

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Commodity Credit Corporation
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Florida

**Conservation Innovation Grants (Florida Component)
Fiscal Year 2008 Announcement of Program Funding**

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NRCS requests applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications are accepted for proposals that will be implemented in the State of Florida. For FY 2008, up to \$150,000 is available for the State CIG competition. Funds will be awarded through a competitive grants process. There are three CIG components available in FY 2008: Natural Resource Concerns Component, Technology Component, and the Wildlife Component. Applications are requested from eligible government or non-government organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between one and three years in duration. This notice identifies the objectives for CIG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and associated instructions needed to apply to CIG.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE AND ADDRESSES: Proposals must be received in the NRCS Florida State Office by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on April 30, 2008. The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using express mail or overnight courier service is: Conservation Innovation Grants Program; c/o Jeff Woods; Natural Resources Conservation Service; 2614 NW 43RD Street, Gainesville, FL 32606-6611.

Applications sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be sent to the following address:
Conservation Innovation Grants Program; c/o Jeff Woods; Natural Resources
Conservation Service; PO BOX 141510, Gainesville, FL 32614

To submit your application electronically, visit www.grants.gov/apply and follow the instructions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions on technical issues contact Jeff Woods, CIG Coordinator for the Florida. NRCS Office at: 2614 NW 43RD Street, Gainesville, FL 32606-6611. Telephone number 352-338-9511 e-mail: Jeffrey.Woods@fl.usda.gov

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

CIG was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under Section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985, as added by section 2301 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-171). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who is vice president of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). EQIP is administered by NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, 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) into NRCS technical manuals or guides, or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Instead, it is a vehicle to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success and to be candidates for eventual technology transfer. CIG funds projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

NRCS will accept applications for single- or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, submitted to NRCS from eligible entities, including, State and local governments, and non-governmental organizations and individuals. Applications are accepted from eligible entities located in the Florida.

Complete applications will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel and scored based on the Criteria for Proposal Evaluation identified in this document. Scored applications will be forwarded to a Grant Review Board. The Grant Review Board will make recommendations for project approval to the State Conservationist. Final award selections will be made by the State Conservationist.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must encompass the development and field testing, evaluation, and implementation of:

- Conservation adoption incentive systems, including market-based systems; or,
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, and approaches.

To be given priority consideration, the innovative project or activity:

- Will have been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success;
- Demonstrates, tests, evaluates, or verifies environmental (soil, water, air, plants, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability in the field;

- Adapts conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance, and encourage adoption;
- Introduces conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector; and,
- Adapts conservation technology, management, or incentive systems to improve performance.

D. CIG Components

For Fiscal Year 2008, three components of CIG will be offered in the Florida. Applicants may apply for multiple components but will not receive more than one award.

1. Natural Resource Concerns Component

Applications must demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address a natural resource concern or concerns. The four natural resource concerns for possible funding through Conservation Innovation Grants for fiscal year 2008 are:

Water Resources

The objective of this natural resource concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance water quality and/or quantity in watersheds with predominantly agricultural land uses while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Nutrient, pesticide, and pathogen transport to surface water and groundwater;
2. Sediment transport to surface water;
3. Irrigation management for water conservation;
4. Aquifer recharge/maintenance of groundwater supplies; and,
5. Increased water supplies/availability through alternative treatment or reuse strategies.

Soil Resources

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance soil resources associated with agricultural and forest land uses while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Erosion reduction;
2. Accumulation of harmful levels of constituents in soils, including nutrients, metals, salts; and,
3. Overall soil quality and productivity.

Grazing Land and Forest Health

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance grazing land and forest health while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Invasive species management on grazing and forest land;
2. Effects of pests, diseases, and fragmentation on forest and grazing land quality/health; and,
3. Systems or practices to minimize overgrazing and restore lands suffering effects of overgrazing.

2. Technology Component

Proposals must address one or more of the following specific technology categories identified by NRCS:

1. **Improved on-farm energy efficiency.** Possible subtopics include:
 - a. Renewable energy sources such as wind or solar;
 - b. Methane recovery; and,
 - c. Other innovative farm management or production technologies.
2. **Market-based approaches.** Possible subtopics include:
 - a. Development and application of technical tools that measure environmental services in order to document credits for trading;
 - b. Greenhouse gas accounting tools; and,
 - c. Water quality improvement accounting tools.
3. **Development and adoption of on-farm energy audits.** Possible subtopics include:
 - a. Automated self energy audit technology;
 - b. Energy audit worksheets; and,
 - c. Compilation of on-farm energy auditors and audit processes.
4. **Application of improved forage production.** Possible subtopics include:
 - a. Low-input approaches to increasing forage production; and,
 - b. Systems or practices that integrate trees-forage-livestock i.e., silvopasture and its effects on forage and forest resources.

