

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

ACTION: NOTICE (Announcement No. USDA-NRCS-VA-14-01)

Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Announcement for Program Funding - Virginia

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing availability of Conservation Innovation Grants (**CIG**) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in Virginia. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2014 will be up to **\$350,000**. Applications are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration. Individual grants will not exceed \$75,000.

Funds will be awarded through a two-phase, statewide competitive grants process that will include: (1) a pre-proposal process; and (2) a full proposal process. The full proposal process will only be open to applicants whose pre-proposal applications are selected to advance to full proposals. Both phases are described in this announcement, but **only pre-proposals are being solicited at this time**.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for CIG projects. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. NRCS will request a full proposal package only from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal phase.

DATES: Applications for the pre-proposal phase must be received at the NRCS State Office in Richmond, Virginia, by 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), on Friday, **May 2, 2014**.

Notification of selected pre-proposal applications will be announced by **May 23, 2014**. Selected applicants will then be required to submit a full proposal package to the NRCS State Office by 4 p.m. EDT on **June 27, 2014**.

ADDRESSES: Applications sent via hand-delivery, express mail or overnight courier service must be sent to the following address: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, 1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209, Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014. The contact phone number for hand-delivered pre-proposals and applications is (804) 287-1691.

Applications sent via the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, 1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209, Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014.

To submit your application electronically, visit Grants.gov-Apply for Grants and follow the instructions. Applicants may also submit applications to the e-mail address on the next page.

Note: all applicants who submit electronically are strongly encouraged to ALSO submit a paper copy through the methods listed on the first page to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications. If you submit your application electronically well in advance of the deadline AND you have received confirmation from NRCS Virginia that it has been properly received then you will not need to send a paper copy as described on the preceding page.

The address for submitting an application by e-mail is Blaine.Delaney@va.usda.gov .

For more information contact:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1675
Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

Blaine Delaney
CIG Program Manager
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1663
Email: Blaine.Delaney@va.usda.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Program was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) under Section 2207 of the Agricultural Act of 2014. 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 funded and 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 the 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 into NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides, and references, or to the private sector. **CIG does not fund research projects and projects intended to test hypotheses do not qualify for a CIG award.** CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology. It is a vehicle to stimulate development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a high likelihood of success, and that are candidates for eventual technology transfer or institutionalization. CIG promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, technologies, and facilities among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. CIG funds projects that target innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

NRCS will accept applications under this notice for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years, submitted by eligible entities from **Virginia**. Eligible entities include State and local units of government, non-governmental organizations and individuals.

A two-phase evaluation process will be utilized for applications submitted under this notice. The first phase requires the applicant to submit a pre-proposal application. Pre-proposal applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition; notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. NRCS staff will evaluate complete pre-proposal applications based on how they demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one of the topics provided in section I.D. of this notice.

NRCS will only request a full proposal package from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal process. Complete applications received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated by a CIG Review Group based on the Application Evaluation Criteria identified in the application instructions in section VI.B. The CIG Review Group will make its recommendations for project approval to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must encompass the development, demonstration, evaluation, implementation and monitoring of the following:

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems; or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures or approaches; or
- Environmental soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement.

To be given consideration, the innovative project or activity must comply with all federal, state and local regulations throughout the duration of the project and should:

- Make use of a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate and verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability and usability of conservation technology in the field;
- Adapt conservation technologies, management, practices, systems, procedures, approaches and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector; or
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. State Component

1. Category

For FY 2014, NRCS in Virginia will offer CIG in the following resource concern areas: **Soil Health**, Silvopasture Establishment, Nutrient Management, Wetland Restoration Design and Economics (the costs and benefits of conservation).

Pre-proposals that demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one bulleted topic listed below will be considered. Pre-proposals must identify the most appropriate bulleted topic the innovation/technology is addressing. While NRCS/VA will accept proposals for each bulleted topic below, special interest is placed on receiving proposals that address topics identified as a “Priority Need”.

PRIORITY NEED: SOIL HEALTH

The priority need for the Virginia State CIG in FY2014 is for projects that seek to improve soil health and function on Virginia farmland in order to improve the productivity, profitability and environmental impact of agriculture. Priority projects will seek to demonstrate, evaluate and promote implementation and integration of the following principles:

1. Maintaining cover on the soil surface
2. Reducing soil disturbance (from tillage, compaction, etc.)
3. Maximizing amount and duration of plant production (continuous living cover)
4. Maximizing biological diversity, both in crops/plants and animals
5. Integrating livestock, forage crops and annual crop production to further boost diversity

These principles apply to cropland as well as grassland systems. Projects that seek to increase adoption of only one of the above principles can qualify as meeting the priority need. Projects that address **multiple principles and integrated systems** will generally receive a higher ranking from the CIG Review Group.

