

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa State Office; Commodity Credit Corporation

ACTION: NOTICE

Conservation Collaboration Grants (CCG) Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Announcement for Program Funding – IOWA

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-IA-CCG-17-01

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.902, 10.903, 10.912, 10.924, 10.931

SUMMARY:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing potential availability of grants 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 from Iowa. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2017 will be up to \$2,000,000. Proposals are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations, and institutions of higher learning for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration.

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.

DATES:

Proposals may be submitted to NRCS at any time between the posting of this announcement and 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on March 31, 2017. Late proposals will not be considered. Proposals in the possession of NRCS will be scored as they are received and, if eligible, added to a ranking list of projects for funding consideration throughout FY 2017. Funding decisions will be made by the NRCS Iowa State Conservationist, informed by the ranking list and the availability of funding in the programs whose CFDA numbers are listed above.

ADDRESSES: Proposals must be sent electronically through www.grants.gov. Once successfully submitted, please notify Martin Adkins by email at martin.adkins@ia.usda.gov. Please cc judy.martinson@ia.usda.gov and tara.kinyon-anderson@ia.usda.gov. You are encouraged to review the FAQ and naming convention guidelines prior to submitting your proposal. The grants.gov user guide is available at: http://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/index.htm#t=Get_Started%2FGet_Started.htm.

PROPOSAL FORMAT:

The *2017 CCG Request for Proposal Template* must be used to submit proposals unless written permission is obtained from Iowa NRCS. The template can be found on the following website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ia/people/partners/?cid=nrcseprd421663>

Proposals over seven (7) pages, not including deliverable table, letters of support and federally required forms, will be rejected. Proposals must be New Times Roman, 12 font, and be single spaced. Proposals must be divided into the following sections:

- 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)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Martin Adkins
Assistant State Conservationist - Partnerships
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Neal Smith Federal Building
210 Walnut Street, Suite 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180
Phone (515) 284-4370
Email martin.adkins@ia.usda.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Conservation Technical Assistance: Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, N/A Stat. N/A, 16 U.S.C 590 a-f.

Soil Survey: The Soil Information Assistance for Community Planning and Resource Development Act of 1966, Public Law 89-560; Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-46, 16 U.S.C 590.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program: Chapter 4 of Subtitle D of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 USC 3839aa--3839aa-8), effective February 7, 2014., Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Public Law 99- 198, 16 U.S.C 3830.

Conservation Stewardship Program: Title XII, subtitle D, Chapter 2, subchapter B of

the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 USC 3838d-3838g, as added by Section 2301 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Pub. L. 110-246. Section 2101 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 re-authorized the Stewardship Program and made minor adjustments to its administration.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program: Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Section 1237, Public Law 99-198.

B. Overview

The purpose of Conservation Collaboration Grants will be to leverage NRCS and partner resources to:

- a. Build soil health on cropland.
- b. Improve environmental and economic performance of grasslands.
- c. Provide habitat for local wildlife species of concern as identified in the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan.
- d. Reduce the net emissions of greenhouse gasses associated with agriculture.
- e. Support the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

- a. Build technical capacity of NRCS and partner field conservation employees.
- b. Build the capacity of local watershed groups to develop and implement effective projects.
- c. Leverage non-Federal and non-government resources to achieve positive natural resources conservation outcomes.

NRCS will accept proposals under this notice for single or multiyear projects, not to exceed three years, submitted by eligible entities based in or with substantial operations in Iowa. Eligible entities include Indian Tribes, State and local units of government, non-governmental organizations, and institutions of higher learning.

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 IV. SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR PROPOSALS, (B) (Content and Format), and Section V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION. Evaluated proposals will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2017 may be up to \$2,000,000.00, although the availability and composition of available funds has not

yet been determined.

Conservation Collaboration grants are expected to fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years.

Cooperative awards or grants may be used to administer funds. 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.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A. Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be a federally recognized Indian Tribes, State and local units of government, non-governmental organizations, or institution of higher learning. Applicants for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards.

B. Matching Funds Requirements

There is not a specific match amount required. 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 and/or in-kind sources.

Matching funds must be secured 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](#).

C. Grant Administration

1. Funds will be awarded through grant agreements or cooperative agreements as appropriate to the project.
2. Section 1240B of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-2, prohibits

duplicative payments. Accordingly, direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which an individual or legal entity has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any USDA conservation program.

D. Activities Limitation and Implementation

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

IV. SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR PROPOSALS

All standard forms necessary for submission are posted on the following Web site: [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) - [Forms Repository](#).

A. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for this funding opportunity can be found on the following web sites:

www.grants.gov and the Iowa NRCS website

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ia/people/partners/?cid=nrcseprd421663>

B. Content and Format

Proposals 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 described in their application. All federally required forms and letters of support must be submitted at the time of application.

