

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
USDA-NRCS-IA
CONSERVATION EASEMENT BOUNDARY SURVEY ASSISTANCE

AGENCY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Des Moines, Iowa

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER

10.072 – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
10.923 – Emergency Watershed Program – Floodplain Protection Easement (EWP-FPE)
10.920 – Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Iowa is requesting applications to provide procurement services for legal land surveys on Wetlands Reserve Program easements, Emergency Watershed Program – Floodplain Protection Easements and Grassland Reserve Program easements. Applicants will be responsible for assisting NRCS and landowners by providing assistance necessary to procure services for legal land surveys on new easement applications and retracement of existing easements. Performance may include any part or all operations necessary to procure a legal boundary survey that meets NRCS specifications. Land survey specifications and surveyor requirements are attached. NRCS will require that the recipient of this agreement contract with only surveyors meeting the requirements in this document.

Applications are being requested from nonprofits having a 501(c) (3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education and nonprofits that do not have a 501(c) (3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education for competitive consideration of cooperative agreements.

APPLICATION DUE DATE AND ADDRESSES: Applications must be received in the Iowa NRCS State Office by **4:00 p.m., Central Time (CT) on May 24, 2013**. The address for hand-delivered applications or applications using express mail or overnight courier service is: Contracting Section, ATTN: Carolyn Christian, Contract Specialist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 210 Walnut Street, Room 693, Des Moines, IA 50309.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) (CFDA 10.072); Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Section 1237, Public Law 99-198, 99 Stat. 1504, 16 U.S.C 3831, as amended by The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Title II, Part Subtitle C, Section 2201, Public Law 110-234, 122 Stat. 1036, as amended by Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Title XIV, Part Subtitle B, Section 1438, Public Law 101-624, 104 Stat. 3584, 16 U.S.C

3837, as amended by Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2001, Public Law 106-387, as amended by Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1998, Public Law 111-80, as amended by Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, Public Law 103-66, as amended by Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Title II, Part Subtitle C, Section 2201, Public Law 107-171, 116 Stat. 252, as amended by Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Title III, Part Subtitle D, Section 333, Public Law 104-127, 110 Stat. 995.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) (CFDA 10.920); Food Security Act of 1985, Public Law 199-198, as amended by Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Title II, Part Subtitle E, Section 2401, Public Law 107-171, 116 Stat. 258, 16 U.S.C 3838n, as amended by The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Title II, Part Subtitle E, Section 2403, Public Law 110-234, 122 Stat. 1051.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) (CFDA 10.923); American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Public Law 111-5, 123 Stat. 117; the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978, Section 403, Public Law 95-334, 33 U.S.C 701B-1; Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1950, Section 216, Public Law 81-516, 33 U.S.C 701b; Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Title III, Part Subtitle H, Section 382, Public Law 104-127, 110 Stat. 1016, 16 U.S.C 2203.

B. Overview

The purpose of the easement programs is to protect and preserve unique land use features on Iowa's landscape. WRP and EWP-FPE are mainly perpetual or 30 year easements in which the landowners agree to sell the NRCS their agricultural value of the land for the protection of a greater ecosystem. GRP is a working lands permanent easement program. Landowners are allowed to continue to graze or hay this easement area in accordance with an approved grazing management plan but these easements may not be tilled for crop production or developed for housing.

The NRCS is requesting applications from qualified individuals and organizations that share a common interest in the conservation of natural resources throughout Iowa and have the capability to assist us in our mission.

C. Project Description

The objective of the NRCS conservation easement programs is to provide long term or permanent protection for environmentally critical lands. These lands must be legally surveyed and boundaries marked on the ground so that easement holders and adjacent landowners know that the land is protected by a conservation easement. These boundary surveys are recorded at the courthouse and filed with the conservation warranty easement deed. Applicants will be responsible for assisting NRCS by providing specialized assistance to procure conservation easement boundary surveys as described in the attached specifications.