The following are examples of priority topics under the soil health heading. Submission of innovative proposals that promote soil health in other ways is also strongly encouraged!

- ***Soil Health Education and Outreach***

- **Development of innovative soil health curricula and outreach efforts** aimed at educating farmers, crop advisors and agency personnel. Projects may be statewide, regional or local in scope. Preference will be given to projects that educate these audiences simultaneously (i.e., meetings open to all); have a strong partnership emphasis; and focus on motivating the audience to establish demonstration farms, fields and plots upon returning home.
- **Implementation of innovative soil health curricula and outreach efforts** aimed at educating farmers, crop advisors and agency personnel. Projects may be statewide, regional or local in scope. Preference will be given to projects that educate these audiences simultaneously (i.e., meetings open to all); have a strong partnership emphasis; and focus on motivating the audience to establish demonstration farms, fields and plots upon returning home.
- **Promoting a culture of demonstration and sharing** among Virginia farmers, crop advisors and agency personnel about practical implementation of soil health building principles. Examples include preparation and presentation of case studies about Virginia farmers, development of peer networks, etc.

- ***Increasing Diversity for Soil Health***

- Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **new harvestable crops**, and overcoming barriers to their usage, in order to increase crop diversity and associated benefits to soil health, pest management, etc. in traditional Virginia farming systems.
- Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **new cover crops and cover crop mixes**, and overcoming barriers to their usage, in order to increase crop diversity and associated benefits to soil health, pest management, etc. in traditional Virginia farming systems.
- Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **new crop/livestock integration strategies**, and overcoming barriers to their usage, in order to increase biological diversity and associated benefits to soil health, pest management, etc. in traditional Virginia farming systems.

- ***Increasing Grazing Management for Soil Health***

- Demonstrate, evaluate and document the use of **adaptive grazing management** (adopting several strategies i.e. rotational stocking, management intensive stocking, and or high-density stocking) for managing plant utilization while meeting animal nutritional requirements at different times during the year for overall improvements to soil health.

- Demonstrate, evaluate and document **system management strategies**, such as deferred grazing and no longer making hay on pastureland, to build soil health through increased ground cover, surface residue and soil organic matter over time.
- Demonstrate, evaluate and document the **integration of very diverse forage species mixtures** (including grasses, legumes and forbs) and overcome barriers to their usage, in order to increase biological diversity and provide productive forage species for grazing during typically dormant periods of the year.
- Demonstrate, evaluate and document the use of **seeding legumes combined with improved grazing management** to manage greater than 30% legume content and reduce the need for nitrogen additions to the system.
- ***Soil Health Impacts***
 - Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **increased nutrient use efficiency and reduced fertilizer need** after adoption of soil-health-building farming systems.
 - Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **decreased pest pressure and reduced pesticide need** after adoption of soil-health-building farming systems.
 - Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **increased farm productivity and profitability** after adoption of soil-health-building farming systems.
 - Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **improved environmental conditions** after adoption of soil-health-building farming systems.
- ***Innovative Strategies to Preserve/Increase Soil Health Gains***
 - Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of **adaptive strategies to preserve viability of no-till or similar soil health building practices** in face of new and evolving weeds and pests.
- ***Innovative Soil Health Testing & Assessment Procedures***
 - Investigation, demonstration and education about new soil testing methods and other procedures to assess soil health in Virginia.

Other Topics of Consideration

- ***Precision Agriculture/Variable Rate Nutrient Management***
 - Demonstration, evaluation and documentation of the **potential for precision technology to more effectively identify field edges and other marginal production areas** with potential for alternative crops/covers or a reduction in inputs of seed/nutrients/pesticides.

- ***Silvopasture Establishment***

- Demonstrate, evaluate and document the effectiveness of alternative methods for silvopasture establishment.
 - **Converting from pine forest to silvopasture:**
Demonstrations are encouraged that compare different methods of site preparation, adjustments to soil fertility, forage species selection, establishment methods and evaluating economic comparisons relative to establishment success.
 - **Converting from grassland to silvopasture:**
Demonstrations are encouraged that compare different methods of site preparation, tree planting arrangement and layout, trees species selection and methods of tree protection during establishment period.

