

Minnesota Fiscal Year (FY) 23 Grant Agreement Notice of Funding Opportunity

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023
Minnesota FY 23 Grant Agreement
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

No. USDA-NRCS-MN-MULTI-23-NOFO0001232

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Key Dates: Teams conference call on March 16, 2023 modification: Canceled--page 3

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

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title: Minnesota (MN) Fiscal Year (FY) 23 Grant Agreement Notice of Funding Opportunity for For-Profit and Non-Profit Organizations

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-MN-MULTI-23-NOFO0001232

Assistance Listing: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings (previously referred to as the Catalog of Federal Financial Assistance) on Sam.gov under

10.902 Conservation Technical Assistance
10.912 Environmental Quality Incentives Program
10.924 Conservation Stewardship

SAM is a web-based, government-wide application that collects, validates, stores, and disseminates business information about the federal government's trading partners in support of the contract awards, grants, and electronic payment processes.

Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing availability of Grant Agreements for the purpose of leveraging NRCS resources, addressing local natural resource issues, encouraging collaboration and developing State- and community-level conservation leadership in Minnesota.

Proposals are requested from eligible applicants identified in Section C.1 of this document for competitive consideration of grant agreement awards for projects up to three years in duration. Proposed projects must be performed in Minnesota for the initiatives and activities identified in Section A of this document. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in fiscal year 2023 may be up to $4,000,000. 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.

For new users of Grants.gov, see Section D. for information about steps required before submitting an application via Grants.gov.

Key Dates

Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59PM Eastern Time on April 30, 2023 .

The agency will conduct a Teams Conference call with interested applicants on March 16, 2023, from 9AM to 10:30AM CST. The purpose of this Teams Conference call will be to introduce, promote and encourage potential applicants to participate in the initiatives set out and described in this funding opportunity. Questions regarding this funding opportunity will also be addressed and a recording made available upon request. Information on how to join the Teams event are below: Canceled

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

Click here to join the meeting
Meeting ID: 260 918 416 158
Passcode: BYV2XW
Download Teams | Join on the web
Or call in (audio only)
+1 202-650-0123,,740115677# United States, Washington DC
Phone Conference ID: 740 115 677#
Find a local number | Reset PIN

The agency anticipates making selections by May 30, 2023 and expects to execute awards by July 3, 2023. These dates are estimates and are subject to change.

For inquiries specific to the content of the NFO requirements, contact the federal awarding agency contact (section G of this NFO). Please limit questions to those regarding specific information contained in this NFO (such as dates, page numbers, clarification of discrepancies, etc.). Questions related to eligibility or the merits of a specific proposal will not be addressed.

For technical issues with Grants.gov, 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 estimated funding floor for this opportunity is $75,000.00, and the estimated funding ceiling is $1,000,000.00. 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. These numbers refer to the total agreement amount, not any specific budget period.

Federal Financial Assistance Training

The funding available through this NFO is Federal financial assistance. Grants 101 Training is highly recommended for those seeking knowledge about Federal financial assistance. The training is free and available to the public via https://www.cfo.gov/grants-training/. It consists of five modules covering each of the following topics: 1) laws, regulations, and guidance; 2) financial assistance mechanisms; 3) uniform guidance administrative requirements; 4) cost principles; and 5) risk management and single

audit. FPAC agencies also apply Federal financial assistance regulations to certain non-assistance awards (e.g., non-assistance cooperative agreements).

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A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are

Conservation Technical Assistance: 16 U.S.C. 590a-590f, 590q, 7 CFR part 610
(CFDA No. 10.902)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program: 16 U.S.C. 3839aa – 3839aa-9, 7 CFR part 1466
(CFDA No. 10.912)

Conservation Stewardship Program: 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-21 – 3839aa-25, 7 CFR part 1470
(CFDA No. 10.924)

Proposed projects must be performed in Minnesota for the following initiatives and activities:

Water Management Systems

Water management systems play a critical role in water security amidst climate smart agriculture.