3. Wildlife Component: Applications must demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address wildlife concerns or concern. The wildlife habitat resource concern for possible funding through CIG for fiscal year 2008 is:

- a. Approaches or technologies for invasive plant and/or animal control.
- b. Approaches or technologies for increasing native plant species.
- c. Approaches or technologies for increasing native animal species.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

A. State Component

Effective on the publication date of this notice, the Florida NRCS State Conservationist announces the availability of up to \$150,000 for CIG. The intent of the State component is to provide flexibility to target CIG funds to individual producers and smaller organizations that may possess promising innovations, but may not compete well on the larger scale of the national grants competition.

Funds will be awarded through a competitive grants process. Funds not used in one component may be shifted to another. Individual projects funded through CIG in fiscal year 2008 may not receive more than \$75,000 from NRCS. CIG will fund single- and multi-year projects, not to exceed three years.

The anticipated start date for awarded projects is August 15, 2008. Awards will be made using grant agreements with NRCS Florida State Office.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a State or local unit of government; non-governmental organization; private business; or individual located in Florida.

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Applicants must provide non-Federal funding for at least 50 percent of the project cost. Up to 50 percent (25 percent of the total project cost) of the applicant's match may be from in-kind contributions. The remainder must be cash. Applicants must submit a letter from the matching source documenting the type of match being provided and the value.

B. Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers

Information regarding the definitions for Limited Resource or Beginning Farmers and Ranchers can be found in the EQIP Final Rule, Federal Register, Vol. 68, No.104, Section 1466.3, Definitions. For the FY 2008 grant award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG may be set-aside for applications from Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. To compete for these set-aside funds, the applicant must make a declaration in the application as described in paragraph IV.B.6. of this notice. Applications that are unsuccessful in the set-aside competition will be placed automatically in the general application pool for consideration. Funds not used in the set-aside pool will revert back into the general funding pool.

In addition, an exception regarding matching funds is made for projects funded out of the set-aside. Seventy-five (75) percent of the required matching funds for such projects may derive from in-kind contributions. This exception is intended to help Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers meet the statutory requirements for receiving a Conservation Innovation Grant.

C. EQIP Payment Limitation

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (as amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002), 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, imposes a \$450,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between 2002 and 2008. The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

a. CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements; these grant agreements are not EQIP contracts. Thus, CIG awards are not limited by the payment limitation.

b. Direct or indirect payments made to an individual or entity using funds from a CIG award to carry out structural, vegetative, or management practices count toward each individual's or entity's EQIP payment limitation. Through project progress reports, CIG grantees are responsible for certifying that producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to the NRCS CIG program manager in the semi-annual report. Direct or indirect payments can not be made for a practice for which the

producer has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds, through any of the USDA Programs (EQIP, AMA, CSP, WHIP, etc) since this would be considered a duplicate payment.

Payment Limitation Examples - Following are two examples of how the \$450,000 EQIP payment limitation applies to CIG projects:

a. A \$75,000 CIG grant is awarded to a State environmental agency to demonstrate an innovative, market-based, water quality trading program. The money is used to finance the development of a market infrastructure, and none of the funds are used to implement structural, vegetative, or management practices. Producers in the trading market demonstration area may indirectly benefit from their eventual participation in the market, but there is no direct or indirect payment of CIG dollars. If, on the other hand, part of the CIG award were used to make payments to producers who implement a conservation practice on their land as part of a trading program, those payments would count towards each producer's \$450,000 EQIP payment limitation.

b. A \$75,000 CIG grant is awarded to a Conservation District to pilot a community-based animal waste treatment technology innovation. EQIP-eligible producers in the area transport their animal waste to a central treatment location. Because producers are not directly or indirectly receiving CIG funds, the payment limitation does not apply. If, however, the producers were paid for their waste, or for transporting their waste to the central treatment location, using CIG funds, the payments would be subject to each producer's EQIP payment limitation.

