Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Iowa Partners for Conservation (IPC) Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Announcement for Program Funding – IOWA

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-IA-IPC-20-GEN0010749

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number (also known as Assistance Listing): 10.902, 10.903, 10.069, 10.912, 10.924, 10.931, 10.923

Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing the potential availability of funding for agreements for the purpose of leveraging NRCS resources, addressing local natural resource issues, encouraging collaboration and developing state-and-community-level conservation leadership. Proposals must be for projects based in Iowa and focus on conservation issues as noted in Section A (2) of this notice. Collaborative projects that provide on-the-ground support for Iowa NRCS Field Offices are highly encouraged. Research proposals will not be accepted, nor considered. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2020 will be up to $2,500,000.00. Proposals are requested from City or township governments, county governments, Federally recognized Native American tribal governments, state governments, , nonprofits having a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education), or institutions of higher education for competitive consideration of awards for projects between 1 and 5 years in duration. Organizations may use this opportunity to request additional funding for existing Iowa IPC agreements. Awarded organizations may be required to attend administrative training and may be required to present project updates in the form of a formal presentation to the Iowa NRCS Leadership.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for projects. 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.
In addition to the information in this opportunity, more information can be found at the following website:
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/people/partners/request+for+proposals+%28rfp%29/

Key Dates:

Applications must be submitted by 10:59 p.m. Central Daylight Time on June 01, 2020. Applicants must submit proposals via Grants.gov at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html. **and** via e-mail to the following address: to Judy Martinson at Judy.Martinson@usda.gov with a cc to Carolyn Christian at Carolyn.Christian@usda.gov.

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.

If NRCS Iowa receives additional funding for this opportunity, additional selections beyond the initial selections may be made in order of ranking. Funding decisions will be made by the NRCS Iowa State Conservationist, informed by the ranking list and the availability of funding in the programs whose CFDA numbers are listed above.

Written questions regarding the application process will be accepted until May 01, 2020. Answers to written questions will be submitted for posting to Grants.gov (https://www.grants.gov/) on May 06, 2020.

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The funding floor for this opportunity $75,000.00, and the funding ceiling is $1,500,000.00. The funding floor means the minimum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. The ceiling is the maximum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are:

1. Legislative Authority

Conservation and Water Conservation (CTA): 16 U.S.C 590 a-f, 590q.

Soil Survey: 16 U.S.C. 590a-f, 590q 42 U.S.C. 3271-3274

Conservation Reserve Program: 16 U.S.C 3831-3835a

Environmental Quality Incentives Program: 16 U.S.C. 3839 et seq.

Conservation Stewardship Program: 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-21 et seq.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easements: 16 U.S.C. 3865 et seq.

2. Overview

The purpose of the Iowa Partners for Conservation awards will be to leverage NRCS and partner resources on proposals that address the following strategic goals of the Iowa NRCS Strategic Plans:

1. Conduct on-site (field) monitoring and follow up of Easement and other Stewardship Lands.
2. Promote Soil Health engagement in the agronomic community (private sector) with the help of conservation agronomists.
3. Conduct on-site (field) practice certifications and follow-up with producers on conservation seeding establishment.
4. Facilitate conversations with NRCS staff and partners at the field level regarding Iowa NRCS' new conservation delivery schedule. The conversations need to result in relationships between field staff and resource team members.

Priority will be placed on projects that:

1. Provide high quality technical services that help our customers achieve their conservation goals.
2. Increase adoption of conservation in Iowa.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this announcement is $2,500,000.00 in FY 2020, although the exact amount and composition of available funds has not yet been determined.

2. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Approved Iowa Partners for Conservation awards will be awarded in FY 2020 and will not exceed 5 years. Projects may be between three and five years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 15, 2020. Project years are determined using the NRCS fiscal year with the first fiscal year ending on September 30, 2020 and the second year beginning October 1, 2020.

3. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award a cooperative agreement 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. Participating in design or direction of activities to develop research protocol or training or service delivery method.
b. Participation in collection or use of data
c. Participation in field trials or presentations
d. Providing OTJ or other training to recipient employees/contractors
e. Participating on committees, review panels, etc.
f. Use of NRCS facilities, computers, or vehicles.
g. Authority to suspend work if specifications or work statements are not met.
h. Project monitoring to permit specified kinds of direction or redirection of the work because of the interrelationships with and impacts of other projects.
i. Review and approval of key personnel.
j. Reviewing of substantive terms of proposed contracts.
k. Review and approval of one stage of work before another may begin.