- ***Wetland Restoration Design***

- Apply a wetland functional assessment model using the Hydrogeomorphic (HGM) approach to guide a wetland restoration design on a site located in Virginia. The model to be used will be from existing HGM wetland functional assessments or be developed using current methodologies. Specific wetland functions to be identified include hydrologic, soil bio-geochemical, plant community and wildlife habitat and landscape. Provide success/failure criteria of a site-specific wetland restoration design using the wetland functional assessment. Estimate the capacity of the restored wetland to improve habitat, water quality and hydrology, such as retention of water in the soil, and nutrient cycling to improve soil and watershed health. Improving the capacity of the hydrology and soil health may include pre-restoration and post-restoration hydrologic and biologic monitoring of the restored wetland.

- ***Economics (the costs and benefits of conservation)***

The economics of soil and water conservation is a topic of consideration that can either be a stand-alone project proposal, per the bulleted interest areas listed below or integrated as an interdisciplinary project component within a proposal dealing with our priority need for CIG proposals on any of the soil health topics or other topics of consideration previously listed in this RFP.

- Demonstrate, through coordinated case studies, how conservation efforts have benefited agricultural land users in different regions of Virginia. Topics of interest include the **economic effects of:**
 - Cover crops or cover crop systems (in particular, how long-term use of cover crops affects soil health, yields and profitability);
 - Case studies that assess the economics of waste to energy projects as a means of commercially utilizing animal wastes in surplus regions of the state, such as the Shenandoah Valley and Eastern Shore;
 - Waste storage and land application systems (how storage systems alter and affect nutrient management practices, yields and profitability);

- Inclusion of perennial legumes in crop rotations (how the introduction of legumes affects nutrient cycling, disrupts pests and diseases and affects yields and profitability);
- Precision agriculture applications (how these systems help farmers achieve greater efficiency in land management, in particular nutrient management and profitability);
- No-till systems (examining how soil health changes translate into yields and profitability);
- Rotational grazing systems (how these systems alter forage productivity and harvest, rest and recovery of forages, management flexibility and profitability);
- CREP participation (how CREP buffers affect farm operations, change wildlife habitat, provide an array of other environmental benefits and provide a stream of income as compared to the establishment and annual management costs associated with participation);
- How implementation of on-farm agricultural energy management plans (CAP122s) and the 374 Farmstead Energy Improvement practice have affected on-farm energy use, efficiency and profitability;
- Case studies that link any of the above (or other related proposal topics) to measured or projected changes in environmental performance of these managed agro-ecosystems with respect to the natural parameters evaluated (nonpoint source pollution and water quality, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, net greenhouse gas emissions and sinks, soil quality, net energy use, efficiency and associated carbon footprint of an existing system, etc.).

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

NRCS Virginia anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2014 will be up to **\$350,000**.

CIG will fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years (anticipated project start date of **September 5, 2014**). Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed **\$75,000** in FY 2014.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

A. Applicant Eligibility

CIG applicants must be a State or local unit of government, non-governmental organization or individual from Virginia.

B. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements set forth in <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2010-title16/html/USCODE-2010-title16-chap58-subchapIV-partIV-sec3839aa-1.htm>. Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip>. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

C. Matching Funds Requirements

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost not to exceed **\$75,000**. CIG recipients must match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions. Of the applicant's required match (at least 50 percent of the total project budget), the contribution from cash sources must be at least 50% of the federal request; the remainder may come from in-kind contributions.

The limit on in-kind contributions does not apply to projects carried out by a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, Federally recognized Indian Tribes, members of Federally recognized Indian Tribes or a community-based organization comprised of or representing them. Instead, the contribution from cash sources must be at least 25% of the federal request; the remainder may come from in-kind contributions. This exception is intended to help these individuals and entities meet the statutory requirements for receiving a CIG.

Matching funds must be secured at time of application of the FULL PROPOSAL

PACKAGE for those selected applicants. Applications should 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 215](#).

Use the following format (Tables 1-4) when preparing your budget narrative for the pre-proposal and full proposal (if selected).