D. Project Eligibility

To be eligible, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements of 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-1. Refer to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/> for more information on EQIP and eligibility requirements. Further, all agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract. Applications must describe the extent of participation of EQIP eligible producers.

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance (HELC) and Wetland Compliance (WC) provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

A person or entity is not eligible if the three-year average adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds \$2.5 million with less than 75 percent derived from farming, ranching, or forestry-related sources at the time of application.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach (applicants should reference the Florida EQIP Eligible Practices List by contacting the NRCS State office, or by visiting the EQIP web site:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/EQIP_signup/2008_EQIP/2008_EQIP.html).

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Federal Grant Representative and a Technical Contact to provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Application Materials

All OMB standard forms necessary for CIG submission are accessible from the following website: http://www08.grants.gov/agencies/approved_standard_forms.jsp#1 An application checklist is included in Part VII.

B. Proposal Content and Format

Proposals must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for a grant. 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. Applications must be submitted in the following format (Applications submitted that do not comply with this format will not be accepted):

Proposals are to be typewritten on 8½" x 11" white paper, double spaced, and on one side only. The text of the proposal must be typewritten in a font no smaller than 12-point, with one-inch margins. If submitting proposals for more than one project, submit a separate, complete application package for each project.

Proposals must include all required forms and narrative sections described below; incomplete applications will not be considered. Do not include letters of support, endorsements or recommendations for project approval.

1. Cover Sheet: Applications must use Standard Form 424 as the cover sheet for each project proposal. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from http://www08.grants.gov/agencies/approved_standard_forms.jsp#1 or obtained from the NRCS Florida State Office. Note that all applicants must provide a DUNS number in block 5. See section 9 below for information on acquiring a DUNS number. Also note that in block 15 of the SF-424, the funding amounts listed must reflect the amounts requested and contributed for the entire duration of the project.

2. Project Abstract: Each proposal must contain a summary of not more than two pages that list the following:

- a. CIG component(s) to which proposal is submitted (e.g., Natural Resource Concerns, Technology, Wildlife Habitat);
- b. Project title;
- c. Project duration (beginning and ending dates);
- d. Name, address, telephone, e-mail, and other contact information for the project director (please provide a mailing address, not a P.O. Box);

- e. Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
- f. Estimated number of EQIP-eligible producers involved in the project;
- g. Natural resource concern(s)/technology to be addressed, taken directly from sections above;
- h. List of deliverables/products of project activities;
- i. Summary of the work to be performed;
- j. Total project cost; and,
- k. Total Federal funds requested.

3. Project Description: Each project must be completely and accurately described in no more than 10 typewritten, double-spaced pages, which must include the following:

- a. Project background: Describe the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success of the project;
- b. Project objectives: Be specific, using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose and goals. Describe how, based on the description of innovative conservation projects and activities provided in section I.C., the project is innovative;
- c. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project;
- d. Location and size of project or project area: Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible;
- e. Producer participation: Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement;
- f. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion;
- g. Project management: Give 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. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project;
- h. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities. Identify project beneficiaries—for example, agricultural producers by type or region or sector; rural communities; municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities;
- i. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project for the final report. Grant recipients will be required to provide a biannual report of progress, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting reports will be detailed in the grant agreement; and,
- j. Environmental impacts: Describe the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project. This description will be used to determine whether an

Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed for any given project, prior to the awarding of grant funds. The applicant is responsible for the cost of an EA or EIS, should one be required. This cost may be counted as part of the grantee's in-kind contribution.

4. Budget Information: Use Standard Form 424A to document budget needs. Standard Form 424A can be found at

http://www08.grants.gov/agencies/approved_standard_forms.jsp#1, or obtained from the NRCS Florida State Office. In addition, provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Itemize the costs necessary for successful completion of the proposed project. Indicate the total amount (both cash and in-kind) of non-Federal matching support that will be provided to the proposed project. Identify and provide documentation of the source(s), the amount, and the nature (cash or in-kind) of the matching funds. An indirect cost-rate agreement must be included if the applicant is claiming indirect costs. In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel cannot exceed 50 percent of the applicant's match (except in the case of projects carried out by either a Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or Indian Tribe, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities). The remainder of the match must be provided in cash.

5. Declaration of EQIP Eligibility: Applicants must make a self declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP.

6. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher: If an applicant wishes to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool (see section III.B. that describes the provision of a set-aside pool of funding for Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers, and Indian Tribes) and avail themselves of the in-kind contribution exception, applicants must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities. More information on Limited Resource or Beginning Farmer or Rancher can be found at <http://www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/index.htm>.