4. Number of Awards

The agency expects to make between zero and fifteen awards, depending upon the quality of the applications and the exact amount and composition of available funds.

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 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. Organizations may use this opportunity to request additional funding for existing Iowa IPC agreements.

7. Training Requirement for Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will send an administrative and technical contact to attend the Iowa NRCS training for Administration of Federal Agreements. This training is usually held within six months of the award start date. Reasonable travel and per diem costs associated with the training may be built into the proposal. Iowa NRCS does not guarantee this training will be available through online or teleconference capabilities.

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
- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- Nonprofits having 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 a not a specific match amount required. 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.

Matching funds must be secured at time of application. Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. See section D(2)(c)(ii) of this opportunity for matching funds verification submission requirements. Cost sharing/match documentation does not count against any applicable page limits. Additional information about matching funds can be found at 2 CFR 200.

3. **Other**

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/sub-awardee relationship.

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 (2 CFR 200.205(d)).

Activities supported through these awards will be limited to those which are within authorities of contributing programs administered by the NRCS.

Research proposals will not be accepted, nor considered.

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. The FY20 IPC Request for Proposal Template, and other documents, are available in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity in Grants.gov and at the Iowa NRCS website: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/people/partners/request+for+proposals+(rfp)/. Applicants may request paper copies of materials by contacting Judy.Martinson@usda.gov or by written request mailed to Judy Martinson, 210 Walnut Street, Room 693, Des Moines, Iowa, 50309.

2. **Content and Form of Application Submission**

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

a. **Proposal**

The proposal must be completed using the Iowa FY20 IPC Request for Proposal Template. This template requires Adobe software. The template is available in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov and can be downloaded from the Iowa NRCS website at: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/people/partners/request+for+proposals+%28rfp%29/

A free version of Adobe Reader is available for downloading at https://get.adobe.com/reader/, however, the applicant should be aware that this version has limited function and Iowa NRCS does not guarantee that it will meet the applicant needs in submitting this application. Proposals must be divided into the following sections and are limited to the number of pages stated per section. Please note that this is an Adobe fillable form with character limitations assigned to each section.

First Page: Project Data Page (1 page)

I. Summary: 250 words maximum (1/2 page)
II. Introduction: One (1) page maximum
III. Needs Assessment: One (1) page maximum
IV. Program Goals and Objectives: One and one-half (1.5) page maximum
V. Project Management Methodology: Three (3) page maximum
VI. Deliverables Template One (1) page maximum
VII. Evaluation: One (1) page maximum
VIII. Budget Narrative: Three (3) page maximum
IX. Cost Benefit Analysis: Two (2) page maximum
X. Key Project Contacts: Two (2) page maximum
XI. Agreement Contacts: One (1) page maximum

Section Descriptions:

First Page: Project Data Page

A summary of organizational, funding, and project information.

I. Summary

The summary should include one or two sentences about each of the following: the applicant organization, the need motivating the request, the project start and end dates, measurable outcomes and methodology, other organizations that will be involved, and the project total cost, funds already obtained, and the amount requested in this proposal.

II. Introduction

This section should introduce your organization to the reviewer and lend credibility to your organization's ability to successfully manage a federal agreement. The response should be succinct and offer a good balance between quantitative and qualitative information.

III. Needs Assessment

This section should demonstrate the tie-in to the organizational mission and goals, describe the issue, and the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation, provide statistical and authoritarian evidence that supports the need identified in the proposal, supports a high probability for success, and makes a compelling case for the project funding based demonstrated client needs.

IV. Program Goals and Objectives

This section of the proposal should demonstrate project outcomes, not project activities. Each goal reflects the purpose toward which an endeavor is directed. Each objective must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a time-line for completion.

V. Project Management Methodology

Provide a narrative with a strictly defined combination of logically related practices, methods and processes that describes how you will plan, develop, control and deliver the project until successful completion and termination. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education/experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. **This section MUST include a timeline with milestones that include, but are not limited to: project initiation, planning and design of each deliverable, execution of each critical task and deliverable, and close-out project tasks, including project evaluation.**

VI. Deliverables Template

Use this section to document tasks, deliverables, and cost associated with this project.