- Demonstrate or increase the use of water management systems, including surface and subsurface drainage water management, water retention, and irrigation water management. Show the connection of water management systems to environmental and economic impacts, climate resiliency, and mitigation.
- Develop promotional and technical materials related to water management.
- Host field days and other events such as demonstrations about water management systems.

Grazing and Livestock Assistance

Grazing management benefits wildlife habitat, soil health, and climate smart agriculture.

- Provide grazing management expertise to livestock owners along with promoting livestock as a land management tool.
- Grazing systems provided by the grant recipient will promote flexible, short-term grazing on lands under easement, CRP, CREP, DNR or USFWS property, and other public or private land.
- Provide technical and financial assistance to encourage producers to utilize managed grazing on public and private lands.
- Subgrants could be provided to producers to facilitate practices in grazing management plans, such as temporary fencing and portable watering systems.
- Landowners and producers to be served include but are not limited to historically underserved and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- Provide grazing trainings, workshops, tours, and demonstration projects.
- Develop educational and technical materials promoting grazing management and grassland improvement to be published via traditional or social media such as TV, radio, podcasts, print, and social media.

Expand Minnesota Field to Fork Enterprises and Startups

Field to fork, or farm to table, connects consumers with farmers and broadens mainstream understanding and support for farming and conservation.

- Provide assistance for planning, developing, and implementing field to fork enterprises.
- Support specialty crop growers by providing conservation stewardship and practices, marketing services, upgrading and creating on-farm conveniences, and expanding value-added resources for producers to enhance their products for marketability.
- Promote sustainable practices, as well as processing and/or marketing assistance to value-added growers.
- Support and develop agritourism and conservation tourism to promote local and sustainably grown food and fiber, including specialty crops, traditional crops, and agroforestry.
- Subgrants could be provided to specialty crop, value added, or field to fork producers.
- Identify food deserts and provide local sustainable production opportunities.
- Expand farmers markets and locally grown initiatives.
- Increase adoption and understanding of local sustainable food systems though demonstration projects, field tours, marketing and social or traditional media such as TV, radio, podcasts, print, and social media.
- Connect specialty crop growers to consumers. Demonstrate how food is grown and how farmers conserve natural resources.

Connecting Agriculture Retailers with Conservation Delivery

Conservation services are available to all producers. Agricultural retailers and conservation agencies can support equity and equality in American agriculture through their shared customer base.

- Increase private land conservation and encourage wide-spread adoption of conservation solutions by providing liaisons for NRCS and private agricultural industry.
- Integrate conservation and support of NRCS services into agricultural retailers' networks.
- Equip retailers with the knowledge of NRCS programs, the ability to cooperatively work with the Agency, and assist in the implementation of conservation.
- Build leadership and expertise within NRCS on the services provided by farmer cooperatives and agricultural retailers.
- Provide local NRCS offices with a better understanding of agronomic principals to better meet landowners' needs and provide better understanding of the economic considerations in agronomic planning for NRCS staff.

Increase Availability of Seedlings for Forestry and Agroforestry

Smart forestry can mitigate climate impact and build climate resiliency in both rural and urban settings.

- Expand the availability of tree seedlings for urban, suburban, peri-urban, and rural reforestation including farm sites and windbreaks.
- Accelerate the capacity and number of forestry nurseries for in-state tree planting.

- Subgrants could be provided to entities or individuals for the development or expansion of forestry nurseries.
- Expand the availability of fruit and nut trees for local, sustainable, and/or urban food systems and individual use.
- Support seedlings growth of hardwoods, including maple and oaks, and regionally appropriate noninvasive species.
- Provide reforestation and/or forestry nursery training, workshops, tours, and demonstration projects.
- Increase both urban and rural landowners' understanding of the benefits of appropriate reforestation and tree cover.
- Develop promotional and technical materials for landowners related to tree and forest management.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Available Funding

a. Estimated Funding

The Federal funding agency expects to award approximately $4,000,000.00 through this opportunity. However, the agency retains the discretion to award a larger or lesser amount.

b. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be up to three (3) years in duration Applicants should plan their projects based on an estimated project start date of July 3, 2023.

c. Number of Awards

The agency expects to make four (4) award(s). However, the agency retains the discretion to fund additional or fewer agreements.

