Summary Information

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department Of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)

Funding Opportunity Title: Announcement for Program Funding for NRCS' Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2019 – Pennsylvania

Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-PA-CIG-001

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 10.912, Environmental Quality Incentives Program

NRCS is announcing the availability of CIG to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications are accepted from eligible entities for projects carried out in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A total of up to $250,000 is available for CIG in FY 2019. All non-federal entities (NFE) and individuals are invited to apply, with the sole exception of federal agencies. Projects may be between one and three years in duration. The maximum award amount for a single award in FY 2019 is $75,000.

APPLICATIONS DUE DATE: Applications must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on July 7, 2019.

SUBMISSIONS: Applications must be submitted electronically through grants.gov. In addition, a PDF of the complete application must be emailed to Denise.Coleman@pa.usda.gov. Submissions must be received by the time and date due. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation for submission made both via Grants.gov and e-mail to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Click here for more on how to submit an application.

The grants.gov electronic submission interface is called Workspace. Workspace is the standard way for organizations or individuals to apply for federal grants in grants.gov. Workspace allows an applicant grant team to access and edit different forms within an application simultaneously. In addition, the forms may be filled out online or as a PDF. An overview of Workspace can be viewed at grants.gov (WEBINAR - Getting Started with Workspace: Become a Workspace Wizard).

Please allow extra time to register in Workspace because there are several preliminary registration steps before an applicant can submit the application. To register, go to www.grants.gov, click on "Applicants", then click on "Get Registered." If you have completed a prior grants.gov application, you may already have completed the registration process. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, or audio tape) should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Applicants are encouraged to visit the CIG website at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/ to learn more about the CIG program. Questions about this announcement can be directed to Noel Soto at Noel.Soto@pa.usda.gov or by calling 717-237-2173.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program is authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP, including CIG, to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems) to agricultural producers, into NRCS technical manuals and guides, or to the private sector. CIG generally funds pilot projects, field demonstrations, and on-farm conservation research. On-farm conservation research is defined as an investigation conducted to answer a specific applied conservation question using a statistically valid design while employing farm-scale equipment on farms, ranches or private forest lands.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

CIG funds the development and field testing, on-farm research and demonstration, evaluation, or implementation of:

- Approaches to incentivizing conservation adoption, including market-based and conservation finance approaches; and
- Conservation technologies, practices, and systems.

Projects or activities under CIG must comply with all applicable federal, tribal, state, and local laws and regulations throughout the duration of the project; and

- Use a technology or approach that was studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate, evaluate, and verify the effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of natural resource conservation technologies and approaches in the field;
- Adapt and transfer conservation technologies, management, practices, systems, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduce proven conservation technologies and approaches to a geographic area or agricultural sector where that technology or approach is not currently in use.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area using an EQIP contract for an established conservation practice standard are ineligible for CIG funding, except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation.

D. State Component

For FY 2019, NRCS accepts proposals that address one or more of the State priorities listed below.

Up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG in FY 2019 is set aside for proposals from Historically Underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities (click here for more information about the 10 percent set-aside).

CIG Priority Categories for FY 2019:

1) Non-Industrial Private Forestland

- **a.** Development and demonstration of innovative strategies to build Forest Management Collaboratives (aka Forest Landowner Stewardship Networks) in order to encourage broader adoption of conservation practices amongst small scale non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) landowners and to support implementation of forestry practices (such as prescribed burning) across ownership boundaries.
- **b.** Development of innovative streamlined forest inventory methods to lower the barriers of entry into voluntary carbon credit markets.
- **c.** Demonstration of innovative agroforestry strategies (i.e. forest farming) and building financial and technical support mechanisms for NIPF operators in PA.
- **d.** Demonstration of on farm uses for residual woody materials (i.e. Biochar) to address resource concerns including soil erosion, and water quality degradation.

2) Urban Farming

a. Demonstrate how agricultural production and conservation of the natural resources (e.g. soil, water) go hand-in-hand in the urban farm by implementing traditional NRCS conservation practices such as cover crops, drip irrigation, conservation crop rotation, integrated pest management as well as innovative conservation practices that promote sustainable production.

b. Develop and implement a hands-on program to educate producers on the elements of soil health, NRCS conservation planning process and on how to request assistance (including helping producers establish farm documentation with the Farm Service Agency). Produce written documents in English, Spanish, Pennsylvania Dutch and Nepali.

c. Demonstrate soil remediation techniques utilizing sources of phosphorus (such as poultry manure) and calcium to mitigate lead and other urban soils contaminants.

d. Demonstrate the implementation of a roof runoff rain collection system that can be used to supplement the farm irrigation system in a way that is safe for the crops, humans and the environment. Evaluate feasibility and affordability of the system.

