Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Conservation Collaboration Grants or Agreements Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Announcement for Program Funding – MONTANA, NEBRASKA, NORTH DAKOTA, and SOUTH DAKOTA

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-MULTI-CCG-20-GEN0010740

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number (also known as Assistance Listing):

10.902 Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
10.912 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
10.924 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
10.931 Agricultural Conservation Enhancement Program (ACEP)
10.069 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing potential availability of grants and agreements for the purpose of leveraging NRCS resources, addressing local natural resource issues, encouraging collaboration and developing state- and community-level conservation leadership. Proposals will be accepted for projects located in the following states: Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Proposals are requested from Federally recognized tribal governments, State and local units of government, non-profit organizations having a 501(c)(3) status, and institutions of higher education for competitive consideration of grant or agreement awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration. In addition to the entities listed above, applications will be accepted and considered from for-profit entities under the ACEP and CTA programs for projects addressing the following areas of importance and will be given priority consideration:

- Grazing assistance – grazing plans, demonstrations and training
- Tribal Conservation Planners and planning
- Watershed focused results (benefits of targeting and social outcomes)
- AG 101 – field training to increase awareness of cropping systems and equipment utilized in agriculture
- Prescribed Burn – plans, trainings and creating a network of consultants

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.

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2020 varies by state as identified below, although the availability and composition of available funds has not yet been determined.

STATE	ESTIMATED TOTAL AVAILABLE BY STATE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	ANTICIPATED # of GRANTS/AGREEMENTS
Montana	$2,000,000	$100,000	$1,000,000	6
Nebraska	$1,500,000	$50,000	$1,000,000	6
North Dakota	$4,000,000	$20,000	$1,000,000	20
South Dakota	$4,800,000	$20,000	$1,000,000	20

Key Dates

Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Daylight Time on April 30, 2020. Funding decisions will be made by the respective NRCS State Conservationist, informed by the ranking list and the availability of funding in the programs whose CFDA numbers are listed above.

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.

A complete application must be submitted to the email address below for the respective state of the project location.

Montana
kyle.tackett@usda.gov with a carbon copy to kris.berg@usda.gov

Nebraska
NRCSNEBProposals@nrcs.usda.gov

North Dakota
jill.howard@usda.gov with a carbon copy to lisa.lund@usda.gov

South Dakota
sd.nrcs.proposals@nrcs.usda.gov

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2020 varies by state as identified below, although the availability and composition of available funds has not yet been determined.

STATE	ESTIMATED TOTAL AVAILABLE BY STATE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	ANTICIPATED # of GRANTS/AGREEMENTS
Montana	$2,000,000	$100,000	$1,000,000	6
Nebraska	$1,500,000	$50,000	$1,000,000	6
North Dakota	$4,000,000	$20,000	$1,000,000	20
South Dakota	$4,800,000	$20,000	$1,000,000	20

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are:

Agricultural Conservation Enhancement Program (ACEP): Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Section 1237, Public Law 99-198, as amended by Agricultural Act of 2014, Title II, Part Subtitle D, Section 2301, Public Law 113-79, 128 Stat. 731 -744, 16 U.S.C 3865et seq. (CFDA No. 10.931).

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): 16 U.S.C. 3831-3835a, 7 CFR 704, 7 CFR 1410; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L.107-171 (CFDA No. 10.069).

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): 16 U.S.C. Section 3839aa-21 et seq. (CFDA No. 10.924).

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

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): Federal Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, P.L. 104-127, as amended; Food Security Act of 1985, Subtitle D, Title XII, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa et seq.; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L. 107-171 (CFDA No. 10.912)

The purpose of Conservation Collaboration Grants or Agreements is to leverage NRCS and partner resources to:

1. Improve soil health.
2. Improve landscape performance in dealing with water quantity issues; either excess or inadequate, and downstream impacts.
3. Improve water quality.
4. Improve habitat for local wildlife species of concern.
5. Improve the environmental and economic performance of working agricultural lands.
6. Assist communities and groups to build and strengthen local food projects that provide healthy food and economic opportunities.

