

Summary Information

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Arkansas NRCS Technical Services and Projects for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2020

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-AR-MULTI-20-GEN0010673

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers: 10.902, 10.912, 10.924, and 10.931

ACTION: NOTICE

Accepting applications to assist NRCS Arkansas implement projects that will provide direct technical services to assist producers to plan and/or implement conservation practices throughout Arkansas, additional specific objectives are described in section I B.

SUMMARY: The NRCS - Arkansas State Office, an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is seeking support from and opportunities to partner with likeminded natural resource conservation partners. The overall intent of this solicitation is to solicit partnerships to provide direct technical services to assist producers to plan and/or implement conservation practices throughout Arkansas and reach objectives and priorities outlined further in this document.

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2020 will be approximately \$3,000,000. There is no minimum amount required for awards, however the maximum single award amount will not exceed \$3,000,000. Proposals are requested from city or township governments, county governments, federally recognized Native American governments, Native American tribal organizations, non-profits with a 501(c)(3) status, non-profits without a 501(c)(3) status, private institutions of higher learning, for-profit business (must have a history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land to address local conservation priorities as determined by NRCS), special district governments, state governments, public and state-controlled institutions of higher learning for competitive consideration of awards for projects between one and three years in duration. All applicants must be capable of providing services in Arkansas.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The Arkansas State Conservationist reserves the right not to fund any or all applications. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for single or multiyear applications submitted by eligible entities.

APPLICATIONS DUE DATE: Applications must be received by NRCS by **4:00-p.m. CST, Friday, March 20, 2020**

SUBMISSIONS: Applications may be sent electronically through www.grants.gov or via email to amanda.mathis@usda.gov with a copy to kimberly.chavis@usda.gov.

Applications may also be sent via express mail, overnight courier service, or the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, Amanda Mathis, Room 3416, Federal Building, 700 West Capitol Avenue, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about this announcement can be directed to Amanda Mathis, Assistant State Conservationist- Partnership Coordinator at amanda.mathis@usda.gov or

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Program Authority

CFDA 10.902 – Soil and Water Conservation (CTA): Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, N/A Stat. N/A, 16 U.S.C 590 a-f.

CFDA 10.912 – Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

CFDA 10.924 – Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)

CFDA 10.931 – Agriculture Conservation Easement Program – (ACEP-ALE/WRE)

B. Overview

The purpose of this announcement is to advertise opportunities to parties who are interested in partnering with NRCS to provide direct technical services to address the key conservation objectives and focus areas described below. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for single or multiyear applications submitted by eligible entities based in or with substantial operations in Arkansas.

Technical assistance services are defined as: Technical expertise, information, training, education, and tools necessary for a producer to be able to successfully implement, operate, and maintain the conservation of natural resources on land active in agricultural, forestry, or related uses. The term includes:

- Technical services provided directly to farmers, ranchers, and other eligible entities, such as conservation planning, technical consultation, and assistance with design and implementation of conservation practices.

Conservation partners are invited to apply for NRCS assistance with the following key conservation objectives:

1. Projects that will provide technical services related to any of the following Arkansas state resource priorities:
 - Water Quantity
 - Water Quality
 - Plant Health
 - Soil Health
 - Wildlife
2. Emphasis will be placed on projects that achieve any of the following:
 - a. Promote public awareness of NRCS programs and further develop NRCS relationships with conservation partners and participants, women agricultural producers; Veterans, minority and limited resource landowners, beginning farmers, and Historically Underserved agricultural producers.