7. Certifications: All applications must include a signed Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. SF 424B may be found at: http://www08.grants.gov/agencies/approved_standard_forms.jsp#1 or contact a State NRCS office;

Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 Code of Federal Register (CFR):

- a. Part 3017, Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) (http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3017_04.html); and,
- b. Part 3021, Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance) (http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3021_04.html).

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

steps needed to obtain one. For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

9. Required CCR Registration: The Central Contractor Registry (CCR) is a database that serves as the primary Government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the Government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the Government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

C. How to Submit a Written Proposal

Applicants must submit one signed original and six complete copies of each project application. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left-hand corner. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a 3½-inch diskette or compact disc (CD). Electronic files must be either Microsoft Word or Acrobat (pdf) files.

Applications submitted via facsimile or e-mail will not be accepted.

Submit written proposals to:

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants, c/o Jeffrey Woods
2614 NW 43RD Street,
Gainesville, FL 32606-6611.**

D. How to Submit a Proposal Electronically:

Applicants may submit proposals electronically through Grants.gov, the Federal government's e-grants portal. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete application outlined above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, abstract, narrative, and declarations are included in the CIG Grants.gov notice. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date.

Note that NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grants.gov submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process well before the submission deadline to avoid problems.

E. Proposal Due Date

Proposals must be received in the NRCS Florida State Office by 5 p.m., Eastern Time on April 30, 2008. A proposal's postmark date is not a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in proposal delivery.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

F. Acknowledgement of Submission

Proposals received by the due date will be acknowledged with an official letter or email. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgment within 30 days of the submission, the applicant must contact the programmatic contact immediately (see Part VII). Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel.

G. Funding Restrictions

The indirect costs (F&A) for CIG awards may not exceed 15 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Awardees may not use un-recovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds.

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:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. 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,
- g. 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. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person listed below.

H. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR 3019.36. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 7 CFR 3019.2, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal Government 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.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW

A. Proposal Review and Selection Process

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

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be scored by a Peer Review Panel against the Criteria for Proposal Evaluation listed above. Scored applications will be forwarded to a Grant Review Board, which will certify the rankings from the peer review panels, and ensure that the proposal evaluations are consistent with program objectives. The Grant Review Board will make recommendations to the State Conservationist for final selection and funding decisions.

B. Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

Peer review panels will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals. Each of the four criterion carries an equal weight of 25 percent.

1. Purpose and goals:
 - a. The purpose and goals of the project are clearly stated;
 - b. The project adheres to the natural resource conservation concerns for FY 2008 stated in this notice; and,
 - c. There is clear and significant potential for a positive and measurable outcome.
2. Soundness of approach or design:
 - a. The project adheres to the description of innovative projects or activities found in section I.C. of this notice;
 - b. Technical design and implementation strategy is based on sound science;
 - c. There is a good likelihood of project success;
 - d. The project substantively involves EQIP eligible producers; and,
 - e. The project promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
3. Project management:
 - a. The proposal has clear milestones and timelines, designated staff, and demonstrates collaboration;
 - b. The project staff has the technical expertise needed to do the work; and
 - c. The budget is reasonable and adequately justified.
4. Transferability:
 - a. There is great potential to transfer the approach or technology to others and/or to other geographical areas; and,
 - b. The project will result in the development of technical or related materials (e.g., technical standards, technical notes, manuals, handbooks, software) that will help foster adoption of the innovative technology or approach by other producers, and in other geographic areas.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

CIG awards are anticipated to be announced on May 30, 2008. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start, until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee. All agreements are expected to be awarded by August 15, 2008.

VI. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected will be notified by the Florida State Conservationist. This notice will indicate the need to work with the administrative contact to develop an agreement prior to starting work on the project. The official notice signed by the authorizing official indicates that awardees may proceed with their projects.

Applicants whose proposals have not been selected will be notified by official letter. Anticipated date for projects to begin is August 15, 2008.

B. Grant Agreement

The CCC, through NRCS, will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in the CIG component of EQIP. The grant agreement will include:

- project purpose;
- project objectives and deliverables;
- the final project plan listing cooperators in the project, and identifying the grant applicant and the project manager;
- the project timelines and expected project completion date;
- project progress and budget reporting requirements;
- award amount and budget information;
- information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement;
- other requirements and terms deemed necessary by the CCC to protect the interests of the United States.

