE enrollments in consultation with the landowner and partners such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service

(USFWS). The WRPO is intended to restore, protect, enhance, maintain, and manage hydrology, native vegetation, natural topography, and other wetland features, functions and values.

The majority of outreach should be targeted to areas of the state that contain wetland geography and soils. Deliverables will include:

- Review geospatial resources for the state to identify suitable wetland geology, geography, and soils on existing farmland, and prepare that data so it can be usable by NRCS to create an outreach plan identifying state target areas, target audiences, and relevant material that can be presented to the public to increase sign-up and enrollment;
- Meet on a regular schedule with the NRCS State Easement Coordinator to review phases of the project, deliverables, and potential target areas for outreach; and
- Find suitable outlets and deliver outreach material (agricultural workshops, field days, extension meetings, conferences, etc.)

This project would be limited to one year and would not require a full-time appointment.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this opportunity is $200,000.00

2. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be between 1 and 5 years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 15, 2021.

3. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award a cooperative agreement(s) pursuant to this opportunity. The agency will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement and will undertake activities such as the following:

a. Authority to suspend work if specifications or work statements are not met.
b. Review and approval of one stage of work before another may begin.
c. Review and approval of substantive provisions of proposed subgrants or contract beyond existing Federal polity
d. NRCS and recipient collaboration or joint participation.
e. Project monitoring to permit specified kinds of direction or redirection of the work because of interrelationships with and impacts on other projects.
f. Highly prescriptive NRCS requirements that limit recipient discretion
g. Review and approval of key personnel.
h. Direct NRCS operational involvement or participation during the activity.

4. **Number of Awards**
   The agency expects to make up to 5 award(s).

5. **Procurement Contracts**
   The agency does not expect to award procurement contracts associated with this opportunity.

6. **Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications**
   Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are not eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards. An application for renewal means an application submitted to continue an existing agreement that meets the objectives and requirements of this NFO. An application for supplementation of an existing project means an application to add components to an existing agreement so that it would meet the objectives and requirements in 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 200.205(d)).

   Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to the following entity types:
   - City or township governments
   - County governments
   - Individuals
   - Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
   - Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
   - Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
   - Nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
   - Private institutions of higher education
   - Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
   - State governments

2. **Cost Sharing or Matching**

There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity. However, applications will be evaluated in part on the relative contribution of non-Federal resources to the project. Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash, services, materials, equipment, or third-party in-kind contributions.

3. **Other (if applicable)**
   Any individual award made pursuant to this opportunity 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.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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.

1. **Address to Request Application Package**
   All standard forms necessary for this opportunity announcement are included in the Grants.gov opportunity package.

2. **Content and Form of Application Submission**
   To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain:

   a. **Proposal**
   Proposals must be divided into the following sections and are limited to the number of pages stated per section.
   1. Project Summary/Abstract (Three-page maximum): Applicant must submit a description including the information below:
      a. Project/workshop title;
      b. Primary area that application pertains to as described in Section 1, Part B of this announcement;
      c. Project director/contact name and contact information (including address, email, and telephone number);
      d. Names and affiliations of application collaborators;
      e. Project/workshop objectives (purpose and goals);
      f. Project/workshop geographic area/location (where application activities will take place);
      g. Project/workshop proposed activities; and
      h. Project/workshop deliverables and benefits.

2.Project Description (12-page maximum): The project description must include the following information in order:

i. Project background: Describe the issue or problem. Include the geographic area and those who will be affected and benefit from this project/workshop.
j. Project/workshop objectives and methods: Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose and goals.
k. Project/workshop action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Applicant should develop their timelines based on a project start date of September 15, 2021.
l. Geographic location and size of project or project area: Identify the geographic location and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map if possible.
m. Project Management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed, including a list/description of project partners. Include a list of key technical and administrative personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Résumés and Curriculum Vitae are not required, if submitted they will count towards the 12-page maximum.
n. Project/workshop deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor progress and payment. In addition to Project-specific deliverables, selected applicant will be required to provide the following:
o. Semi-annual progress reports;
p. Supplemental narratives or brief updates that indicate progress that explain and support payment requests; and
q. A final report.
r. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits derived from the project. Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; Historically Underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and/or municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. Describe how the results will be communicated to others via outreach activities. Forecast the lasting impact of project results.
s. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, do not count towards the 12-page maximum.