2. Type of Award

a. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award grant agreement(s) pursuant to this opportunity. Depending on the nature of a particular proposal received, the agency may elect to negotiate an alternate award type with the selected applicant.

b. Procurement Contracts

The agency does not expect to award procurement contracts associated with this NFO.

c. 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 200.206(d)).

Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to the following entity types:

a. City or township governments
b. County governments
c. For profit organizations other than small businesses
d. Individuals
e. Independent school districts
f. Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
g. Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
h. Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
i. Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
j. Private institutions of higher education
k. Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
l. Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities
m. Small businesses
n. Special district governments
o. State governments

2. Other

Any award made pursuant to this NFO 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.

An applicant organization may submit more than one application for different projects or proposing different approaches. In the case of applications submitted as revisions or corrections to a previously submitted application under this NFO, the agency will consider the last application submitted prior to the established deadline.

Awards made pursuant to this NFO are not Farm Bill incentive contracts; therefore, the awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation in 16 USC Chapter 58. However, any agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a project awarded under this NFO must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR Part 12 and 7 CFR Part 1400 and have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed award period.

3. 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. Refer to Section D of this NFO for information about any required submittals related to match or cost-share requirements. Refer to Section E for a description of how voluntary match will be evaluated. While the pace of cost-sharing/matching may vary throughout the award period, the agency will actively monitor cost-sharing/matching levels as it receives payment requests to ensure the total cost sharing/matching proposed is met by the award period of performance end date. Funds from another Federal award cannot be used as match except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing. Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions are located at 2 CFR 200.306.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Information for New Users of Grants.gov

a. Overview

While a Grants.gov account is not required to download an NFO and related documents, it is required to submit an application. If your organization has never submitted an application via Grants.gov, please be aware that there are several steps you must take to register your organization before you can submit an application. **Completing those steps can take a significant amount of time, plan accordingly.**

For information about the Grants.gov pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html.

b. Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Carefully review the registration steps and gather information requested prior to beginning the registration process to avoid last-minute searches for required information. For assistance with the registration process, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Organizations must complete all steps to register (steps i. through v. below). Complete organization instructions are included on Grants.gov here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html.

Although creating a Grants.gov account online can take only minutes, SAM registrations may take several weeks. Therefore, organizations should begin the process early to ensure they have sufficient time to complete registration and meet required application submission deadlines.

Individuals are not subject to the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) or SAM requirement and may begin with step iii., Create a Grants.gov Account, listed below. (Note: Individuals are not eligible for all opportunities.)

c. **Steps to Register**

i. *Obtain a UEI:* All entities applying for funding must have a UEI issued by SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI in the data entry field labeled "UEI" on the SF-424 form.

ii. *Register with SAM:* All organizations must register with System for Award Management (SAM) to apply online through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. Part of the SAM registration process includes designating an Electronic Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC). **The EBiz POC plays an integral part in the organization's Grants.gov registration and application process.** The individual in that role must authorize all other roles in Grants.gov. For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html

iii. *Create a Grants.gov Account:* From the Grants.gov webpage (https://www.grants.gov/), click "Register" in the top right-hand corner and follow the on-screen instructions or refer to the detailed instructions here https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html

iv. *Add an Organization Applicant Profile to a Grants.gov Account:* A profile in Grants.gov corresponds to a single applicant organization the user represents (i.e., an applicant) or an individual applicant. If you work for or consult with multiple organizations and have a profile for each, you may log in to one Grants.gov account to access all your grant applications. To add an organizational profile to your Grants.gov account, enter the UEI for the organization in the UEI (Unique Entity Identifier) field while adding a profile. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html

v. *EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles:* After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, you must establish roles for individuals in the organization. The Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role is critical; it

gives an individual permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. Without this role, the organization cannot submit any applications. The request for role assignment will be routed to the organization's EBiz POC for approval. Once approved, the AOR can submit an application online. For more detailed instructions about creating a EBiz POC authorized profile on Grants.gov, refer to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html