Table 1: NRCS's Projected Contribution (Hypothetical Example)

Category	Total	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Description
Personnel					
Fringe Benefits					
Travel					
Equipment	\$20,000	\$20,000			Weigh wagon; ATV
Supplies	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	Seed
Contractual	\$21,000	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000	Soil Testing & outreach
Construction					
Other					
Total Direct Charges	\$56,000	\$32,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	
Indirect Charges					
Total	\$56,000	\$32,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	

Table 2: **Applicant's Projected Contribution** (Hypothetical Example)

Category	Total	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Description
Personnel	\$10,000	\$10,000		\$4,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	Staff time
Fringe Benefits							
Travel	\$3,000	\$3,000		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	Mileage
Equipment	\$15,000		\$15,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	Farm equipment usage
Supplies	\$8,000	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	Various supplies
Contractual	\$20,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$6,000	Soil Testing & outreach
Construction							
Other							
Total Direct Charges	\$56,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$21,000	\$18,000	\$17,000	
Indirect Charges							
Total	\$56,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$21,000	\$18,000	\$17,000	

Table 3: **Projected Resource/Contribution Summary by Categories** (Hypothetical Example)

Category	From NRCS	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Total
Personnel		\$10,000		\$10,000
Fringe Benefits				
Travel		\$3,000		\$3,000
Equipment	\$20,000		\$15,000	\$35,000
Supplies	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$3,000	\$23,000
Contractual	\$21,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$41,000
Construction				
Other				
Total Direct Charges	\$56,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$112,000
Indirect Charges				
Total	\$56,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$112,000

Table 4: **Projected Resource/Contribution Summary by Year** (Hypothetical Example)

Category	From NRCS	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Total
Year 1	\$32,000	\$13,000	\$8,000	\$53,000
Year 2	\$12,000	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
Year 3	\$12,000	\$7,000	\$10,000	\$29,000
Totals	\$56,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$112,000

The following eight items are additional guidance to help applicants develop their cash match and in-kind match contributions:

- 1) The recipients must submit Federal Financial Reports (SF-425) per general agreement terms and conditions on a quarterly basis. The recipient must maintain accounting records of all project costs that are claimed by the recipient as cost sharing as well as records of costs to be paid by NRCS. These records must include supporting source documents (invoices, mileage logs, time records, etc.). NRCS will require complete documentation for reimbursables, broken down by cash, and in-kind match, on a quarterly basis.
- 2) Travel expenses can be counted as a cash or in-kind match. Acceptable source documents to support requests include invoices and bills for project-related travel. Also acceptable are logs or documentation showing mileage multiplied by the applicable official federal per mile rate from the Federal Travel Regulations. In other words, invoices for fuel, maintenance, etc. are not required documentation.
- 3) Unless permission is granted by NRCS on a case-by-case basis, all cash matches should be supported in accounting records by actual invoices, bills, and other documentation that costs have been incurred and/or funds have been paid to a third party contractor or vendor. For example, a farmer's cash match fertilizer expense for a fertilizer-related on-farm demonstration should be documented with a bill for fertilizer. A document written up by the award recipient stating that the cash expense was incurred and paid is not adequate.
- 4) All project activities for both reimbursables and matches must have dates that fall between the beginning and end dates of the agreement. Anything outside those dates is not allowable.
- 5) Costs of meetings and conferences, the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of technical information about the project, are allowable. This includes the costs of meals, transportation, rental of facilities, speakers' fees and other items incidental to the meetings or conferences. Such expenses paid by the grantee or a third party can be counted towards the required cash or in-kind match.
- 6) "Personnel" costs are usually counted as in-kind, but may potentially be counted as cash match under the following circumstances: the personnel must be employed by the primary grant recipient organization (not a partner or third party) and there must be a timekeeping or accounting system that clearly designates or codes a portion of the personnel's time to the CIG project. If such source documentation exists, then personnel expenses for permanent salaried employees can be counted as cash. Personnel time by all partners, farmers, third parties, etc. may be counted as in-kind match with supporting documentation and justifiable level of cost per unit of time or work provided.
- 7) Expenses associated with hiring personnel on an hourly or contractual basis to work on a CIG project may be counted as cash match. As stated above, proper documentation of cash expense incurred and/or cash paid is required; such expenses should be classified as "contractual" rather than "personnel".

- 8) Personnel, equipment, supplies, contractual and other expenses provided by farmers and other partners for conducting on-farm demonstrations is an important source of match for CIGs. Documentation can include hours worked, rate per hour, acres treated, equipment used, etc.

D. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Subject to limited exception, section 2207 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, imposes a \$450,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract during fiscal years 2014 (beginning on 2/7/14) through 2018.