3) Soil Health

a. Implement a strategy to increase the number of farms with systems of no-till plus cover crops where manure is applied. Priority will be given to proposals that are willing to

work with farmers already implementing such systems as role models/mentors to the less experience farmers. Project leader should be able to use non-formal adult educational techniques (appropriate use of field days, meetings, newsletter articles, posters, exhibits, etc.) to affect the desired practice change which is the increase in farms with the system, within target audience(s). It is expected that the project leader at the end of the project describes the educational and outreach techniques utilized and that the evaluation data includes a "before" and "after" practice adoption within the targeted audience that describes degree of success in meeting the goal.

b. Demonstrate, evaluate, and verify the effectiveness, utility and affordability conservation systems that include crop rotation, cover crops, conservation tillage and nutrient management have in promoting beneficial organisms that support ecological pest management.
c. Increase adoption and implementation of innovative nitrogen and manure application management systems that improve nitrogen use efficiency and reduce negative environmental impacts to water and air quality while improving soil health. Incorporate the 4Rs of nutrient management and the four basic principles for improving soil health as much as possible.

II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

It is anticipated that a total of up to $250,000 in funding will be available for this announcement. The funding floor for a single award is $5,000 and the funding ceiling for a single award is $75,000.

Awards made through this announcement will be executed through a grant agreement between NRCS and the awardee.

NRCS accepts proposals for projects of one to three years in duration.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Applicant Eligibility

All non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals, with the exception of Federal agencies, are eligible to apply for projects carried out in Pennsylvania. Individuals and entities may submit more than one application and may receive more than one award for different projects addressing different categories.

B. Project Eligibility

All CIG projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers that meet EQIP's eligibility requirements listed in 7 CFR § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3):

- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 CFR Part 12).
- Be a person, legal entity, joint operation, Indian tribe, or native corporation who is engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or has an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation as defined in 7 CFR Part 1400.

- Have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed contract period.

C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

The following provisions apply to CIG funding:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements. These grant agreements are not EQIP contracts; thus, CIG awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation found at section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, which imposes a $450,000 payment limitation for all payments made to persons or legal entities under an EQIP contract entered into between FY 2019 and FY 2023.
- All agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a CIG project must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3) noted above. In addition, all CIG payments are subject to the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limitation. All agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a CIG project must have an AGI that does not exceed $900,000. If awarded a grant, grantees must self-certify and maintain records showing that participating producers receiving payments using CIG funding meet the EQIP eligibility and AGI requirements. Section 1704 (a)(3) of the 2018 Farm Bill states the Secretary may waive the AGI limit on a case by case basis, if the Secretary determines that environmentally sensitive land of special significance would be protected as a result of such waiver. CIG grantees may request waivers once their project commences.
- Section 1240B of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-2, prohibits duplicative payments. Accordingly, direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which an individual or legal entity has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any USDA conservation program (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program, EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Stewardship Program). If awarded a grant, grantees must self-certify that payments to producers using CIG funding are not duplicative.

D. Cost Sharing/Matching Requirements

CIG recipients must provide a non-federal funding match or cost-share amount at least equal to the amount of federal funding requested. Applications that do not include cost-sharing will be ineligible for award. Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash, services, materials, equipment, or third party in-kind contributions. See Section IV, subsection 8 of this announcement for information on cost share/match.

E. Historically Underserved Producers and Veteran Farmers or Ranchers

For the FY 2019 CIG award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG are set aside for proposals from Historically Underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. The regulatory definitions of a Historically Underserved producer and a veteran farmer or rancher may be found at 7 CFR 1466.3.

To compete for set-aside funds, the applicant must signal their intent by following the instructions here. These applicants must meet all other requirements of this announcement, including addressing at least one CIG priority listed in this notice.

Funds not awarded through this set-aside will revert to the pool of non-set-aside funds.

F. Technical Assistance for CIG Projects

Conservation Innovation Grants are Grant Agreements and as such do not provide for substantial involvement between NRCS and the grantee in carrying out the activity contemplated by the federal award. The technical assistance required to carry out a project is the responsibility of the grantee. NRCS designates an NRCS employee as a Technical Contact for each grant award. Technical contacts provide oversight activities during the project, such as site visits, reviewing performance reports, financial reports, and audits to ensure that standards, objectives, terms, and conditions for the projects are accomplished, but will not be substantially involved in carrying out the activity contemplated by the federal award.