VII. Evaluation

This section should clarify your objectives, define the ease with which they can be measured, and clearly state the criteria for how success will be measured using quantifiable methods. Your evaluation should determine whether the delivered program was consistent with the initial plan and identify which program activities individually contributed to the effectiveness of the program.

VIII. Budget Narrative

Provide a detailed budget and budget narrative in support of the proposed project. Within the Budget Narrative, discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Supplies, Other, and Equipment must be itemized.

IX. Cost Benefit Analysis
Compile a comprehensive list of all the costs and benefits associated with developing and delivering the project deliverables. Evaluate all costs and provide a detailed analysis of the cost benefits of your proposal. Assign a realistic dollar value on tangible and intangible proposal deliverables and benefits.

X. Key Project Contacts
Provide information for the individuals who will be working directly on development and implementation of this project. Be specific regarding their Project Role and the experience they bring to the project. Do not include administrative personnel or signatories in this section.

XI. Agreement Contacts
Provide the administrative and technical contact information for this agreement. This information will become part of the agreement package upon acceptance of the proposal.

Margins and page numbers on the template may not be modified. The text of the proposal must be single spaced and typed in Times New Roman, no smaller than 12-point font and must not exceed nineteen (19) pages. Information must be provided within the proscribed sections and may not be considered if inaccurately documented within the template.

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**. This is a self-limiting fillable form. Pasted text that exceeds the page limits will be blocked by template page limits.

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.** The budget is comprised of the SF424A and the information provided in the FY20 IPC Request for Proposal Template

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.

i. Required Cost-Share Documentation:

If Cost sharing/matching is included in the proposal, the funds must be committed at the time of application submission. Applications must include written documentation showing the amounts and sources of match or cost share (including both cash and in-kind contributions). Cost sharing/match documentation does not count against any applicable page limits.

For third-party contributions, such documentation must include a separate letter of support for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the contributor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar amount of the contribution, and (5) a statement that the contributor will pay the contribution no later than the end of the award period. The agency may conduct reference checks to ensure that organizations identified are supportive and involved with the project."]

ii. **Indirect Costs**:

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. **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.

f. **Post Award Documentation**. Applicants may be required to resubmit any of the above documents for date changes, new signatures or document corrections once a notification of intent to award has been made to the organization. **Failure to comply with requested changes within the requested time period may result in rescinding of the award offer.**

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 and to Iowa NRCS. Proposals must be submitted by 10:59 p.m. Central Daylight Time on June 01, 2020. Applicants must submit proposals via Grants.gov at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html. **and** via e-mail to the following address: to Judy Martinson at Judy.Martinson@usda.gov with a cc to Carolyn Christian at Carolyn.Christian@usda.gov.

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.

Note in the message line of the email: FY20 IPC [organization name] [proposal name]. You are encouraged to keep the name of your proposal short. **Attachments must be named and emailed as separate documents. Do not send as one adobe document or as a compressed (i.e. zipped) files.** Attachment names must reflect the name of the organization and the form name (Example: Cambridge University_SF-424A) If it takes more than one email to send the attachments, number the emails in the message line (example: three emails would be numbered 1 of 3, 2 of 3, and 3 of 3)

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, 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
- Costs not supported by the funding categories identified in the SF-424A.

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 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. The 10% indirect cost rate applies to both federal and non-federal funds. Other types of entities are not subject to this statutory limitation.

a. **To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either** 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; or 2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). 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.

b. Applicants not subject to a statutory limitation, which have a current NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. A recipient may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at its sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the agency. 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.

c. Entities that are eligible for the de minimis rate who already have a de minimis rate agreement must use the rate and base specified in the agreement, which is modified total direct costs (MTDC) as defined by 2 CFR 200.68 and also excluding the amount of each subaward exceeding $25,000. Note that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base to which the rate is applied. A copy of the applicant's de minimis rate agreement must be provided with the application. If a recipient is eligible to use the de minimis rate, but does not have a de minimis rate agreement, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10% of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award.

d. 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

All proposals that include conservation planning assistance MUST specifically include the following in Section V. of the FY20 IPC Request for Proposal Template, and will not be considered if not included:

- What steps of the 9-step NRCS conservation planning process are included in the project proposal,
- Who will have responsibility for the completion of each step, and
- Detail in the project methodology documenting how each step will executed.