Applicants must submit only one original copy of the application in the following format:

Proposals must be divided into the following sections and are limited to the number of pages stated per section:

- 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)

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.

C. Forms

The following forms must be submitted at the time of application. The proposal must be completed using the Iowa 2017 CCG Request for Proposal Template. Forms must be signed and dated. Please note that some forms may require multiple signatures within the form. To ensure that all signatures are validated, the applicant is encourage to hand sign the documents rather than using electronic signatures. All forms can be downloaded from the Iowa NRCS website at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ia/people/partners/?cid=nrcseprd421663>

. Forms other than the fillable Iowa NRCS Proposal Form may be downloaded at [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#).

1. **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each proposal.
2. **Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.** 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.
3. **Standard Form (SF) 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs.** Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following Federal regulations:
 - a. 2 CFR Part 417, [Government wide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#)
 - b. 7 CFR Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#)
 - c. 2 CFR Part 421, [Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#)
4. **Iowa 2017 CCG Request for Proposal Template:** This fillable Adobe form restricts users to the page requirement outlined in the section below. See the help aids on the Iowa NRCS RFP website for additional information. The website is located at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ia/people/partners/?cid=nrcseprd421663>

D. Proposal

1. **Project 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 as defined in Section I.B of this announcement. the project start and end dates, the measurable outcomes and mythology, other organizations that will be involved, and the project total cost, funds already obtained and the amount requested in this proposal.

2. **Introduction:** (Letters of Support, federally required forms, and one (1) page narrative maximum.) This section should introduce your organization to the reviewer and lend credibility to your organization's ability to successfully manage a federal agreement. The response should be succinct, offer a good balance between quantitative and qualitative information, and be free of unnecessary verbiage. It should include a brief history of the organization, including its mission statement and goals, important past events or accomplishments, a description of your clientele, including demographic information, organizational funding sources. Describe your history of successfully managing these federal and non-federal agreements, including meeting and complying with reporting requirements, submitting final acceptable technical reports, and reporting on progress made in achieving the results under those agreements.
3. **Needs Assessment:** (One (1)-page maximum.) The problem statement, or needs assessment, is critical to the success of your application. It is the justification for your proposal and should focus on the condition that your proposal will address. Use care to ensure your proposal make no unsupported assumptions. Your Needs Assessment should demonstrate the tie-in to the organizational mission and goals, describe the issue or problem, and the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation, provide statistical and authoritarian evidence that clearly supports the need identified in the proposal and supports a high probability for success, and make a compelling case for the project funding based demonstrated client needs.
4. **Program Objectives:** (One (1)-page maximum.) This section of the proposal should demonstrate project outcomes, not project activities. You should be using language that **supports** *increasing, decreasing or reducing* the problems identified in the needs assessment. Avoid including topics that pertain to *providing, establishing, or developing* a method to address the problem. Your objectives should include at least one objective for each problem identified in the Needs Assessment. Each objective must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a timeline for completion. An example objective would be: *At the end of the 3-day workshop, 70% of participants will demonstrate at least a 30% increase or better in pre/post-test exams.* Be sure to describe how the outcomes will be measured.

Please note that underserved populations identified in this section as primary beneficiaries of the grant's outcomes, such as veterans, culturally specific populations, women, limited resource farmers/ranchers, socially disadvantaged, etc., will receive additional points during the ranking process. Explain how these entities will benefit.

5. **Methods:** (Deliverables Table plus two (2)-page narrative maximum.) Methods, activities and procedures explain to the reviewer the steps that will be taken to complete the objectives identified in the previous section. This section demands clarity and justification in describing how the objectives will be met. Use care to present a reasonable number of activities that can be completed within the grant period. Clearly describe the program client and the program activities, their sequence, and explain your reason for choosing this combination of activities. Provide a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education or

experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and 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.

You must use the deliverables table provided by NRCS to list project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. In addition to project-specific deliverables, selected applicants will be required to provide the following:

- a. Semi-annual progress reports;
- b. Supplemental narratives that explain and support payment requests;
- c. A final report; and
- d. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress

6. **Budget Information:** (SF-424A, SF-424B and one (1)-page maximum narrative.) The budget portion of the application consists of the two parts described below. Careful planning of your budget will reduce the number of changes needed during the grant period. Miscellaneous expenses and equipment needs should be itemized. Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. The format of this information, which can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc., should be readable in 8 ½” by 11” printable pages. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the evaluators and NRCS can readily understand what expenses will be incurred to support the project.