- b. Facilitate and conduct activities to help NRCS and Conservation Partners determine how to improve customer service, work must include methods to obtain direct producer feedback and direct suggestions on ways to better serve conservation clientele.
- c. Implement strategies to broadly communicate key conservation messages that heighten public awareness of conservation measures being implemented in Arkansas and better connect concept that conservation practices have become part producers' portfolios in mainstream and are vital to agricultural operation vitality.
- d. Facilitate the organization, advertisement, and delivery of training sessions which will result in participants being trained to become certified technical service providers to prepare soil health management plans.
- e. Provide direct technical assistance in support of development and implementation of wildlife habitat/management plans. Work must cover a multi-county area but staff resource should be based in the following Arkansas locations: North Little Rock, Monticello, Hot Springs, Pocahontas, Danville, Harrison, and Hazen.
- f. Provide direct technical assistance to producers in Arkansas by conducting the following; on-site inventory/analysis, formulation of conservation alternative, preparation of conservation plans, assistance with conservation practice survey, design, layout, checkout and implementation and support for farm bill program management.
- g. Provide unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology to facilitate planning and installation of conservation practices. Areas to provide assistance will include real time data for analyzing changes in landscape due to flooding or other natural disasters, improved irrigation water management, assistance with highly erodible land and wetland determinations/compliance, and post construction features. UAV must be capable of providing geo-referenced data and proposals shall include accuracy of the UAV data.
- h. Conduct water quality monitoring in identified MRBI and NWQI watersheds to provide data on the effects of conservation practices.
- i. Provide direct technical assistance and/or advanced equipment for personnel in order to facilitate dam inspections and promote operation and maintenance activities on designated watershed dams.
- j. Development of conservation planning tools, specifics below:
 - Soil Health*
 - Specific Arkansas case studies documenting on how soil health conservation practices can reduce production costs and provides conservation benefits.
 - Water Quality*
 - Enhancement of existing manure/nutrient planning tool(s) to allow for easier use and more efficient planning by field staff.
 - Plant Health*
 - Applications (apps) to assist field staff and producers with any of the following

required to practice implementation/certification; Fertilizer calculations, pure live seed calculator, grazing records.

- A guide to working effectively with small ruminant producers.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

The NRCS anticipates that the amount of funding available for this announcement will be approximately **\$3,000,000** in FY2020. Selected recipients will be notified by email. All awards are subject to the availability of funds appropriated by Congress. Awards may include;

- Contribution Agreements with 50 percent contribution from each party, or
- Cooperative Agreements* without contribution of funds but where significant NRCS involvement is needed.

Applications must clearly indicate the type of instrument proposed.

*In the event cooperative awards are made there *must* 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.

Subject to the availability of funds, the resulting agreements are expected to fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed three years. Applicants should submit budget applications that fully describe funding requests. Multiyear applications also must be shown completely on page 2, Section D of Standard Form (SF) 424A portion of the application. Subject to the availability of funds, extensions may be granted by unilateral decision of the Government.

III. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for this funding opportunity can be found on <https://www.grants.gov/>. All standard forms necessary for application submission are posted on the following Web site:

1. Grants.gov – Forms Repository

Forms may also be obtained by emailing, contacting, or writing to the agency contacts identified in section VI.

B. Applicant eligibility

Applicants must be city or township governments, county governments, federally recognized Native American governments, Native American tribal organizations, non-profits with a 501(c)(3) status, non-profits without a 501(c)(3) status, private institutions of higher learning, special district governments, state governments, public and state-controlled institutions of higher learning, or for-profit business (must have a history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land to address local conservation priorities as determined by NRCS). All applicants must be capable of providing services in Arkansas.

C. Matching Funds Requirements

There is no designated match requirement for these agreements. However, proposals will be evaluated in part on the relative contribution of non-Federal resources to the project. Non-Federal funds may be derived from any combination of cash, non-cash and in-kind sources. Proposals claiming matching funds must ensure funds are committed at time of application. Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Additional information about matching funds can be found at 2 CFR 200.

D. Applying for assistance – Content and format

Applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. **Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project/workshop described in their application.** Applicants must submit only one original copy of the application in the following format:

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

Applications must include **all** required forms and narrative sections described below.

Incomplete and/or noncompliant applications will not be considered.