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

1. Build technical capacity to implement Farm Bill Conservation Programs.
2. Build technical capacity of NRCS and partner field conservation employees.
3. Build the capacity of local partners to develop and implement effective projects.
4. Leverage non-Federal resources to achieve positive natural resources conservation outcomes.
    a. In addition to the entities listed in Section C of this opportunity, applications will be accepted and considered from for-profit entities under the ACEP and CTA programs for projects addressing the following areas of importance and will be given priority consideration:
        - Grazing assistance – grazing plans, demonstrations and training
        - Tribal Conservation Planners and planning
        - Watershed focused results (benefits of targeting and social outcomes)
        - AG 101 – field training to increase awareness of cropping systems and equipment utilized in agriculture
        - Prescribed Burn – plans, trainings and creating a network of consultants

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. Complete proposals received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in Section D(2) of this opportunity. Evaluated proposals will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Funding

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2020 varies by state as identified below, although the availability and composition of available funds has not yet been determined.

STATE	ESTIMATED TOTAL AVAILABLE BY STATE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	ANTICIPATED # of GRANTS/AGREEMENTS
Montana	$2,000,000	$100,000	$1,000,000	6
Nebraska	$1,500,000	$50,000	$1,000,000	6
North Dakota	$4,000,000	$20,000	$1,000,000	20
South Dakota	$4,800,000	$20,000	$1,000,000	20

2. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be between one and three years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 1, 2020.

3. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award a grant agreement(s) or cooperative agreement(s) pursuant to this opportunity. In the event cooperative awards are made, there will be substantial involvement on the part of the NRCS. This would include NRCS collaboration or participation, or close NRCS oversight and control. This could include:

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

Applicants must state in the proposal of their application the type of award for which they would like to be considered.

4. Procurement Contracts

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

5. Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications

Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing are eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards. An application for renewal means an application submitted to continue an existing agreement that meets the objectives and requirements of this NFO. An application for supplementation of an existing

project means an application to add components to an existing agreement so that it would meet the objectives and requirements in this NFO.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants and applications must meet eligibility criteria by the application deadline to be considered for award. Eligible applicant type is determined by the implementing program statute. Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program (2 CFR 200.205(d)).

Applicants must be a Federally recognized tribal governments, State and local units of government, non-profit organizations having a 501(c)(3) status,, or institution of higher learning. Entities may submit more than one application as long as the proposals are for different projects and entities may receive more than one award.

In addition to the entities listed above, applications will be accepted and considered from for-profit entities under the ACEP and CTA programs for projects addressing the following areas of importance and will be given priority consideration:

1. Grazing assistance – grazing plans, demonstrations and training
2. Tribal Conservation Planners and planning
3. Watershed focused results (benefits of targeting and social outcomes)
4. AG 101 – field training to increase awareness of cropping systems and equipment utilized in agriculture
5. Prescribed Burn – plans, trainings and creating a network of consultants

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is a not a specific match amount required. However, applications will be evaluated in part on the relative contribution of non-Federal resources to the project. Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash, services, materials, equipment, or third party in-kind contributions.

Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions is located at 2 CFR 200.306.

3. Other

Any individual award made pursuant to this opportunity will be made to a single entity. Applicants that apply as “partnerships” or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the “partner” parties.

In all but exceptional cases, it must be reflected in the award as an awardee/subawardee relationship.

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

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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

A complete application must be submitted to the email address below for the respective state of the project location.

Montana
kyle.tackett@usda.gov with a carbon copy to kris.berg@usda.gov

Nebraska
NRCSNEBProposals@nrcs.usda.gov

North Dakota
jill.howard@usda.gov with a carbon copy to lisa.lund@usda.gov

South Dakota
sd.nrcs.proposals@nrcs.usda.gov

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

2. **Content and Form of Application Submission**
   Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application.

   Applicants must submit only one original copy of the proposal.

   Each page must be on numbered 8½" x 11" white paper that has one-inch margins. The text of the application must be typed in New Times Roman, no smaller than 12 font, and be single spaced.

   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**. Proposals must include all

required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered. All federally required forms and letters of support must be submitted at the time of application.

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

a. **Proposal**

I. Summary: 250 words maximum (1/2 page)
II. Introduction: One (1) page maximum
III. Needs Assessment: One (1) page maximum
IV. Program Objectives: One (1) page maximum
V. Methods: Two (2) page maximum plus Deliverables Table
VI. Budget: One (1) page maximum
VII. Evaluation: 250 words maximum (1/2 page)

I. 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 each of the following: 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, the project total cost, funds already obtained, and the amount requested in this proposal. Applicants must state in this section the type of award for which they would like to be considered, and if a cooperative agreement is requested, NRCS's requested level of involvement.