Track Role Status: To track your role request, refer to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html

d. ***Electronic Signature***

When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. Please be aware that the EBiz POC and the person with AOR Role cannot be the same individual; they must be different people. The EBiz POC **must** authorize people who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role. **This step (step c.v. above) is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

e. Workspace.

Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each NFO, you can create individual instances of a workspace. An applicant can start an application in Workspace and return to work on it later within Workspace.

f. Apply for an Opportunity

Below is an overview of applying on Grants.gov. For complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

i. Create a Workspace: Creating a workspace allows you to complete an application online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.

ii. Complete a Workspace: Add participants to the workspace to work on the application together, complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the status of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.

- Adobe Reader: If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html

- Mandatory Fields in Forms: In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.
- Complete SF-424 Fields First: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant's name, address, and UEI. Once it is completed, the information will transfer (i.e., prepopulate) to the other forms.

iii. Submit a Workspace: An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

iv. Track a Workspace Submission: After successfully submitting a workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted workspace.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html

2. Electronic Application Package

Applicants interested in submitting an application in response to this NFO must submit it via Grants.gov; the agency will not accept applications submitted via email or any other method. Applicants are urged to submit early to the Grants.gov system.

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

Address to Request Application Package
All information necessary to apply for this opportunity is included in the Grants.gov opportunity announcement.

3. Content and Form of Application Submission

The agency may choose not to consider applications that fail to comply with the required content, format, and page limits, or those that are incomplete.

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain the documents in a-e below.

a. Application Form

(Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) See Instructions for Completing SF 424 located in the appendices section.

b. Project Narrative

Each page must be numbered and have one-inch margins. The text of the project narrative must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Courier) with no smaller than 12-point font. The project narrative must not exceed seven (7) pages. This page limitation applies to the project narrative only.

(1) **Summary**: (First page of grant application. 1/2 page maximum.) A good summary will provide a frame of reference for the reviewer as they begin the review process. It should be clear, concise, and interesting. The summary should be one to three paragraphs long and include the Project Title. The summary should include one or two sentences about the applicant organization, the need motivating the request, the project start and end dates, the 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.

(2) **Introduction**: (Letters of Support, federally required forms, and one (1) page narrative maximum.) 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, offer a good balance between quantitative and qualitative information, and be free of unnecessary verbiage. It should include a brief history of the organization, including its mission statement and goals, important past events or accomplishments, a description of your clientele, including demographic information, organizational funding sources. Describe your history of successfully managing these federal and non-federal agreements, including meeting and complying with reporting requirements, submitting final acceptable technical reports, and reporting on progress made in achieving the results under those agreements.

(3) **Needs Assessment**: (One (1)-page maximum.) The problem statement, or needs assessment, is critical to the success of your application. It is the justification for your proposal and should focus on the condition that your proposal will address. Use care to ensure your proposal make no unsupported assumptions. Your Needs Assessment should demonstrate the tie-in to the organizational mission and goals, describe the issue or problem, and the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation, provide statistical and authoritarian evidence that clearly supports the

need identified in the proposal and supports a high probability for success, and make a compelling case for the project funding based demonstrated client needs.