The text of the proposal must be no smaller than 12-point font, must be a minimum of one-inch margins.

Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. **Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered**. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered.

b. **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.

c. **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 any applicable 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.

d. **Budget Narrative.** In a separate narrative 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. See Instructions for Completing Budget Narrative located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.

   i. 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.

   ii. 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% 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.

e. **Standard Form (SF) 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs**. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following Federal regulations:

- 2 CFR Part 417, Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)
- 4 CFR Part 418, New Restrictions on Lobbying
- 2 CFR Part 421, Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)

f. **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.

g. **Post Award Documentation**. N/A

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.

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.

> 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. 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.

4. **Submission Dates and Times**

   Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov. Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on May 29, 2021. 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. Grants.gov provides and automatic acknowledgement when applications are received.

5. **Intergovernmental Review**
   This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

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

   - Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project:
   - Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
   - Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;

- Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- 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
- 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.
- Management fees and profit

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

Indirect costs limitations:

a. A non-profit organization or institution of higher education awarded a cooperative agreement will be limited to a 10% indirect cost rate in accordance with the Agency's annual appropriations act. 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 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. 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)). 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% 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 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% of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award.

e. Profit is not an eligible project cost. Therefore, any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related 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.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Merit/Technical Criteria

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Proposals requesting research funding will be immediately rejected and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. Applicant should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application. **Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or proposals not meeting the formatting criteria will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant.** NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on these Proposal Evaluation Criteria (120 points possible) prior to submitting scoring data to the North Carolina NRCS State Conservationist for final award selection:

Proposal Ranking Criteria Points	Points
Addresses one or more North Carolina NRCS priorities.	0-20
Objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a timeline for completion.	0-10

Clearly describes project activities.	0-15
Describes staffing of project and brief staff job descriptions.	0-5
Project methodology is innovative.	0-5
Leverages private and/or public-sector partnerships.	0-10
Presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be conducted within the budget, time, and resources of the program.	0-15
Contains significant match in the form of cash, non-cash, or in-kind services from applicant and/or contributing organizations.	0-10
Applicant has demonstrated ability/experience in managing Federal agreements or has a letter of support from an organization with such ability/experience that commits that organization to provide agreement management assistance in the event the proposal is selected for funding.	0-15
The proposal does not rely on partner use of NRCS vehicles, computers, office space, or on training provided by NRCS.	0-15

2. Risk Criteria

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)).

To further comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.205, the agency has established the following risk review process and related standards that an applicant must meet to be considered for award:

a. Financial Stability. The applicant certifies that it maintains adequate financial resources or cash flow to meet its financial obligations on a routine basis and 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 certifies it has a financial management system adequate to segregate and track federal funds. It further certifies is 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 certifies that 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.

3. **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 will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The agency intends to make a selection and award without conducting any discussions or allowing applicants to correct deficiencies or omissions in their applications. Consequently, they 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 identified by the awarding agency. If this is done, the agency will conduct discussions with all applicants and identify deficiencies and omissions and give applicants and 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 application.

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 North Carolina NRCS State Conservationist.

4. **Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (if applicable)**
Notice to applicants:

   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 29, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 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 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 the 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 opportunity announcement.

3. **Reporting**
   Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the 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.

   Applicants that receive awards pursuant to this opportunity and any sub awardees 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).

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact the following individual:

Administrative Contact (Primary Contact)
Name: Sondra Watkins
Grants Management Specialist
FPAC Business Center
Email: sondra.watkins@usda.gov with a copy to FPAC.BC.GAD@USDA.GOV

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions regarding this opportunity must be submitted to the Administrative Contact identified above via email with the Opportunity Number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by May 1, 2021. A questions and answers document addressing all questions will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this opportunity in Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the deadline.

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.

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.