II. Introduction: (Letters of Support, and one (1) page narrative maximum. Letters of support do not count towards the page 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

III. 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.

IV. 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.

V. 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 non-government 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.

VI. Budget Information: (one (1)-page maximum narrative.) Explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency's approval and estimate its cost. See Instructions for Completing Budget Narrative located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.

i. As required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending $750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System.

ii. Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. Applications must include written documentation showing the amounts and sources of match or cost share (including both cash and in-kind contributions). Cost sharing/match documentation does not count against any applicable page limits. For third-party contributions a separate letter of support 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.

iii. "In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third-party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of "in-kind" contributions include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and verifiable.

iv. The value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with 2 CFR 200.

v. NOTE: NRCS may conduct reference checks to ensure that organizations identified are supportive and involved with the project.

vi. All applicants are hereby notified of the following:

- Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award. (Accepting the 10% *de minimis* rate as a condition of award constitutes establishing an approved rate.)
- Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award.

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

VII. 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 has 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.

b. **Application Form**: (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) See Instructions for Completing SF 424 located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.

c. **Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs**. Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the agency funds, and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds, if any. This form is the summary budget for the project and should include the full project totals on pages one and two. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.

d. **Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 2 CFR Part 418, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with this application AND the Federal share exceeds $100,000, you must also complete and submit the SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities located at 2 CFR 418, Appendix B. See 2 CFR, Subpart 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

3. **Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)**
   Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the agency is ready to make an award, it may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

   Entities must obtain a DUNS and register in SAM prior to registering with Grants.gov. A description of each is below. Entities are strongly encouraged to apply early for their DUNS number and SAM registration.

   Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number: A Dun and Bradstreet DUNS number is a unique, nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. Applicants must obtain a DUNS number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform or by calling 1-866-705-5711.

   System for Award Management (SAM) Registration: SAM is the official Federal system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registry, Federal Agency Registration, Online Representations and Certifications Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: https://www.sam.gov. The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance, and can be contacted via the Help tab at the website listed above.

Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding DUNS or SAM issues.

4. **Submission Dates and Times**
   Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on April 30, 2020. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline.

A complete application must be submitted to the email address below for the respective state of the project location.

Montana
kyle.tackett@usda.gov with a carbon copy to kris.berg@usda.gov

Nebraska
NRCSNEBProposals@nrcs.usda.gov

North Dakota
jill.howard@usda.gov with a carbon copy to lisa.lund@usda.gov

South Dakota
sd.nrcs.proposals@nrcs.usda.gov

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

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

   - Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project:
   - Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
   - Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
   - Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
   - Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
   - Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; and
   - Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces, the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces, and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.
   - Management fees and profit

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

Indirect costs limitations:

a. A non-profit organization or institution of higher education awarded a cooperative agreement will be limited to a 10% indirect cost rate in accordance with the Agency's annual appropriations act. The 10% indirect cost rate applies to both federal and non-federal funds. Other types of entities are not subject to this statutory limitation.

b. To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; or 2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). In order to qualify for the de minimis rate, the recipient must have never had a NICRA. A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than $35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the de minimis rate.

c. Applicants not subject to a statutory limitation, which have a current NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. A recipient may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at its sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the agency. If voluntarily reduced or waived, the recipient may choose to apply any unrecovered indirect costs as part of their cost share or match. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount which could have been charged to the Federal award under the recipient's approved negotiated indirect cost rate (2 CFR 200.306(c)). A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. Indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA. However, if an applicant with a current NICRA is subject to the statutory limitation, indirect costs must be calculated as follows. First, multiply the NICRA rate by the base stated in the NICRA to arrive at Amount A. Next, multiply the statutory limit of 10% by the total of all direct costs to arrive at Amount B. The lower of Amount A and B is the amount of indirect cost to include on the budget.

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

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

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Merit/Technical Criteria

NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on these Proposal Evaluation Criteria (180 points possible):

I. 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 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
7. Includes if the applicant is requesting consideration of a grant or cooperative agreement.
8. Addresses one or more of the purposes and/or areas of emphasis outlined in Section A, Program Description of this opportunity.