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

C. Reporting Requirements

Grantees receiving Federal funds of more than \$25,000 are required to submit a SF-272 (Report of Federal Cash Transactions), and when necessary, the continuation sheet, SF-272-A, no later than 15 days following the end of each quarter or 90 days after project completion. These reports are used to monitor cash advanced to recipients and to obtain disbursement and outlay information for each award.

Grantees must submit a Financial Status Report (SF 269) no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project.

The SF-272 and SF-269 are available at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html>.

In addition, every six months the grantee must submit a written performance progress report to NRCS State Office. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 6-month period, including any funded or unfunded time extensions, a comparison of actual accomplishments to project goals, and a statement of work projected to be completed in the next 6-month period. A progress report template will be provided to grantees by NRCS

To satisfy the requirements of EQIP (7 CFR 1466) compliance measures, the grantee is required to submit as a component of the biannual progress report:

- a. A list of producers, identified by name and social security number, of all EQIP-eligible producers or entities involved in the project.
- b. The dollar amount of direct and indirect payment made to each individual producer or entity for any structural, vegetative, or management practices. Both quarterly and cumulative payment amounts must be submitted.
- c. A self-certification indicating that each individual or entity receiving a direct or indirect payment through this grant is in compliance with the EQIP Payment Limitation, AGI, HEL, and Wetlands Conservation Compliance Farm Bill provisions.

A progress report template will be provided to grantees by the NRCS program contact. This template is also available on the NRCS CIG website at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html>

NRCS will designate a Federal Grant Representative (FGR) and a Technical Contact for the project. These individuals will have technical oversight responsibility for the project. The grantee must send copies of each biannual progress report to the FGR and technical contact, and comply with any requests for information from these individuals. NRCS recommends that the grantee work closely with these subject matter experts throughout the course of the project.

Upon passage of the completion date of the project, a final report must be submitted within 90 days detailing project activities, funding received and expended results, and potential for transferability of results.

VII. CIG CONTACTS

For programmatic questions (e.g., natural resource concerns), please contact:

Jeffery Woods
CIG NRCS Florida Coordinator
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
2614 NW 43RD Street,
Gainesville, FL 32606-6611.
Phone: (352) 338-9515,

Fax: (352) 338-9574
Jeffery.Woods@fl.usda.gov

For administrative questions (e.g., indirect costs, contracts), please contact:

Lynn F. Merrill
Contract Specialist
Tel. (352) 338-9553
lynn.merrill@fl.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and FAQs, is available on the CIG webpage:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig

Signed in Gainesville, FL on February 11, 2008.

Salvador Salinas
Acting State Conservationist
NRCS Florida

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

APPLICATIONS MISSING ANY OF THESE REQUIRED ITEMS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED

FISCAL YEAR 2008 APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

1. Cover Sheet: Standard Form 424 (SF-424)

2. Project Abstract:

- a. CIG component(s) to which proposal is submitted (e.g., Natural Resource Concerns, Technology, Wildlife Habitat);
- b. Project title;
- c. Project duration (beginning and ending dates);
- d. Name, address, telephone, e-mail, and other contact information for the project director (please provide a mailing address, not a P.O. Box);
- e. Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
- f. Estimated number of EQIP-eligible producers involved in the project;
- g. Natural resource concern(s)/technology to be addressed, taken directly from sections above;
- h. List of deliverables/products of project activities;
- i. Summary of the work to be performed;

- j. Total project cost; and,
 - k. Total Federal funds requested.
- 3. Project Description:** (10 typewritten, double-spaced pages, 12 point font)
- a. Project background:
 - b. Project objectives:
 - c. Project methods:
 - d. Location and size of project or project area: Provide a map, if possible;
 - e. Producer participation:
 - f. Project action plan and timeline:
 - g. Project management:
 - h. Benefits or results expected and transferability:
 - i. Project evaluation:
 - j. Environmental impacts:
- 4. Budget Information:** Submit a completed Standard Form 424s (SF-424a) and a detailed budget narrative
- 5. Declaration of EQIP Eligibility:** Include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers.
- 6. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher:** If applicable, include a statement declaring your status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher or Indian Tribe or Community-based Organization representing these entities.
- 7. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424b (SF-424b)
- 8. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- 9. Required CCR Registration:** Visit <http://www.ccr.gov>.