The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements. These grant agreements are not EQIP contracts; thus, CIG awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation.
- 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 individuals or entities involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. All direct and indirect payments made to individuals or entities using CIG funds must be reported to the NRCS CIG program manager in the semi-annual report. Further, all individuals or entities receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements.
- In addition, section 1240B, 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 entity has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any USDA conservation programs (e.g., EQIP, Conservation Stewardship Program, etc.).

To participate in EQIP financial assistance, an individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements in 7 C.F.R. 1466.8, which include the following:

Criteria	Potential Verification Documentation*
Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 C.F.R. Part 12)	Documentation of their compliance status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service on-line portal.
Have an interest in the agricultural operation as defined in 7 C.F.R. Part 1400	Documentation of their farm interest can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service on-line portal showing that the producer has farm records established.
Have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract period	Documentation can be provided in the form of a deed, lease, or other documents which show the producer has adequate control for the term of the proposed contract period.

Criteria	Potential Verification Documentation*
There is no adjusted gross income (AGI) requirement for FY14. However, the AGI for FY15 through FY18 will be \$900,000 for both farm and non-farm income.	If using FY 2014 CIG funding, documentation of a producer's AGI eligibility status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center, or through the USDA customer service on-line portal.

*Many of the verification documents will require that the producer has current records established with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) or require that the producer establishes new records.

E. Activities Limitation and Implementation

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 Virginia's EQIP Eligible Practices List, which can be found at the following web site:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/va/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=stelprdb1192416>.

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

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR PRE-PROPOSALS

All Office of Management and Budget standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following web site: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#).

A. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for this CIG funding opportunity can be found at the following web site: www.grants.gov.

B. Content and Format

Applications must contain the content, format and information set forth below in order 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.

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

- Each page must be on numbered 8½" x 11" white 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 that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered.

- 1) **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#).
- 2) **Project Summary:** (Two to three pages, with a three-(3) page maximum) Applicants must submit a description including the information below.
 - a) Project title;

- b) Primary, bulleted topic area for consideration (refer to pages 4-8) and why;
 - c) Project duration (anticipated project start date of **September 5, 2014**, not to exceed 3 years);
 - d) Project director name and contact information (including e-mail);
 - e) Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
 - f) Project background (describe the issue or problem and how the project addresses it innovatively);
 - g) Project objectives (purpose and goals);
 - h) Project methods (methodology, tools and processes);
 - i) Project area/location;
 - j) Project deliverables/products; and
 - k) Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement. Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers and describe and certify their level of involvement in the project. Projects that do not involve EQIP eligible producers are ineligible for a CIG award.
- 3) **Budget Information:** (Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs).
- a) Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the cost share. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. Applicants must prepare this document to identify budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: Grants.gov - Forms Repository.
 - b) A narrative describing the budget needs and justifying why the budget is appropriate should also be included. This is limited to a 3-page maximum. *(Refer to Tables 1-4 in Section III. C. to ensure you provide your budget information in this tabular format. This makes the review process much easier for the CIG Review Group.)*

C. How to Submit a Pre-Proposal Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov or to the e-mail address listed below. Alternatively, applications may be submitted via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the address listed below. Applications must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Grants.gov provides date and time stamps on applications submitted through its website. All pre-proposal applications, regardless of how they are submitted, must be received by NRCS before 4 p.m. EDT on **May 2, 2014**.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site problems related to Grants.gov or e-mailed submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process or send their e-mail in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems. **All applicants who submit electronically are strongly encouraged to ALSO submit a paper copy** to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications.

The address for submitting an application by e-mail is Blaine.Delaney@va.usda.gov.

The address for submitting a paper copy of the application is:
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209,
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

Note: Applicants must submit only one signed original copy of each project application. Applications submitted by fax will not be considered. The use of Federal Government postage-paid envelopes, e-mail and/or equipment in filing applications is a violation of federal law and will disqualify you from consideration.

D. Due Date

Pre-proposal applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. EDT on **May 2, 2014**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

E. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 5 calendar days of their submission, but believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below within 10 calendar days of submission deadline. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered.

CIG Program Contact:

Blaine Delaney, State CIG Program Manager
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209, Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1663
Email: Blaine.Delaney@va.usda.gov

F. Withdrawal

Applicants or their authorized representative may withdraw an application by written notice at any time before selections are made.

G. Review

Applications will be evaluated by NRCS staff under the bulleted topic identified by the applicant. Each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice, including EQIP payment limitations. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

H. Anticipated Notification

Applicants will be notified via e-mail by May 23, 2014. Applicants selected for full proposals will be required to submit a full proposal package by June 27, 2014.

V. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR FULL PROPOSALS (only for those applicants notified at the end of the pre-proposal review process that their application has been identified for further evaluation).

All Office of Management and Budget standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following web site: Grants.gov - Forms Repository.

A. Content and Format

Applications must contain the content, format and information set forth below in order 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.

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

- Each page must be on numbered 8½" x 11" white 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 that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered. Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- 1) **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from Grants.gov - Forms Repository.
- 2) **Project Executive Summary** – in one page or less, describe in non-technical language the issue/problem and how the project addresses it through its objectives, methods, environmental outcomes, funding requested, participating partners, deliverables and any potential negative impacts.
- 3) **Project Description:** The description must include the following information and is limited to 15 pages in length. Pages in excess of the 15-page limit will be discarded and not evaluated.
 - a) **Project background:** Describe the issue or problem, and 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 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, demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
 - e) **EQIP eligible producer participation:** Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (Note: Producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements). **Proposals that do not involve EQIP eligible producers are ineligible for a CIG award.**
 - f) **Project action plan and timeline:** Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Anticipated project start date of **September 5, 2014**.
 - 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) Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and payment. The proposal shall include a set of technical deliverables designed to evaluate the performance and broader applicability of the project being proposed for implementation. In addition to project-specific deliverables, selected applicants will be required to provide the following:
- 1) Semi-annual reports;
 - 2) Supplemental narratives that explain and support payment requests;
 - 3) A final report;
 - 4) Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress;
 - 5) A new technology and innovative approach fact sheet; and
 - 6) Participation in at least one NRCS sponsored event during the grant period.
- i) Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities, and explain how the results will be measured. Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; historically underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.
- j) 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 semi-annual progress reports, quarterly financial reports and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.
- 4) **Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts**: Describe and assess the potential environmental and social impacts of the proposed project. The description of the potential environmental and social impacts must address all potential beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. A full description and assessment of the potential impacts to all environmental resources must be disclosed. The length of the analysis should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the environmental resources impacted directly, indirectly or cumulatively. Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc. Environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants and animals, as well as other resources protected by law, regulation, Executive Order and agency policy. In addition to describing impacts, applicants are required to assess the significance or degree of potential environmental impact of the proposed project on environmental resources.
- Note: Please be aware that applications for projects with potentially adverse impacts may need to be modified in order to achieve acceptable and beneficial levels of environmental impact. NRCS may choose not to select projects that cannot be modified.
- 5) **Budget Information**: The budget portion of the application consists of the three parts described below. The budget information must include the following information and is limited to 12 pages in length.
- a. 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 cost share funds. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. This form is the summary budget for the project.

- b. Detailed Budget Description: A specific item-by-item breakdown of the totals provided in Item 6 of the SF-424A should be provided. This detail should show what individual costs were added together to arrive at the totals presented in each of the Object Class Categories on the SF-424. This information should be provided in a tabular format (refer to Tables 1-4 in Section III. C). The information needs to be presented in such a way that the CIG Review Group can readily understand what expenses will be incurred to support the project. The breakdown of the federal share and the cost share should be shown separately as in the SF-424A, not combined. This may be in separate documents or in different sections of the same one. Items provided to NRCS in the budget details should include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 6a. Personnel: A list of personnel, their salary, hourly rate, hours, % time.
 - 6b. Fringe Benefits: % of salary, differing rates for different staff.
 - 6c. Travel: basis for airfare, mileage rate (NTE Federal govt. rate), per diem, hotel, car rental, how many trips, how many days, number of staff.
 - 6d. Equipment: type of equipment, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity.
 - 6e. Supplies: type of supplies, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity (a general statement such as “office supplies \$3,000” is not acceptable).
 - 6f. Contractual: Cost of each subcontract – the total of all subcontracts should be shown on the SF-424, but an itemized budget should be provided for each potential subcontract. The budgets for the subcontracts should follow this same format and be submitted with your proposal.
 - 6g. Construction: N/A.
 - 6h. Other: Cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity.
- c. Budget Narrative: 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. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. In addition to the information above, any subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. The budget narrative should support the federal funds requested and the cost share.