1. **Application Form:** (SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each application. SF 424 can be downloaded from Grants.gov – Forms Repository
2. **Project Summary:** [Two (2)-page maximum] Applicants must submit a description including the information below:
 - a. The applicant entity name.
 - b. The project title (limited to no more than 10 words).
 - c. Primary emphasis area that application pertains to, as described in Section 1, Part B of this announcement, **clearly document which emphasis area the project will support.**
 - d. The duration of project in years or months.
 - e. The amount of federal funding requested.
 - f. The amount of non-federal match funding committed.
 - g. The geographic location of the project.
 - h. If applicable, other organizations, entities and agencies that will partner with the applicant in implementing the activities of the proposal.
 - i. A brief project description, including –
 - *description*, in non-technical language, the issue or problem,
 - the *objectives* to address the issue or problem,

- the *approach* to be employed (including the role of participating partners, if applicable),
 - how the *impact* will be quantified or outcomes measured, and
 - the *deliverables* of the project.
- j. A technical and administrative contact for the project (notate if both are the same person). NRCS will use the technical and administrative contacts identified as the primary applicant contacts.
3. **Project Description:** [Ten (10)-page *maximum*] The description must include the following information:
- a. Proposal background: Describe the issue or problem driving the need for the proposed project. Provide evidence that the proposed project has a high probability for success.
 - 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 needed.
 - c. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project, the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project, and the role of the partner(s) in completing the project.
 - d. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Anticipated start date after July 1, 2020 but subject change. Proposals should have flexible start dates with timelines shown relative to the execution of an agreement.
 - e. Project management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
 - f. 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 outcomes, performance, and broader applicability of the project.
 - g. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, do not count towards the 10-page maximum.
4. **Budget Information:** [Four (4)-page maximum for narrative.] The budget portion of the proposal consists of the two parts described below:
- a. SF 424A Budget Information- Non-Construction Programs: Fill in all spaces as appropriate. This form is the summary budget for the project. If there is a desire for the applicant to reach a long-term partnership through this announcement, please indicate this using the SF 424A to indicate multi- year funding needs. If proposed activities will extend past a 12-month period of performance, make sure to identify the funds needed for each funding year period by completing all sections of the SF 424a. Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the NRCS 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 year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. Personnel costs should include documentation supporting hourly rates and the number of hours or equivalent time allotment that will be allocated to the project. Equipment, supplies and materials need to be itemized with pricing data. Statement(s) of work for any subcontractors and consultants must be included as part of the application. The budget narrative should support the Federal funds requested and the applicant's matching funds (if applicable). The breakdown of the Federal share and matching funds should be shown separately as in the SF 424A, not combined.

Due to the agreement software used by NRCS, the preferred format of the budget narrative is in text form only. However, spreadsheets, table, etc may be used *if* easily transferable to text. The narrative 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.

5. **Indirect (Facilities and Administrative) Costs:** In order to be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, the non-federal entity (NEF) 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 voluntarily 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 choose 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)).

The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, Section 708, **limits indirect costs** under cooperative agreements between USDA and **non-profit institutions, including institutions of higher education, to ten (10) percent of the total direct costs of the agreement regardless of an approved NICRA.**

6. Certifications and Required Forms:

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

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs. Must be completed by all applicants.
- d. Certification Regarding Lobbying. Must be completed by all applicants.
- e. SF LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Form. Must be completed by all applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in federal funds.

7. Additional Pre-award Requirements: The following items **must** be obtained prior to entering into an agreement with the Federal Government but do not need to be provided with the application. Applicants are encouraged to apply early for their Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)/System for Award Management (SAM) number.

- a. **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. Please note that the registration may take up to 10 business days to complete.
- b. **SAM:** Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contract Registration/Federal Register, Online Registrations and Certifications Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Please allow ample time to complete the SAM registration, registration typically takes a minimum of 7 days to complete but delays have been frequently experienced in the past.

NRCS 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 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.

E. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit their application electronically via [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or by email to:

amanda.mathis@ar.usda.gov with a copy to kimberly.chavis@usda.gov.

Applications may also be sent via express mail, overnight courier service, or the United States Postal Service using the following address: USDA-NRCS, Amanda Mathis, Room 3416, Federal Building, 700 West Capitol Avenue, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201. If you choose to submit your application via [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), visit <https://www.grants.gov/> and follow the instructions.