(4) **Program Objectives**: (One (1)-page maximum.) This section of the proposal should demonstrate project outcomes, not project activities. You should be using language that supports increasing, decreasing or reducing the problems identified in the needs assessment. Avoid including topics that pertain to providing, establishing, or developing a method to address the problem. Your objectives should include at least one objective for each problem identified in the Needs Assessment. Each objective must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a timeline for completion. An example objective would be: At the end of the 3-day workshop, 70% of participants will demonstrate at least a 30% increase or better in pre/post-test exams. Be sure to describe how the outcomes will be measured. Please note that underserved populations identified in this section as primary beneficiaries of the grant's outcomes, such as veterans, culturally specific populations, women, limited resource farmers/ranchers, socially disadvantaged, etc., will receive additional points during the ranking process. Explain how these entities will benefit.

(5) **Methods**: (Deliverables Table plus two (2)-page narrative maximum.) Methods, activities and procedures explain to the reviewer the steps that will be taken to complete the objectives identified in the previous section. This section demands clarity and justification in describing how the objectives will be met. Use care to present a reasonable number of activities that can be completed within the grant period. Clearly describe the program client and the program activities, their sequence, and explain your reason for choosing this combination of activities. Provide a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and nongovernment entities and identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project. Please note that demonstrating innovative methods will receive additional points during the ranking process.

(6) **Evaluation**: (One half (1/2)-page maximum.) 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 methods should determine the extent to which the program as achieved its stated objectives and the extent to which the objectives contributed to the program success. Further, 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.

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.

If your proposal will include information collection from non-Federal sources, ensure the collection meets the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act. Surveys of individuals or entities are generally prohibited without prior approval from the Office of Management and Budget. For additional guidance about allowable and unallowable activities, please visit the following website: https://pra.digital.gov/do-i-need-clearance/.

The following documents do not count toward the above stated page limit.

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 the 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 appendices section. Refer to Section D of this opportunity for information regarding indirect costs. Errors in the SF-424A with regard to classifying costs may be negotiated after selection.

d. Budget Narrative

In a separate document titled "Budget Narrative," explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. (Refer to the budget narrative guidance located in the appendices section.) 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. The pages included as the budget narrative do not count toward the page limit. Errors in the budget narrative with regard to classifying costs may be negotiated after selection. Refer to the Budget Narrative Guidance located at the end of this document regarding procurement standards when including contracts for goods or services. **Sole-source contracting is prohibited without proper justification.** See Procurement Standards located at 2 CFR 200.317-327.

i. Build America, Buy American. "Buy America" preference applies to Federal financial assistance awards that include construction components, even if it is funded by both Federal and non-Federal funds under the award. Subawards should conform to the terms and conditions of the Federal award from which they flow. A Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to a construction project. Refer to the General Terms and Conditions for additional information: https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/about/grants-and-agreements/award-terms-and-

conditions/index.html

ii. Indirect Costs Recovery. If requesting indirect costs, provide the calculation specifying the amounts used in applying the base (the base specified in the applicable rate agreement) by the applicable rate. The calculation can be displayed in different formats but must capture the components (i.e., amounts used in determining the base and the rate applied to the base).

A. To be eligible to recover any indirect costs 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) and described below. For-profit entities (if eligible to apply) must obtain a NICRA from their cognizant agency. USDA will not accept an indirect cost agreement negotiated or approved by the Defense Contract Audit Agency.

B. Any non-Federal entity (except State and local governments that receive more than $35 million per year in Federal funding) that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate, simply indicate in your budget narrative that the recipient elects to use the de minimis rate. Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

C. As described in 2 CFR 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

iii. Indirect Costs Limitations.

A. 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. 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 percent 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.

B. Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

C. Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization they 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.

iv. Cost Share or Matching.

A. Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. The budget narrative must show the amounts and sources of match or cost share (including both cash and in-kind contributions).

B. For third-party contributions, a letter is required 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. Cost sharing/match letters should be addressed to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact in Section G of this NFO and uploaded under Other Attachments (listed separately under Optional Forms) in Grants.gov.

Refer to the Budget Narrative Guidance located in the appendices section for information about making contract vs. subaward determinations.

e. Grants.gov Lobbying Form

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.

f. Statement of Current and Pending Support.