G. SAM.gov Exclusions Database

Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program (2 CFR 200.205(d)).

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

There is no pre-proposal process for this announcement. All standard forms necessary for CIG application submission are included in the grants.gov application package.

A. Executive Order (EO) 12372

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

B. Content and Format

Applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. Submit a separate application for each project if submitting more than one. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Applicants must submit a single copy of the application in the following format:

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

Applications that are incomplete or fail to comply with the required content and formatting requirements will not be considered for funding.

1. *Project Abstract (1 page maximum).*

On a single page, provide the following information:

- The applicant entity name.
- The duration of project in months.
- The amount of federal funding requested.
- The amount of non-federal cost-share/match funding committed.
- The project title.
- The geographic location of the project.
- A brief project description - describe in non-technical language the issue or problem, the objectives to address the issue or problem, the innovative approach to be employed (including the role of participating partners, if applicable), how the impact will be quantified, and the predicted benefits or deliverables of the project.
- The State priotity that is being addressd by the project. List one priority from section I.D. above. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, please use your discretion to select the one that is the best fit. The priority that you select will determine the panel that will review your application. For each priority area, a review panel will be established with expertise in subject matter relevant to the priority topic.
- An indication if applicable that you wish to compete for the 10 percent set-aside described here.
- A technical and administrative contact for the project (if both are the same person, please note this). NRCS will use the technical and administrative contacts identified as the primary applicant contacts.

2. *Standard application form.*

"Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance" and instructions to complete it are included in the application package posted on grants.gov.

3. *Project Narrative (15-page maximum).*

The project description must include the following information in order. A sample project description is included in the application package on grants.gov.:

a. Project background: Describe the issue or problem driving the need for the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success of the project.
b. Project objectives: Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose, goals, and objectives. Describe how the project is innovative. If the project is addressing a NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, or proposing a new standard, please state this explicitly and identify the standard.
c. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project.

d. Geographic location and size of project or project area: Identify the geographic location and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics, etc.) of the project area. Maps are highly recommended.
e. EQIP eligible producer participation: Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers involved in the project, and describe the type and extent of their involvement.
f. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Applicants should develop their timelines based on a project start date of September 1, 2019.
g. Project management: Give a description of how the project will be organized and managed, including a list/description of project partners. Include a list of key technical and administrative personnel, their experience managing federal awards, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Also, include a description of how communication will be structured within the project team to ensure effective project management. Do not include resumes or CVs.
h. Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and approve payments. The proposal must include a set of technical deliverables designed to evaluate the performance and broader applicability of the project. In addition to project-specific deliverables, selected grantees are responsible for:
    1. Participation in at least one event (e.g., conference or workshop) during the grant period where the grantee presents on the activities of the project, with notification of the NRCS technical contact;
    2. A final fact sheet for use in public settings;
    3. Closing event – could be a webinar, field day, training event, etc., with notification of the NRCS technical contact.
i. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology or procedures used to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, quantify the results of the project, and ensure project objectives were impactful.
j. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits derived from the project. Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; Historically Underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and/or municipalities. Describe how the results will be communicated to others via outreach activities and how these entities will benefit. Forecast the lasting impact of project results.
k. Graphics – including pictures, charts, graphs and similar items – count towards the 15-page maximum.
l. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, do not count towards the 15-page maximum.

4. *Assessment of environmental impacts.*

If implementation of the proposal is anticipated to have physical, chemical, or biological impacts on the environment, please describe the impacts and their extent. The description of the potential environmental impacts must address both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. The length of the description should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the natural environmental resources impacted directly, indirectly, or cumulatively. Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of

acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc. Natural environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other resources protected by law, regulation, executive order, and agency policy. NRCS may choose not to approve funding for projects that may result in unacceptable adverse environmental impacts.

Every funded CIG project that involves ground disturbance activities is subject to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). NRCS must complete an environmental review of each awarded project before project commencement. Applicants may be required to prepare and pay for preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), should the environmental review find that an EA or EIS is required.

In addition, a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review and consultation by 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 CIG project effects. More information on the applicants role in NHPA Section 106 process can be found here.

5. *Budget Information, (12-page maximum).*

The budget portion of the application consists of two parts, as described below:

a. Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs. The SF-424A is included as part of the application package posted on Grants.gov. 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. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this announcement on Grants.gov.

b. Detailed Budget Narrative. Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project broken down by each project year. Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. Statement(s) of work for any subcontractors and consultants must be included as part of the application. The budget narrative should include both the federal funds requested and the applicant's matching funds.