Awardees will perform all work in close coordination with the NRCS Natural Resource Specialist, District Conservationist (DC) and Contracting Staff. Once a project is received the awardee will complete the assigned project during the performance period identified in each survey request. Awardees will be responsible for appointing a survey ordering officer. This

ordering officer will work with the NRCS Natural Resource Specialist in regards to the day to day concerns of the surveyors and procurement of surveys. The awardee will provide NRCS with all the deliverables as outlined in the attached documents and provide, if requested by NRCS, a list of the surveyors that will be used in this process.

NRCS will provide the awardee with a conservation easement package consisting of the documentation that they will need to procure the easement legal land survey. The Awardee will solicit for the procurement of the survey from surveyors meeting the criteria set forth in the attached documents and provide NRCS with a quote for services. NRCS and the awardee will duly concur on the cost of the conservation easement surveys. Conservation Easement land survey specifications are included in the attached document.

The awardee will be expected to provide the NRCS a monthly status report of work in progress and any other documentation as may be required by the NRCS standards and specifications.

Location of Services: Throughout Iowa

USDA Service Center Location: All Iowa Field Offices

Iowa NRCS anticipates the following involvement, which is deemed substantial, in carrying out projects funded with Federal assistance provided through a cooperative agreement under this announcement.

Iowa NRCS will:

- Conduct an initial briefing at the Iowa NRCS State Office in Des Moines, Iowa prior to award to discuss the goals and objectives of the project and items of work to be conducted under the agreement.
- Designate a liaison to participate in the planning and management of the cooperative agreement and coordinate activities between the awardee and Iowa NRCS.
- Identify and prioritize work assignments at the Iowa State Office level with consultation from the Iowa NRCS Field Offices.
- Provide quality assurance for services provided under the agreement. Every survey will have a post survey meeting that will be documented and signed by the landowner, surveyor, and NRCS designated conservationist. In addition to this post survey meeting, NRCS may also perform onsite quality assurance inspections on 5% of the surveyed easements.
- Provide access to NRCS technology and technical tools to the maximum extent possible.
- Approve all new technologies and innovative practices, including applicable standards and specifications, prior to the applicant applying those practices.

- The NRCS will monitor the awardee's progress and suspend work if agreement or NRCS standards and specifications are not met.

D. Funding Availability

All awards are subject to the availability of sufficient funds being appropriated by Congress and apportioned by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to support the addition and full cost of service to implement specialized assistance activities. Cooperative agreements will be awarded competitively to applicants. Cooperative agreements have been determined to be the appropriate funding instrument because of the substantial involvement of NRCS in providing technical oversight for the conservation easement survey activities. It is anticipated that approximately **\$3.0 million** will be available for procuring retracement, new surveys, and minor corrections or re-posting in Fiscal Year 2013. The amount of funds available for this program is not fixed and may vary considerably from the current funding level. Amendments to the agreement(s) may be developed upon availability of funding in future years (approximately a 5-year period). The work will be performed statewide.

The cooperative agreements will be for 2 years but may be extended for a total of 5 years. Duration of the agreement will depend on funding and recipient performance. There will be no minimum or maximum price on any easement survey project. There shall be no guaranteed minimum. Multiple cooperative agreements may be awarded as a result of this announcement. Projects will be ordered on an as-needed basis beginning from the date of the award of the agreement for a period not to exceed five years.

E. Indirect Costs

Section 708 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, limits indirect costs under cooperative agreements between USDA and nonprofit institutions to ten (10) percent of the total direct costs of the agreement. Section 708 authorizes an exception to the ten-percent limit for institutions that compute indirect cost rates on similar basis for all agencies for which the Act makes appropriations. If requested, indirect costs must be justified and may not exceed the ten percent limitation or the current rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal-negotiating agency. Iowa NRCS will identify and consider the value of federally supported facilities, supplies, vehicles and equipment in negotiating allowable indirect costs for Conservation Districts or other Partners currently operating within USDA Service Centers.