Submit a Statement of Current and Pending Support for each key personnel who will participate in the project. Use the template located in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity.

g. SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, must be submitted **only** if you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying. See 2 CFR 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

h. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), if applicable

If charging indirect costs using a NICRA (including for cost share), upload the NICRA under Other Attachments (listed as an Optional Form) in the Grants.gov Opportunity Application Package.

i. Disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest

In accordance with 2 CFR 400.2, applicants must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the performance of its employees in the selection, award, and administration of Federal awards. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a Federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict of interest would arise when the employee, officer or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties referenced, has a financial or other interest in, or a tangible personal benefit from, an applicant considered for a Federal award. The standards of conduct must provide for disciplinary actions to be applied for violations of such standards by officers, employees, or agents of the applicant.

If the applicant has a parent, affiliate, or subsidiary organization that is not a state, local government, or Indian tribe, the applicant must also maintain written standards of conduct covering organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflict of interest means that because of the relationships with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, the applicant is unable or appears to be unable to be impartial in conducting a Federal award action involving a related organization.

Applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflicts of interest to the USDA awarding agency or pass-through entity. Include the name of the individual, the name of the entity with which the individual has a conflict, the nature of the financial or other interest, the value of the interest, a description of how the interest relates to your application. Upload disclosures under Other Attachments (listed

separately under Optional Forms) in Grants.gov. **If no conflict exists, no submission is required.**

j. **Post Award Documentation** Successful applicants may be required to submit updated forms and/or other documents after notification of intent to make a federal award, but prior to execution of the award.

k. **Unique entity identifier (UEI) 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 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 UEI 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 SAM registration.

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration: 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 UEI or SAM issues.

4. Submission Dates and Times and Correspondence

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov. Applications must be received by 11:59PM Eastern Time (ET) on April 30, 2023. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late (an application is considered on time at 11:59:59PM ET, but it is late at 12:00AM ET). Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role attempting to submit the application. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process; be patient and give the system time to process the application.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any issues. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Section D. 2. for Grants.gov contact information.

For applications successfully transmitted to Grants.gov before the deadline: The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive:

- an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov
- an email with the official date/time stamp (this stamp is used to determine if the application was received prior to the deadline) and Grants.gov

When the agency successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will also provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the applicant.

5. Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." When completing the SF-424, check block c, "Program is not covered by E.O. 13272."

6. Funding Restrictions

Funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law and approved in writing by the agency in advance of incurring such costs:

a. Profit and management fees. Any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related direct and indirect costs only.
b. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project.
c. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award, including time spent applying for this opportunity.
d. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto.
e. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives.
f. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities.
g. 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.
h. Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land and for improvements to land, buildings, or equipment which materially increase their value or useful life. See 2 CFR 200.439 for additional information.
i. Meals may be charged to an award only if they are necessary for the performance of the project. For instance, meals (normally only lunch) that are a necessary part of the costs of meetings and conferences (i.e., required attendance and continuity of a meeting), the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of information, are allowable, as are costs of transportation, rental of facilities, speakers' fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences. Note: Meals consumed while in official travel status do not fall in this category. They are considered to be per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization's

established travel policies subject to statutory limitations or in accordance with Federal travel policies.

j. Costs normally charged as indirect costs may not be charged as direct costs without proper justification and agency approval. Proper justification includes documentation that the costs meet the criteria for allowability (see 2 CFR 200.403). Examples of such costs include rent, utilities, depreciation on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.

k. Salaries that are not commensurate with level of work. All costs must be reasonable to be allowable (2 CFR 200.403), and 2 CFR 200.404 defines a reasonable cost as one if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. Salaries determined not to be reasonable compared to the level of work will be unallowable.

l. Software produced by non-domestic entities. Project budgets must not include costs (both Federal costs and cost-share) for software developed by non-domestic entities if it will be utilized by the Federal government or hosted on Federal systems.

m. Refer to Section D for applicable indirect cost restrictions, if any.