The breakdown of the Federal share and matching funds should be shown separately as in the SF-424A, not combined. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. The budget narrative should support the Federal funds requested and the applicant’s matching funds. See section IV(C) of this announcement for additional information on the required budget forms.

a. Indirect Costs

- i. Applicants wishing to claim indirect costs must have a federally approved indirect cost rate. The approved indirect cost rate must be included in the application package.
- ii. An indirect cost rate not to exceed 10 percent may be approved for applicants without a preexisting, federally approved indirect cost rate. To be considered for an indirect cost rate not to exceed 10 percent, applicants must submit an indirect cost rate proposal with the application that includes the following:
 - Applicant’s written policy for allocating and identifying direct and indirect costs;
 - The contact information of the person who prepared proposal;
 - Breakdown of indirect salaries by position title and amount;
 - Line item expenditure descriptions describing how the costs are being

- allocated between direct and indirect costs;
 - Applicant's tax identification number; and
 - Signed certification attesting that (i) all costs in proposal are allowable under the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) cost principles; (ii) costs treated as indirect have not been claimed as direct; (iii) similar types of costs have been accounted for consistently; and (iv) the applicant will notify the Federal Government of any account changed that would affect the rate. This certification should be signed by the applicant's approving official or the applicant's chief financial officer.
- iii. Non-profit organizations and universities awarded a cooperative agreement will be limited to a 10% indirect cost rate in accordance with Section 704 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act.
- b. Matching: Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-Federal third parties.

Match

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 during the grant period.

"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.

The value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars and Cost Principles for additional guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

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

7. **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.

E. Additional Pre-award Requirements

The following items must be provided in the proposal.

1. **DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) 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 14 business days to complete.**
2. **System for Award Management (SAM,** Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS.): Applicants are required to be registered in the SAM before submitting an application. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Please allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration. Applicants must continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NRCS will not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NRCS is ready to make the award, NRCS may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as the basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.
3. **How to Submit an Application**

Proposals must be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov. Once successfully submitted, please notify Martin Adkins by email at martin.adkins@ia.usda.gov. Please cc judy.martinson@ia.usda.gov and tara.kinyon-anderson@ia.usda.gov. You are encouraged to review the FAQ and naming convention guidelines prior to submitting your proposal. The grants.gov user guide is available at: http://www.grants.gov/help/html/help/index.htm#t=Get_Started%2FGet_Started.htm.

Please note that all applicable forms must contain a valid signature prior to submission. Electronic signatures may disappear or become corrupted once uploaded to Grants.gov. To ensure that all signatures maintain their integrity, you are encouraged to hand-sign each document prior to uploading it into the grants.gov system. Please note that some forms have more than one signature required or may require the same signature on multiple pages of the form.

4. Due Date

Proposals may be submitted to NRCS at any time between the posting of this announcement and 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on March 31, 2017. Proposals received after this time will not be reviewed or considered.

5. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of proposals via email. An applicant who does not receive such an email acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission, but believes he/she submitted a timely proposal must contact the NRCS program contact below within 30 days of submission deadline. Failure to do so will result in the proposal not being considered.

Contact

Martin Adkins
Assistant State Conservationist - Partnerships
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Neal Smith Federal Building
210 Walnut Street, Suite 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180
Phone (515) 284-4370
Email martin.adkins@ia.usda.gov

F. Withdrawal

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

G. 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;

1. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
2. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
3. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
4. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
5. 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
6. 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 on Part VII Agency Contacts.

H. Review

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 Proposal Evaluation Criteria identified in Section V. **APPLICATION REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION.** Evaluated proposals will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

I. Patents, Inventions, and Copyrights

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200](#). This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CCG. 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.

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

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

J. Natural Resources and Historic Property Review Requirements

1. The Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508 and the NRCS regulation that

implements NEPA at 7 CFR Part 650 require that an environmental review be prepared for Federal actions that may have environmental effects. NRCS financial assistance requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application packet, applicants are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project if there will be actions with potential to affect the environment to help NRCS determine the appropriate documentation required to comply with NEPA and NRCS regulations. If the application is selected for funding, the NRCS Program Contact, Technical Contact and NRCS Environmental Liaison will coordinate with the selected applicant concerning documentation for compliance with NEPA. The selected applicant will be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement if required for NEPA compliance). Grant funding cannot be approved until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

2. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800), and other related authorities, require federal agencies to determine if a project has the potential to cause an effect to historic properties and, if yes, please address how the adverse effects may be addressed. This NHPA review and compliance in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 must be completed by NRCS and may not be delegated. This compliance process includes consultation with SHPOs, Tribes, THPOs, NHOs, and the appropriate preservation community regarding identification, evaluation of NRHP eligibility, evaluation of effects, and if the effects are adverse, treatment. This treatment may include avoidance or other forms of mitigation of adverse effects. This mitigation will occur after the grant is awarded but before it is implemented.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Review and Selection Process

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or proposals not meeting the formatting criteria will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on the following Proposal Evaluation Criteria

B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria (180 points possible)

(30 points) **SUMMARY:** The extent to which the summary clearly summarizes the request, is no longer than 1/2 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Identifies the grant applicant
2. Includes at least one sentence on reliability/credibility of the applicant
3. Includes at least one sentence on problem addressed in the grant
4. Includes at least one sentence on objectives
5. Includes at least one sentence on methods

6. Includes the total cost, funds already obtained and the amount requested in this proposal

(20 points) 1. **INTRODUCTION:** 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 applicants 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.)