All applications, regardless of how they are submitted, must be received by NRCS **by 4:00p.m. CST on Friday, March 20, 2020.**

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or emailed submissions. If you encounter issues with [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), please contact the [grants.gov](https://www.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](https://www.grants.gov) and therefore is encouraged to submit your application early to ensure there is time to work out unforeseen issues or use an alternative approved submission method, such as email.

F. Due Date

Applications must be received **no later than 4:00p.m. CST on Friday, March 20, 2020.** The applicant assumes the risk of delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early via email to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

G. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via email. An applicant who does not receive such an email acknowledgement within 15 days of their submission, but believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below within 30 days of submission deadline. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered. [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) provides receipt of application submissions.

H. Withdrawal

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

I. Funding Restrictions

The funds granted through this announcement **may not be used** to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing via the funding instrument 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;
3. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;

4. Entertainment costs (including all food/snacks/beverages), 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.
8. 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 on Part VI.

OMB Circulars will be incorporated by reference and made a part of each agreement awarded under this process. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars and Cost Principles for additional guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

IV. APPLICATION REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Review and Selection Process

Initially, all application packages will be reviewed to confirm that applicants are eligible recipients. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. NRCS *will not* consider incomplete application or those that do not meet the requirements set forth in this notice, and applicants will be notified when NRCS is not considering their application. Applications will be evaluated against the specific objectives identified in the opportunity titles identified above. Business evaluations are performed by the grants and agreements or contract specialist. Technical reviews are performed by a technical review board and program manager. Failure to identify the specific opportunity title may result in a determination of ineligibility. NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on the Special Award Selection Factors below (120 points possible).

B. Special Award Selection Factors

1. The extent to which the project supports the identified conservation objective:
Projects that promote/enhance/foster implementation of the following state resource priorities:
 - Water Quantity
 - Water Quality
 - Plant Health
 - Soil Health
 - Wildlife
2. The extent which the proposal places emphasis to achieve any of the following:
 - Promote public awareness of NRCS programs and further develop NRCS relationships with conservation partners and participants, women agricultural producers, Veterans, minority and limited resource landowners, beginning farmers, and Historically Underserved agricultural producers.
 - Facilitate and conduct activities to help NRCS and Conservation Partners determine how to improve customer service, work must include methods to obtain

direct producer feedback and direct suggestions on ways to better serve conservation clientele.

- Implement strategies to broadly communicate key conservation messages that heighten public awareness of conservation measures being implemented in Arkansas and better connect concept that conservation practices have become part producers' portfolios in mainstream and are vital to agricultural operation vitality.
- Facilitate the organization, advertisement, and delivery of training sessions which will result in participants being trained to become certified technical service providers to prepare soil health management plans.
- Provide direct technical assistance in support of development and implementation of wildlife habitat/management plans. Work must cover a multi-county area but staff resource should be based in the following Arkansas locations: North Little Rock, Monticello, Hot Springs, Pocahontas, Danville, Harrison, and Hazen.
- Provide direct technical assistance to producers in Arkansas by conducting the following; on-site inventory/analysis, formulation of conservation alternative, preparation of conservation plans, assistance with conservation practice survey, design, layout, checkout and implementation and support for farm bill program management.
- Provide unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology to facilitate planning and installation of conservation practices. Areas to provide assistance will include real time data for analyzing changes in landscape due to flooding or other natural disasters, improved irrigation water management, assistance with highly erodible land and wetland determinations/compliance, and post construction features. UAV must be capable of providing geo-referenced data and proposals shall include accuracy of the UAV data.
- Conduct water quality monitoring in identified MRBI and NWQI watersheds to provide data on the effects of conservation practices.
- Provide direct technical assistance and/or advanced equipment for personnel in order to facilitate dam inspections and promote operation and maintenance activities on designated watershed dams.
- Development of conservation planning tools, specifics below:
 - *Soil Health*
 - Specific Arkansas case studies documenting on how soil health conservation practices can reduce production costs and provides conservation benefits.
 - *Water Quality*
 - Enhancement of existing manure/nutrient planning tool(s) to allow for easier use and more efficient planning by field staff.
 - *Plant Health*
 - Applications (apps) to assist field staff and producers with any of the

following required to practice implementation/certification; Fertilizer calculations, pure live seed calculator, grazing records.