6) Indirect Costs

- a. 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.
- b. An indirect cost rate not to exceed 15 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 15 percent, applicants must submit an indirect cost rate proposal with the application which includes the following:
 - 1) Applicant’s written policy for allocating and identifying direct and indirect costs;
 - 2) The contact information of the person who prepared the proposal;
 - 3) Breakdown of indirect salaries by position title and amount;
 - 4) Line item expenditure descriptions describing how the costs are being allocated between direct and indirect costs;

- 5) Applicant's tax identification number; and
 - 6) Signed certification attesting that (i) all costs in proposal are allowable under 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.
 - c. If applicant does not have a federally approved indirect cost rate, it is at the agency's (NRCS) discretion whether to allow indirect cost.
- 7) **List of letters of support:** Include entity name, location, role, and, if a commitment of cash or in-kind support has been made, the value.
- 8) **Matching:** Applications must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-federal third parties.

Cash Match

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement 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 cash contribution, and (5) a statement that the contributor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

In-Kind Match

"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.

For any third-party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the contributing organization and the applicant, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the contributor, (2) the name of the applicant's organization, (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third-party in-kind contribution, and (5) a statement that the contributor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The sources and amounts of all matching support from non-applicants must be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support (matching support means a budget narrative broken down by year).

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.

9) **Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement and Past Performance:**

If you have ever received an NRCS National or State CIG, please respond to item 9.A below. If you have never received an NRCS CIG, but have received other federal or non-federal assistance agreements (an assistance agreement is a grant or cooperative agreement and not a contract), please respond to item 9.B below. If you have never received any type of federal or non-federal assistance agreements, please indicate this in your proposal. In evaluating an applicant's response, in addition to the information provided by the applicant, NRCS may consider relevant information from NRCS files and/or from other federal or non-federal grantors to verify or supplement information provided by the applicant.

A. Applicant has previously received an NRCS CIG

Identify the NRCS CIG(s) you currently have or have received in the past. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award. Demonstrate how you successfully managed the grant(s), and successfully performed all phases of work under the previous or existing grant(s), including whether the desired outcomes of the project(s) were met by providing information on the following:

- (1) Funds Expenditure: the balance of grant funds currently remaining.
- (2) Describe your compliance with grant requirements, including, but not limited to, information regarding your compliance with the work plan, schedule, terms and conditions, and timely reporting (e.g., semiannual progress reports, financial status reports, and any other required submittals). Accomplishments: Describe your success using NRCS grant funds, including whether you reported accomplishments to NRCS.

B. Applicant has received other federal and/or non-federal assistance agreements

- (1) Identify current and/or prior federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements received. Please provide information on no more than five of your most recent assistance agreements. Describe your history of successfully managing these agreements and performing the agreements including meeting and complying with reporting requirements, submitting final acceptable technical reports, and reporting on whether you were making progress towards achieving the results under those agreements and, if not, whether you explained why.

10) **Certifications:** Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. All applications must include this document. The SF-424B may be found at: [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) - Forms Repository or by contacting the State office. In addition, 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 \(Financial Assistance\)](#)

The items below must be obtained prior to entering into an agreement with the federal government. Applicants are encouraged to apply early for their DUNS/SAM number.

11) **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. CIG applicants must obtain a DUNS Number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. **Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.**

12) **System for Award Management (SAM):** Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA and EPLS. Those recipients who receive CIG awards must maintain their SAM registration throughout the grant period. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Please allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration.

B. How to Submit the Full Proposal Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov or to the e-mail address listed below. Alternatively, applications may be submitted via express mail, overnight courier service or U.S. Postal Service to the address listed below. All applications must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Grants.gov provides date and time stamps on applications submitted through its website. All applications regardless of how they are submitted must be received by 4 p.m. EDT on **June 27, 2014**.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site problems related to Grants.gov or e-mailed submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process or send their e-mail in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems.

The address for submitting an application by e-mail is Blaine.Delaney@va.usda.gov.

The address for submitting a paper copy of the application is:
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209,
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

Note: Applicants must submit only one signed original copy of each project application. Applications submitted by fax will not be considered. The use of Federal Government postage-paid envelopes, e-mail and/or equipment in filing applications is a violation of federal law and will disqualify you from consideration.

C. Due Date

Applications for **Full Proposals** must be received at the Virginia NRCS State Office by 4:00 p.m. EDT on **June 27, 2014**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

D. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 5 calendar days of their submission but believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below within 10 calendar days of the submission deadline. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered.

CIG Program Contact:

Blaine Delaney, State CIG Program Manager
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209, Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1663
Email: Blaine.Delaney@va.usda.gov

E. 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.

F. Funding Restrictions

Awardees may not use unrecovered 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:

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 any amendments thereto;
4. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
5. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
6. Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; and,
7. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces, the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces, and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

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

G. Review

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. Complete applications will be evaluated by a CIG Review Group based on the Application Evaluation Criteria identified in the application instructions in section VI.B.