F. Eligible Applicants

A listing of possible eligible applicants is as follows:

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

G. Application and Submission Information

1. How to Obtain Application Materials

All OMB standard forms necessary for application submission are posted on the following site: http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp

- Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance (submit with application)
- Standard Form 424A Budget Narrative (submit with application)
- Standard Form 424B Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (submit with application)
- Standard Form 424D Assurances – Construction Programs (submit with application)
- SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (after award)
- SF-425 Financial Status Report (after award)
- SF-270 Request for Advance or Reimbursement (after award)
- AD-1047 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters – Primary Covered Transactions
- AD-1048 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion – Lower Tier Covered Transactions
- AD-3030 Representations regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

2. Application Content and Format

Applications must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for an award. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the work described in the application. Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below; incomplete applications will not be considered. Do not include letters of support, endorsement or recommendations for award.

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to complete the grant or cooperative agreement application. Applicants should refer to <http://www.grants.gov> to apply. Further, the applicant must respond to the Evaluation Factors for Award, provide a detailed cost breakdown to support the proposed budget and include project narratives with a detailed discussion of the project and methodology used.

3. Cover Sheet.

Applications must use Standard Form 424, including SF 424A and 424B, with the required information filled in and the certified assurance signed as the cover sheet for their application. NOTE: All applicants must provide DUNS number in Block 5. By signing the application form the applicant is providing the required certifications set forth in 7 CFR Part 3017 regarding Debarment and Suspension and Drug Free Workplace, and 7 CFR Part 3018, regarding Lobbying.

4. Project Funding.

In Block 15 of the SF 424, show the percent of funding to be provided by each source. Attached to the SF 424 a spreadsheet including rates for the following: personnel listed by labor category, equipment, materials and supplies, travel, all other costs and

indirect costs. The agreed to rates will be incorporated into the agreement and be the basis for future orders.

Show all funding sources. Funds may be required from the NRCS under any of the line items listed above provided that the item or service for which support is required is identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed project, is allowable under the authorizing legislation and the applicable Federal cost principles and is not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute. Salaries of project personnel who will be working on the project may be requested in proportion to the effort that they will devote to the project. Show any costs that the applicant will contribute in support of the project, including the organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the project.

5. Project Description.

The application shall include a narrative statement that addresses the following as a minimum:

- a) A description of the resources and experience of the organization necessary to successfully perform implementing procurement activities.
- b) The organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the cooperative agreement.
- c) A brief description of the capabilities to perform the terms of the cooperative agreement, including a brief description of the organizational entity and of the qualifications, employment status, current responsibilities, and proposed level of effort for the project coordinator, and staff responsible for implementation. Resumes for key personnel should be included in an appendix to the application.
- d) A list of past experiences with providing procurement assistance.

6. Certifications.

All applicants must include a signed SF 424B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs. By signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with following from 7 CFR:

- a) Part 3017, Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement;
- b) Part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying;
- c) Part 3021, Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

7. DUNS Number.

A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Therefore,

potential applicants should verify that they have a DUNS number or take the steps needed to obtain one. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

- 8. Required SAM Registration:** The System for Award Management (SAM) is a database that serves as the primary Government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the Government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants or cooperative agreements from the Government. Applicants must register with SAM. To register, visit <http://www.sam.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration.

9. How to Submit a Written Application

Applicants may submit applications in paper copy or electronic format.

Submit applications to:

Carolyn Christian, Contract Specialist

Carolyn.christian@ia.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service

210 Walnut Street, Room 693

Des Moines, Iowa 50309

10. Application Due Date

Applications must be received no later than May 24, 2013, 4:00 p.m. Central Time. Applications received after that time will not be considered. An application's postmark date or electronic receipt is not a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery.

11. Acknowledgment of Submission

Applications received by the due date will be acknowledged with an official email. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgment within 30 days of the submission, the applicant must contact the administrative contact (see "Agency Contacts" above) immediately. Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding.

12. Evaluation Criteria:

The Iowa NRCS anticipates possible multiple selections for this announcement.

Prior to the evaluation review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice by the appropriate NRCS staff. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the provisions of this notice will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be evaluated by an evaluation

team against the evaluation criteria. The evaluation team will make recommendations to the State Conservationist for final selection and award.