This list is not exhaustive. For additional information please refer to 2 CFR Part 200, subpart E, Cost Principals.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. 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 may be eliminated from competition. In that event, the agency will send notification of elimination to the applicant. The agency intends to select and award without conducting any discussions or allowing applicants to correct deficiencies or omissions in their applications. Consequently, applicants must ensure their applications are complete and accurate. However, while the agency intends to select without contacting applicants, it reserves the right to request applicants to revise their applications to correct deficiencies or omissions it identifies. If this occurs, the agency will conduct discussions with all applicants, identify deficiencies and omissions for all, and give applicants an 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 applications.

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 NRCS State Conservationist for Minnesota.

2. Merit/Technical Criteria

NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based upon these Proposal Evaluation Criteria (195 points possible which includes the Potential Bonus of 10 points for Cost Sharing):

a. **SUMMARY (30 points):** The extent to which the summary clearly summarizes the request, is no longer than ½ page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Identifies the grant applicant
2. Includes a statement on capability to implement the proposal
3. Includes a statement on problem addressed in the grant
4. Includes a statement on objectives
5. Includes a statement on methods
6. Includes the total cost, funds already obtained, and the amount requested in this proposal.

b. **INTRODUCTION (20 points):** The extent which the proposal describes the applicant's organization, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Describes the applicant's organizational purposes and goals
2. Describes the applicant's programs and activities
3. Provides evidence of the applicant's accomplishments and qualifications
4. Supports qualifications in the activity areas in which funds are sought (e.g.: research, training, etc.)
5. Describe the capacity to implement the proposal

c. **NEEDS ASSESSMENT (30 points):** The extent which the proposal describes the need or problem to be solved, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Relates to purposes and goals of the applicant agency
2. Is of reasonable dimensions – not trying to solve all the problems of the world
3. Is developed with input from clients and beneficiaries
4. Makes no unsupportive assumptions
5. Makes a compelling case
6. Identify focal area(s) within the project area or priority criteria

d. **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES (25 points):** The extent which the proposal describes the outcomes and benefits of the grant in measurable terms, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. At least one objective for each problem or need committed to in problem statement

2. Includes when and how outcomes will be measured
3. Describe the population that will benefit
4. Underserved communities will benefit from this project
5. Objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a timeline for completion.

e**. METHODS (40 points):** The extent which the proposal describes the activities to be completed to achieve the desired objectives, is no longer than 2 pages, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Clearly describes program activities that constitute a solution
2. States reasons for selections of activities
3. Activities and outcomes are transferable to other organizations
4. Describes staffing of program and brief staff job descriptions
5. NRCS assistance is minimal for project success
6. Project methodology is innovative
7. Leverages private and/or public-sector partnerships
8. Presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be conducted within the budget, time and resources of the program.

f. **BUDGET (20 points, with a potential bonus of up to 10 additional points for cost sharing):** NRCS will consider if the proposed costs are reasonable and relevant. NRCS will evaluate the extent which the proposal describes the cost required to achieve the desired objectives, including personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, in-kind contributions, indirect costs, and requested NRCS financial assistance, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Is detailed
2. Includes a narrative
3. Includes NRCS, partner, and other contributions
4. Identify NRCS time and number of staff
5. Cost sharing/matching is not a requirement but will be considered. Additional points will be awarded for a proposal including cost share:
    - 5 points for proposed cost share up to 10% of the federal funded amount, or
    - 10 points for proposed cost share exceeding 10% of the federal funded amount

g. **EVALUATION (20 points)** The extent to which the proposal presents a plan for determining the degree to which objectives are met and methods are followed is no longer than 1/2 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Presents a plan for evaluating accomplishments of objectives
2. Presents a plan for evaluating and modifying methods over the course of the program
3. Clearly states criteria of success – Describes how will success be measured
4. Define how progress will be reported and technical representative kept informed

3. Administrative and Risk Criteria

Notice of selection after merit/technical evaluation does not guarantee that an applicant will receive an award. Following notification of selection for funding (see Section F), the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division's staff conducts a final administrative and risk review of those applications. The administrative review includes, but is not limited to, a check to ensure that NFO requirements were met (e.g., applicant meets eligibility criteria, application was submitted via Grants.gov by the established deadline), and proposed costs are allowable, allocable, and necessary. During this process, it may be necessary to request further documentation from the applicant (e.g., organizational information as part of the risk assessment, more detail regarding proposed costs).