Proposals do not require matching or in-kind contributions, but this factor is considered in the review process. Proposals containing matching or in-kind funding will receive up to 10 additional points in the review process.

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.

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. 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.

NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on these Proposal Evaluation Criteria (195 points possible) prior to submitting scoring data to the Iowa NRCS State Conservationist for final award selection:

2. **Proposal Ranking Criteria:**

Proposal criteria will be ranked between as unacceptable, marginal, satisfactory, good, or excellent, with a scoring range dependent upon the weighted significance of each criteria. Maximum points for each criteria are listed below.

1. **Purpose, Approach, and Goals (80 points)**
   - 1.1. Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technical approach. (10 points)
   - 1.2. Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production. (10 points)
   - 1.3. Outcome is clearly measurable using SMART objectives – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. (10 points)
   - 1.4. Provides direct technical assistance to NRCS customers. (25 points)
   - 1.5. Addresses one or more Iowa NRCS priorities **AND** emphasis areas. Addressing a priority without addressing an emphasis area will result in no higher than a satisfactory scoring of 10 points. (maximum 25 points)

2. **Project Management (65 points)**
   - 2.1. Clearly describes project activities that can be conducted within the budget, time and resources of the program. Milestones and timeline are clear and reasonable. (25 points)
   - 2.2. Project staff has the technical expertise needed. (20 points)
   - 2.3. Budget is adequately explained and justified. (10 points)

2.4. Experience and capacity to partner with, and gain, the support of other organizations, institutions, and agencies. This criteria scoring must be justified by documented letters of support that specifically document in-kind monetary or services support that will be provided to the project. (10 points)

3. Funding and Partnerships (50 points)

3.1. Leverages private/public partnerships (10 points)

3.2. Contains significant match. "Excellent" in this category is defined as 100% or more match of requested federal dollars. (10 points)

3.3. Applicant has demonstrated ability to manage federal agreements. (20 points)

3.4. Applicant has supplied a cost-benefit analysis that demonstrates a comparative assessment of the project benefits and all the costs to introduce the project, complete the tasks, and support the changes resulting from the project over the life of the project. In rating this criteria, the reviewer must determine if the project deliverables can be completed by the partner for a lower cost than NRCS could produce the deliverables. The analysis must include direct and indirect costs associated with the project. Dollars/per deliverable product. (10 points)

3. 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.

4. 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 committee of NRCS staff members, with the recommendations forwarded to the Iowa State Conservationist. The State Conservationist will make the final determinations of awards with consideration given to the committee recommendations, NRCS Iowa conservation needs, and available funding. Final award offers many not reflect the recommendations of the review committee. Risk reviews will be conducted by the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division.

5. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold

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.

6. Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by July 1, 2020. Federal awards are anticipated to be in place by September 1, 2020 but dates may vary depending upon NRCS workload. Awarded applicants may be required to re-submit or revise previously submitted proposal forms and documents. Re-submitted forms and documents must be completed and returned to NRCS by the requested return date. Late or incomplete re-submissions may result in the award offer being rescinded.

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 email, letter, or both.

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. Training Requirements

Successful applicants are required to send one administrative and one technical contact to an Iowa Administrative Training workshop during the first calendar year the training is offered. Funds may be added to the proposal travel budget to cover travel and per diem costs. Per diem costs are allowed only for over-night travel.

4. 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 using NRCS Iowa provided format

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 one of the following individuals:

Administrative Contact (Primary Contact)
Name: Michele Devaney
Grants Management Specialist
FPAC Business Center
Mailing Address: 125 S. State St., Room 4010, Salt Lake City, UT 84138
Phone Number: (801) 524-4587
Email: michele.devaney@usda.gov

NRCS Program Contact
Name: Judy Martinson
Resource Conservationist – Partnership Team
USDA-NRCS
Mailing Address: 210 Walnut Street, Room 693, Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone Number: 515-323-2229
Email: Judy.Martinson@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 01, 2020. A questions and answers document addressing all questions will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this opportunity in Grants.gov by May 06, 2020.

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

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

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

5. **Withdrawal**
   Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are mad. Proposals may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

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.

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