   The budget narrative must be in text format with no charts, spreadsheets, or tables. It should be readable on letter-size, printable pages. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the reviewers can readily understand what expenses are incurred to support the project.

6. *Funding Restrictions*

CIG funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs:

1. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
2. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant (preaward costs);
3. Costs which lay outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
4. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
5. Compensation for injuries to persons or damage to property arising out of project activities;
6. Consulting services performed by a federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; and
7. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces, the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces, and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

This list is not exhaustive. For more details, refer to 2 CFR 200.

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

Individuals applying for a CIG award may not include any indirect costs in the proposed budget.

7. *Indirect (F&A) costs.*

To be eligible to recover any indirect costs under a federal award, an applicant must either 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with its cognizant federal agency that has not expired or 2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate of 10% of the modified total direct costs (MTDC) as authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). In order to qualify for the de minimis rate, the applicant must not have, or have previously held, a NICRA. A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than $35 million in direct federal funding is not eligible for the de minimis rate.

Applicants with a NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. The total amount of indirect costs is entered in Section B, Row J, of the SF-424A (Budget Information). A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. If the applicant does not have a current NICRA, indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA. A new NICRA can be negotiated with its cognizant federal agency, which is the agency that provides the applicant entity its largest amount of federal funding.

Entities that are eligible for the de minimis rate who already have a de minimis rate agreement must use the rate and base specified in the agreement, which is modified total direct costs (MTDC) as defined by 2 CFR 200.68 and also excluding the amount of each subcontract exceeding $25,000. Note that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base to which the rate is

applied. A copy of the applicant's de minimis rate agreement must be provided with the application. If a recipient is eligible to use the de minimis rate, but does not have a de minimis rate agreement, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10% of MTDC when preparing the budget and state in the budget narrative that a de minimis rate agreement is requested. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award.

An applicant may voluntarility reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at their sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the NRCS. If voluntarily reduced or waived, the applicant may chose to apply any unrecovered indirect costs as part of their cost share or match. Unrecovered indirect cost are the difference between the amount charged to the federal award and the amount which could have been charged to the federal award under the applicant's approved negotiated indirect cost rate (2 CFR 200.306(c)).

8. *Cost Share or Matching Funds.*

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost. CIG recipients must provide a non-federal funding match or cost-share amount at least equal to the amount of federal funding requested. For example, if an applicant requests $50,000 in CIG funding, at least $50,000 in non-federal cost-share or matching funds must be committed by the applicant.

Matching funds may be committed by the applicant, project partners, or both and can be a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Examples of in-kind contributions include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions identified in the project budget must be quantifiable, verifiable, and necessary to accomplish program activities.

Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. Cost sharing or matching funds must meet the criteria stated at 2 CFR 200.306 and be valued in accordance with 2 CFR 200.306(d). Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions is located at 2 CFR 200.306.

All matching funds must be identified in both the SF-424A and budget narrative components of the application. Project partners (other than the applicant) must provide commitment letters for all cash and in kind matching contriutions. A separate commitment letter is required for each cash and/or in-kind match contribution. Commitment letters must be signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization and must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the project partner; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar value of the contribution; and (5) a statement that the contributor commits to furnish the contribution during the grant period. A sample commitment letter is included as part of the application package on grants.gov.

Applications without signed written commitments covering the full value of the matching contribution are deemed incomplete.

The value of applicant contributions to the project is established according to federal cost principles. Applicants should refer to 2 CFR 200.306 for additional guidance on matching funds, in-kind contributions, and allowable costs.

9. *Declaration of previous CIG projects involvement and past performance.*

If the applicant has previously received a CIG award (either at the National or State levels), please list the following for each award:

- Project Title
- CIG agreement number
- Award funding amount
- Year of Award

10. *Declaration of Historically Underserved and veteran farmers or ranchers.*

To compete for the funding set aside for Historically Underserved producers or veteran farmers or ranchers, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities, applicants must self-certify. Historically Underserved producers or veteran farmers or ranchers can do so with a simple declarative sentence such as:

"I qualify as a (Historically Underserved producer) (veteran farmer) (veteran rancher)(community-based organization representing…) and wish to compete in the set-aside funding pool."

In addition to the self-certification statement, community-based organizations comprised of or representing Historically Underserved producers or veteran farmers or ranchers must provide a brief description of the entity and the types and numbers of producers the organization intends to service through the project.