(25 points) 2 **NEEDS ASSESSMENT:** 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

(25 points) 3. **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:** The extent which the proposal describes the outcomes and benefits of the grant in measurable terms, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. At least one objective for each problem or need committed to in problem statement
2. Includes when and how outcomes will be measured
3. Describe the population that will benefit
4. Underserved communities will benefit from this project
5. Objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a timeline for completion

(40 points) 4. **METHODS:** The extent which the proposal describes the activities to be completed to achieve the desired objectives, is no longer than 2 pages, and addresses the following criteria:

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

(25 points) 5. **BUDGET:** The extent which the proposal describes the cost required to achieve the desired objectives, including personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment,

supplies, in-kind contributions, indirect costs, and requested NRCS financial assistance, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Is detailed
2. Includes a narrative
3. Contains significant match in the form of cash, non-cash, or in-kind services from applicant and/or contributing organizations
4. Includes NRCS, partner, and other contributions
5. Reimbursement of Indirect Costs are 10% or less

(15 points) **6. EVALUATION:** 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 will success be measured

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

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 a grant agreement.

D. Unsuccessful Proposals

Applicants whose proposals do not meet the criteria listed above will be notified of their status within 30 days of the evaluation of their proposal. All other proposals that are not funded will be notified by July 15, 2017.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive official notification from the Iowa NRCS State Office.

Notification for selection is not an authorization to begin performance. A Notice of Grant and Agreement Award, signed by the Iowa State Conservationist provided to the selected recipient, is the authorizing document.

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. Agreement

The grant or cooperative agreement will permit the NRCS Technical Contact to be involved in overseeing the work performed by the selected recipients. Although NRCS will negotiate precise terms and conditions as part of the award process, the anticipated Federal involvement for a grant awarded may include:

1. Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results.
2. Collaborating during performance of the scope of work.
3. Reviewing substantive terms of proposed contracts.
4. Reviewing qualifications of key personnel (NRCS will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient.)
5. Reviewing and commenting on reports prepared under the agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient.)

C. Reporting Requirements

Selected applicants will be required to submit a SF-425, Federal Financial Report to the NRCS administrative contact, no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after the award period of performance end date. In addition, every 6 months the selected applicant must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program, technical, and administrative contacts. **NRCS will provide a template for the formatting that must be used in the report.** This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 6-month period and include, at a minimum:

- Summary of progress, including the results to date and a comparison of actual accomplishments with proposed goals (milestones) for the period and, where project output can be quantified, a computation of the costs per unit of output.
- Current problems or unusual developments or delays.
- Reasons why goals and objectives were not met, if appropriate.
- Additional pertinent information including, where appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit cost.
- Any time extensions.
- Any changes to the project's original objectives, methods, or timeline with a summary of the justification for the changes.
- Lessons learned that inform future project activities or broader efforts in the project's topic area.

The final report is due to the NRCS program, technical, and administrative contacts 90 days after the award period of performance end date. This report is distinct from the performance progress reports described above. **NRCS will provide a template for the formatting that must be used in the Final report.** The final report will summarize the project and describe methods, quality control, findings, and recommendations.

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 (FOIA). 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.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Martin Adkins, Assistant State Conservationist – Partnerships Coordinator
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Neal Smith Federal Building
210 Walnut Street, Suite 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180
Phone: (515) 284-4370
Email: martin.adkins@ia.usda.gov

Judy Martinson, Resource Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Neal Smith Federal Building
210 Walnut Street, Suite 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180
Phone: (515) 323-2229
Email: judy.martinson@ia.usda.gov

Signed this _____ day of _____ in Des Moines, Iowa.

Kurt Simon

Digitally signed by Kurt Simon
DN: cn=Kurt Simon, o=Natural
Resources Conservation Service,
ou=USDA,
email=Kurt.Simon@ia.usda.gov, c=US
Date: 2017.01.24 15:17:30 -06'00'

Kurt Simon
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign, and mail the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form \(PDF\)](#), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at:

USDA
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Or by email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities and you wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

[Equal Employment Opportunity Data Posted Pursuant to the No Fear Act -](#)

This is the reporting page for the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (NO FEAR Act), Public Law 107-174.