- A guide to working effectively with small ruminant producers.
3. Partner match contribution.
 4. Evidence in the proposal that the design and implementation of project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
 5. Measurability of project outcomes.
 6. Potential for successful completion and benefit to NRCS mission.
 7. Project timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
 8. Project staff has experience working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land to address local conservation priorities and possesses the technical expertise needed to carry out the project.
 9. Budget is adequately explained and justified.
 10. Project benefits to Historically Underserved Producers, Veteran Farmers or Ranchers or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.
 11. The extent to which the project is dependent upon NRCS field staff inputs (for staff training/onboarding, engineering oversight/assistance etc.)

C. Review and Selection Process

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

1. Technical peer review panels composed of subject matter experts evaluate the proposals. The technical peer review panels forward their recommendations to the State Conservationist.
2. The State Conservationist makes the final award selections based on the recommendations of the peer review panels and critical conservation needs. The State Conservationist may consider available funding, geographic diversity, applicant diversity, and other factors in making the final decisions.

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;

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.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Applicants will be notified of their initial award status within approximately 30 days from the deadline date. Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification. Award dates will be determined by the availability of funds and NRCS workloads. **Proposals should have flexible start dates with timelines shown relative to the execution of an agreement.**

E. Unsuccessful Applications

Applicants whose applications are not selected for funding will be notified of their status within 30 days of the announcement of selections.

F. Intergovernmental Review

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

G. Procurement Contracts

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

V. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive official notification from the USDA NRCS Arkansas State Office. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the technical review process and financial review. Awardees may not begin their project until a fully executed 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.

Note: Appropriations Restrictions: Awards made under this solicitation are subject to the provisions contained in the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. No. 112-55), Division A, Sections 738 and 739, regarding corporate felony convictions and corporate Federal tax delinquencies.

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 VI below.

C. Reporting

Partners are required to submit progress, expenditure, and performance reports on an annual basis. Individual agreements may require more frequent reporting, which will be noted in an agreement if necessary. Progress reports will include annual operation and maintenance reports of activities, achievements, plans, and results for the project. Expenditure reports will include a SF-425, Federal Financial Report. Performance reports are required to indicate award documents for the program, as well as other documents determined by the individual agreement.

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 subawardees 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).

D. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Applicants should be aware that some or all of the information submitted in their application may be subject to public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act. Applicants are advised to mark confidential information, such as proprietary information, to prevent disclosure.

E. Other Requirements

Selected applicants will be required to comply with the NRCS-USDA General Terms and Conditions for Grants and Cooperative Agreements. A copy of this document may be obtained by contacting the Agency Contacts listed in Section VI.

VI. AGENCY CONTACTS

Program Contact

Amanda Mathis
Assistant State Conservationist-
Partnership Coordinator
Room 3416 Federal Building
700 West Capitol Ave
Little Rock, AR 72201
Office: 501-301-3162
amanda.mathis@usda.gov

Administrative Contact

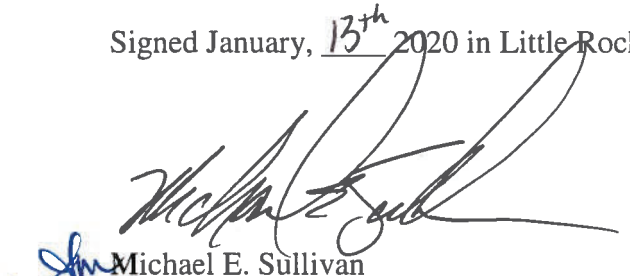
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Signed January, 13th 2020 in Little Rock, Arkansas



Michael E. Sullivan
Arkansas State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service

VII. OTHER INFORMATION

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

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