Refer to the section of this notice that describes the funding pool set aside for Historically Underserved producers and veteran farmers or ranchers.

11. *Certifications.*

All proposals must include the following signed certification forms, which are available at grants.gov:

- AD-3030 Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. Must be submitted if entity is a corporate non-profit or for-profit corporation as indicated in the applicants SAM registration.
- AD-3031 Assurances Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. Must be submitted if entity is a corporate non-profit or for-profit corporation as indicated in the applicants SAM registration.
- SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Constrution Programs. Must be completed by all applicants.
- Certification Regarding Lobbying. Must be completed by all applicants.

12. *Letters of support.*

Letters of support for the project from individuals or entities that are not project partners may be submitted and should be placed at the very end of the application package.

13. *Risk Review Documentation*

NRCS may request additional documentation from selected applicants in order to evaluate the financial, management, and performance risk posed by awardees as required by 2 CFR 200.205. Based on this risk review, NRCS may apply to a CIG award special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed.

C. DUNS and SAM Numbers

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 the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award, application, or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NRCS may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant complies with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant does not fully comply with the requirements when the NRCS is ready to make a federal award, NRCS 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.

NFEs must obtain a DUNS and register in SAM prior to registering with Grants.gov. NFEs are strongly encouraged to apply early for their DUNS number and SAM registration.

1. **Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet DUNS number is a unique, nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. CIG applicants must obtain a DUNS number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform or by calling 1-866-705-5711.
2. **System for Award Management (SAM) Registration:** SAM is the official Federal system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registry, Federal Agency Registration, Online Representations and Certifications Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/. The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance, and can be contacted via the Help tab at the website listed above.

D. How to Submit an Application

Applications must be submitted through the Grants.gov web portal by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on July 7, 2019 and by emailing a pdf copy of the full application to Denise.Coleman@pa.usda.gov.

Submitting a CIG application through www.grants.gov requires a number of tasks. There are several preliminary registration steps before an applicant can submit the application. To register in the grants.gov system, go to www.grants.gov, click on "Applicants," amd then click on "Get Registered."

If you have completed a prior grants.gov application, you may already have completed the registration process.

Please allow sufficient time to register in grants.gov, and for possible system delays. An overview of Workspace can be viewed through grants.gov (WEBINAR - Getting Started with Workspace: Become a Workspace Wizard).

Below are instructions for accessing the forms necessary to complete an application in grants.gov:

- Go to www.grants.gov.
- Select the "Applicants" tab.
- Select the "Apply for Grants" heading.
- Click on "Get Application Package." Follow all steps.
- All necessary forms are included within the grants.gov "Application Package."
- Provide the "Funding Opportunity Number" listed on page 1 of this announcement or return to the "Search Grants" section.

Applications not received by the submission due date and time will not be accepted. The emailed application must be assembled into one pdf file document in the order specified in section IV, part A. All applications must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described in this announcement. Grants.gov provides instructions for submitting the required application items through the portal. An application's receipt date and time will be determined by the respective system-generated documentation of receipt date and time (grants.gov provides date and time stamps for all proposals submitted through the portal).

NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to grants.gov or emailed submissions. If you encounter issues with grants.gov, please contact the grants.gov help desk at (800) 518-4726 or support@grants.gov. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application submission through grants.gov and therefore is encouraged to submit your application early to ensure there is time to work out unforeseen issues.

E. Due Date

Proposals must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on July 7, 2019. Application receipt date and time will be determined by the respective system-generated documentation of receipt date and time (grants.gov provides date and time stamps for all proposals submitted through the portal). The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application receipt.

F. Acknowledgement of Submission

Grants.gov provides receipt of application submissions. NRCS acknowledges receipt of proposals received by the submission deadline via email. An applicant who does not receive such

an email acknowledgement within 15 business days of the submission deadline, but believes the proposal was submitted on time, must contact the CIG program within 30 business days of the submission deadline. Failure to do so may result in the proposal not being considered.

G. Withdrawal

Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before award execution. Written notice of withdrawl must be signed by the applicant or an authorized representative.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Proposals will be initially screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this announcement. Incomplete or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition prior to initiation of the peer review process.

A. Application Evaluation Criteria

Risk Criteria Evaluation

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.205, NRCS will review risk posed by applicants. This screening process includes:

1) Confirming the NFE does not have an active exclusion in SAM precluding it from eligibility receipt of an award (i.e., suspended or debarred; see 2 CFR Part 180 and 7 CFR Part 417).
2) Confirming the NFE does not have adverse information located in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS).