The applications will be evaluated using the following criteria that are listed in descending order of importance:

A. Professional qualifications necessary for satisfactory performance (30%)

Evaluation will be based upon the number of qualified personnel, their knowledge and experience associated with the requirements above, and their availability to perform work on this agreement.

B. Best Value to the Government (25%)

Evaluation will be based on the best value to the government based on the applicants proposed procurement costs and delivery response time. Also the cost and due date of the surveys will be negotiated upon delivery of the order to the recipient.

C. Capacity to accomplish the work (25%)

Evaluation will be based upon the number of qualified personnel, the quantity of existing work under contract and the schedules for completion of the existing work.

D. Past performance regarding work of this nature (20%)

Past experience with other government agencies and other organizations in regards to work of this nature. Quality and timeliness of performance of work performed.

13. Selection

Each application will be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the evaluation factors listed above. Discussions may be held with each applicant regarding the applicant's experience and operational methods. After selection, NRCS will enter into negotiations with the selected applicant(s) to discuss cost and the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement to be signed. NRCS has the option to cancel the announcement if there no qualified applicants or limit the number of awards made from this announcement.

14. Award Information

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected will be notified by the State Conservationist. Applicants whose applications have not been selected will be notified by official letter.

B. Cooperative Agreement

The NRCS will use a cooperative agreement with selected applicants to document the agreement parameters. The cooperative agreement will include:

- Project purpose;
- Project objectives and deliverables;
- Project progress and budget reporting requirements;
- Award amount and budget information;
- Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement;
- Other requirements and terms deemed necessary to protect the interests of the United States.

Neither the approval of any application nor the award of any cooperative agreement commits or obligates the United States to provide further support of a project or any portion thereof or implies any endorsement.

C. Reporting Requirements

Awardees must submit a Financial Status Report (SF-425) no later than 30 days of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project.

In addition, every 30 days, the awardee must submit a written progress report to the NRCS Iowa State Office. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 30-day period, including any funded or unfunded time extensions, a comparison of actual accomplishments to project goals.

The NRCS will designate a Government Representative and an Administrative contact for the agreement. These individuals will have technical oversight and administrative oversight responsibility for the agreement. The awardee must comply with any requests for information from these individuals. NRCS recommends that the awardee work closely with these individuals throughout the course of the agreement.

15. Terms and Conditions of the Award

This announcement is subject to “Variations in Quantity” and “Variations in Delivery”.

By accepting an award, the applicant assures the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that the program or activities provided for under this agreement will be conducted in compliance with all applicable Federal civil rights laws, rules, regulations, and policies.

Successful applicants will attend an initial briefing prior to award to discuss the goals and objectives of the project and items of work to be conducted under the agreement.

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders and other generally applicable requirements, including those set out in 7 CFR 3015, 3016, 3017, 3018, 3019 and 3052 which will be incorporated into the agreement by reference and such statutory provisions as are specifically set forth in the agreement.

The OMB Circulars will be incorporated by reference and made a part of each agreement awarded under this process. Applicants are encouraged to review the appropriate circulars prior to requesting federal funds. OMB circulars may be viewed online at http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp. CFR's may be found at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/CFR/>. Failure of an applicant to comply with any provision may be the basis of withholding payment for proper charges made by the applicant and for termination of support. Federal Statutes and regulations that apply to this program include, but are not limited to the following:

7 CFR Part 3 – USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-129 regarding debt collections;

7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A – USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act;

7 CFR Part 15, Subpart A – USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;

7 CFR Part 3015 – USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., Circular Nos. A-102, A-110, A-21, A-87, A-122) and incorporating provisions of the 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308, as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance;

7 CFR Part 3016 – USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments;

7 CFR Part 3017 – USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (non-procurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace;

7 CFR Part 3018 – USDA implementation of New Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements and loans;

7 CFR Part 3019 – USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-Profit Organizations;

OMB Circular A-21 – Cost Principals for Educational Institutions;

OMB Circular A-87 – Cost Principals for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments;

7 CFR Part 3052 – USDA Implementation of Audits of States and Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations;

5 CFR part 2635 – Standards of Ethical Conduct;

Comply with the “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons.”

Comply with the “Privacy Act.”