In addition, to comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.206, the agency will follow, at a minimum, the risk review process described below (additional steps may be taken).

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 USC 2313 and 2 CFR 200.206(a)).

An applicant must meet the following standards to be considered for award:

a. **Financial Stability**

   The applicant maintains an adequate financial resources or cash flow to meet its financial obligations on a routine basis in order to 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 has a financial management system adequate to segregate and track federal funds. It 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 has never failed to materially comply with the Federal award terms and conditions and further has never had an award terminated on that basis.

Submission of an application constitutes certification that an applicant meets these standards (items a. through c. above). The agency may request documentation to substantiate the certification. Based on risk assessment, the agency may impose specific award conditions in accordance with 2 CFR 200.208.

4. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (if applicable)

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. FAPIIS is a federal database intended to serve as a government-wide source of information about the prior performance and compliance of federal procurement contractors, grantees, and cooperative agreement holders (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.206(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 FAPIIS, 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 200.206, Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

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 official is the only authorizing document and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized official for signature.

Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the award decision via letter.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200 and the General Terms and Conditions, which are available at the following website: https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/about/grants-and-agreements/award-terms-and-conditions/index.html.

Projects performed pursuant to this opportunity may be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If applicable, NRCS must work with awardees to complete an environmental review of each awarded project before project commencement. In addition, prior to any ground-disturbing activities related to NRCS funding, the awardee must work with NRCS staff to complete an environmental evaluation (EE) related to those activities. Awardees may be required to prepare or pay for preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), should any environmental review find that an EA or EIS is required.

In addition, a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106 review and consultation by an NRCS State or area office with consulting parties (such as the pertinent State Historic Preservation Officer and federally recognized Indian Tribes) may be required prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact cultural resources. NHPA Section 106, its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800), and other related authorities, require Federal agencies to determine if a project has the potential to cause an effect to historic properties and, if so, if they are adverse and how the effects may be addressed. The NHPA review and compliance in accordance with Section 106 of NHPA and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 must be completed by NRCS and applicants may be required to pay for any cultural resource surveys needed for NRCS to assess project effects. More information on the applicant's role in the NHPA Section 106 process can be found on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation website at https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/section-106-applicant-toolkit.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is also required for projects that may affect listed or proposed species or destroy or modify critical habitat. The ESA consultation in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA and implementing regulations at 50 CFR Part 402 must be completed by NRCS prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact species or habitat protected under the ESA. More information on the Section 7 consultation process can be found at https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/consultations-overview.html.

3. Reporting

Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the agency's General Terms and Conditions, which are available at the following website: https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/about/grants-and-agreements/award-terms-and-conditions/index.html

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).

4. Audit Requirements

As required in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, Federally recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending $750,000 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.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact the following individual with the NFO number in the subject line:

Name: Shynika Loften
Grants Management Specialist
FPAC Business Center

Email: Shynika.loften@usda.gov with a copy to FPAC.BC.GAD@USDA.GOV

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions regarding this opportunity must be submitted to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact identified above via email with the NFO number in the subject line.
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. Any award made pursuant to this NFO may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

   a. *Funds from this grant cannot be used in a project supported with other NRCS funds. No stacking of NRCS funds is allowed pursuant with this opportunity.*

   b. *More information about NRCS is available on the Minnesota NRCS webpage, national webpage, Farmer.gov, and USDA webpage.*

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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