Merit Criteria Evaluation

The technical peer review panel use the following criteria, using a 100 point scale, to evaluate applications:

1. Purpose, Approach, and Goals (25 points)
   a. The purpose of the project is clearly explained and the rationale is explicit for why the innovative approach or technology is needed.
   b. The design and implementation of the project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
   c. The project outcomes are stated, measurable, and likely to be achieved; and
   d. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and a significant level of improvement will be achieved.
2. Innovative Technology or Approach (25 points)
   a. The project is innovative (national, regionally, and/or local) according to the criteria for innovation in the CIG funding announcement.
3. Project Management (20 points)
   a. Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
   b. Project staff has necessary technical and administrative expertise.
   c. The budget is adequately explained and justified, and expenses allowable.
   d. Proposal includes robust partnership with entities that can substantially assist with delivery of project outcomes with clear project management structure and team communication laid out.

4. Benefits and Transferability (30 points)
   a. An evaluation plan is documented that clearly lays out how project work will be assessed and the results transferred.
   b. There is potential for producers and landowners to use or participate in the innovative technology(s) or approach(s).
   c. There is potential for NRCS to benefit from the innovative approach or methods, including (if appropriate) the development of materials such as technical standards, technical notes, handbooks, technology tools, etc.
   d. There is potential to transfer the approach or technology to a broader audience or to other geographic areas or agricultural sectors.
   e. The potential for successful transfer, through planned project activities, to Historically Underserved producers and communities.

Partner matching contributions are considered an eligibility criterion as described in this section of the notice, and will not be considered in the evaluation.

B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals that pass the initial screening are then evaluated using a two part process:

- A technical peer review panel composed of subject matter experts evaluate the proposals. Proposals are evaluated against the CIG Proposal Evaluation Criteria listed here. The technical peer review panel forward their recommendations to the State Conservationist.
- The State Conservationst makes the final award selections based on the recommendations of the peer review panel.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NRCS anticipates announcing CIG selections through a USDA press release no later than August 7, 2019. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 1, 2019.

VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notices

Successful Applicants
A successful applicant can expect to receive official notification by email from NRCS State Office Staff. Awardees may not begin their project until a fully executed grant agreement has been signed by both NRCS and the awardee. The notice of federal award form (NRCS-ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency official is the only authorizing document, and will be provided electronically to the applicant's authorized official. Any pre-award costs incurred by the awardee will not be reimbursed.

Unsuccessful Applicants
Applicants whose proposals are not selected for funding will receive notification from PA NRCS CIG staff within 30 days of the announcement of CIG selections. These applicants will receive feedback on their proposal if a request is made to the awarding agency contact. The information

will be emailed to the technical and administrative contacts listed in the proposal within 60 days of the request.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and NRCS' *General Terms And Conditions Grants And Cooperative Agreements*. A copy of the *General Terms And Conditions Grants And Cooperative Agreements* document may be obtained by contacting the Agency Contacts listed in Section VII below.

Patents, Inventions, and Copyrights

Allocation of rights to patents, inventions, and copyrights shall be in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for federal use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States must normally manufacture it domestically. With regard to copyright, the grant recipient may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed, or for which ownership was acquired, under an award. USDA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for federal purposes and to authorize others to do so.

All tools produced must meet the accessibility of Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) requirements as specified in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d) as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220). Specifically, subsection 508(a)(1) requires that when the federal government procures EIT, it must allow federal employees and individuals of the public with disabilities comparable access to and use of information and data that is provided to federal employees and individuals of the public without disabilities. All EIT that is subject to the 36 CFR 1194 standards will have a Section 508 acceptance test and will be validated upon acceptance. All maintenance for EIT that requires upgrades, modifications, installations, and purchases will adhere to the Section 508 standards and 36 CFR 1194. Contact the CIG program contact with specific questions with regard to the applicability of this section.

C. Reporting

Reporting details are included in the fully executed grant agreement. Reporting will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, annual financial status reports, and final reports.

VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT:

The PA NRCS CIG program manager will be the agency contact for answering questions or helping with problems while this funding opportunity is open.

Phone: 717-237-2173
Email: Noel.Soto@pa.usda.gov
Mailing Address :
Noel Soto
USDA-NRCS
359 East Park Drive, Suite 2, Harrisburg, PA 17111

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

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

B. National Component

The USDA NRCS CIG program has two components – the "National Competition" and the "State Competition." This announcement is for the "State Competition" component. More information about the National Competition is available here.

C. Notice to Applicants

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

U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Statement
In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call

(866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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