II. 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

III. NEEDS ASSESSMENT (25 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

IV: 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. Objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a timeline for completion

V. 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. Project methodology is innovative
6. Leverages private and/or public-sector partnerships
7. Presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be conducted within the budget, time and resources of the program.
8. Describes efforts for sustainability of the project after the agreement expiration.

VI. BUDGET (25 points): 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:

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1. Is detailed
2. Includes a well written narrative

Applications will be evaluated in part on the relative contribution of non-Federal resources to the project.

VII. EVALUATION (15 points): The extent 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 success will be measured
4. Define how progress will be reported and technical representative kept informed

2. Risk Criteria

The awarding agency will check SAM to ensure the applicant is not suspended or debarred, which would preclude receiving an award. In addition, prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold ($250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a)).

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

a. Financial Stability. The applicant certifies that it maintains adequate financial resources or cash flow to meet its financial obligations on a routine basis and successfully complete any agreement it may be awarded.
b. Quality of Management Systems and Ability to meet Management Standards prescribed in 2 CFR Part 200. The applicant certifies it has a financial management system adequate to segregate and track federal funds. It further certifies is has adequate systems in place for proper agreement administration; compliance with the standards outlined in 2 CFR Part 200 Section D for procurement, property, and records management; and required financial and performance reporting.
c. History of Performance. If the applicant has previously obtained Federal financial assistance award, it certifies that it has never failed to materially comply with the Federal award terms and conditions and further that it has never had an award terminated on that basis.

Submission of an application constitutes certification that an applicant meets these standards.

3. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or applications not meeting the formatting criteria will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The agency intends to make a selection and award without conducting any discussions or allowing applicants to correct deficiencies or omissions in their applications. Consequently, they must ensure their applications are complete and accurate. However, while the agency intends to make a selection without contacting applicants, it reserves the right to request applicants to revise their applications to correct deficiencies or omissions identified by the awarding agency. If this is done, the agency will conduct discussions with all applicants and identify

deficiencies and omissions and give applicants and opportunity to submit a revised application by a common cut-off date. The agency may also contact individual applicants to clarify certain components of their application.

Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by a technical review board nominated by the approving official. Risk reviews will be conducted by the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the applicable State Conservationist.

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

   a. Prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold ($250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a));

   b. An applicant may review information in FAPIIS accessible through SAM and comment on any information about it that a Federal awarding agency previously entered;

   c. The agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR 200.205, Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

5. **Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates**
   The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by *June 15, 2020* and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2020.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. **Federal Award Notices**
   The agency will provide notice that an application has been selected before it actually makes the Federal award. As such, the selection notification is not an authorization to begin performance. Any pre-award costs incurred by the awardee will not be reimbursed. The Notice of Grant and Agreement Award (ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency representative is the only authorizing document, and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized representative for signature.

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

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and the General Terms and Conditions; a copy of the General Terms and Conditions may be obtained by contacting the Federal Awarding Agency Contacts listed in this opportunity announcement.

3. Reporting

Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the General Terms and Conditions but will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, quarterly financial status reports, and final reports.

If the Federal share of any agreement awarded under this opportunity notice may include more than $500,000 over the period of performance, recipients must also comply with the post award reporting requirements reflected in Appendix XII of 2 CFR Part 200 —Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

Applicants that receive awards pursuant to this opportunity and any sub awardees must comply with the reporting requirements described at 2 CFR Part 170, unless an exception applies. Applicants must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with those requirements. A list of exceptions can be found at 2 CFR 170.110(b).

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact one of the following individuals:

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

Program Contact:

MONTANA
Kyle Tackett, Partnership Liaison
Phone: (406) 925-2865
E-mail: kyle.tackett@usda.gov

NEBRASKA
Neil Dominy, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships
Phone: (402) 437-4131
E-mail: neil.dominy@usda.gov

NORTH DAKOTA
Jill Howard, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships
Phone: (701) 530-2073
E-mail: jill.howard@usda.gov

SOUTH DAKOTA
Denise Gauer, Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy
Phone: (605) 352-1243
E-mail: denise.gauer@usda.gov

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions regarding this opportunity must be submitted to the Administrative Contact identified above via email with the Opportunity Number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by April 7, 2020. A questions and answers document addressing all questions will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this opportunity in Grants.gov by April 13, 2020.

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

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

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

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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