The CIG Review Group will make its recommendations for project approval to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

H. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with [7 CFR §3019.36](#). 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.

I. Environmental Review Requirements

The Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 and the NRCS regulation that implements NEPA at 7 CFR parts 650 require that an environmental review be prepared for federal actions that may have environmental effects. NRCS financial assistance under the CIG program requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application packet, applicants are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project 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 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.

VI. APPLICATION REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Review and Selection Process

A two-phase evaluation and review process will be utilized for applications submitted under this notice. The first phase requires the applicant to submit a pre-proposal application. Pre-proposal applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. NRCS staff will evaluate complete pre-proposal applications based on how they demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one of the topics provided in section I.D. of this notice.

NRCS will only request a full proposal package from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal process.

The proposals will be evaluated and reviewed by a NRCS technical and programs review group. The CIG Review Group will make recommendations to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

B. Application Evaluation Criteria

To be given consideration, the innovative project or activity must comply with all federal, state and local regulations throughout the duration of the project and should:

- Make use of a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability of success;
- Demonstrate and verify environmental (e.g., soil, water, air, plants, energy and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability and usability of conservation technology in the field;
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector; or
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

The CIG Review Group will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals:

1) Purpose, Approach and Goals

- Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
- Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
- Project outcome is clearly measurable.
- Potential for successful completion.
- Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and an acceptably significant level of improvement will be achieved.

2) Innovative Technology or Approach

- Project is innovative (national, regionally and/or local in nature) per proposal request announcement.
- Project addresses one or more of the NRCS bulleted topics (pages 4-8).

3) Project Management

- Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
- Project staff has technical expertise needed.
- Budget is adequately explained and justified.
- Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions and agencies.

4) Benefits and Transferability

- Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology/approach or technologies/approaches.
- Potential to transfer the approach or technology nationally or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas.
- Potential for successful transfer, through planned project activities, to historically underserved producers and communities.
- Potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods.
- Project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.).

C. Other Factors

In making final selection recommendations from among the most highly qualified applicants, NRCS's Selection Official may consider the following factors if, and as, appropriate.

- A balanced distribution of funds among the State's regions.
- A balanced distribution of projects across resource concerns.

- Whether the applicant is a Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or Indian Tribe, or a community based organization comprised of or representing these entities.
- Whether full participation by historically underserved individuals and groups will be achieved.
- Fair distribution of funds between urban and non-urban areas.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NRCS anticipates announcing CIG selections by August 1, 2014 and awarding all grants by September 5, 2014. However, NRCS will not distribute any funds, and grantees cannot begin work until the parties execute an appropriate CIG agreement.

Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of **September 5, 2014**.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification from the Virginia NRCS State Office. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental review process and financial review. NRCS reserves the right to have grant award(s) administered by a third party. In the event that a third party administers the grant award(s), the applicant/recipient will be notified in writing.

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. 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 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 this project may include:

- close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results
- collaborating during performance of the scope of work
- reviewing substantive terms of proposed contracts
- reviewing qualifications of key personnel (NRCS will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient)
- reviewing and commenting on reports prepared under the agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient)

C. Environmental Review Requirements

Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the NRCS Environmental Liaison to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation required for the project. The

environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to award of grant funds.

Selected applicants may be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document(s) if an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

D. 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 completion of project. In addition, every six months the selected applicant must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program and technical contacts. 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:

- A statement 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
- Any current problems or unusual developments or delays
- The 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 costs
- Lessons learned that inform future project activities or broader efforts in the project's topic area
- Work to be performed during the succeeding period
- Any preliminary results that can inform NRCS standards, policy, training or programs
- Products and/or technologies currently ready for adoption and/or transfer
- Potentially promising products and/or technology not yet ready for adoption and/or transfer, and a description of what is needed to reach that maturity
- Identification of any new data or research needs to inform broader efforts in the project's topic area
- Project activities that have been featured on recipient or partner websites and success stories that could be amplified by NRCS
- Any funded or unfunded time extensions
- Any changes to the project's original objectives, methods or timeline with a summary of the justification for the changes

The final report is due to the NRCS program, technical and administrative contacts 90 days after completion of the project. This report is distinct from the performance progress reports described above. The final report will summarize the project and describe methods, quality control, findings and recommendations.

To satisfy the requirements of EQIP (7 CFR 1466) compliance measures, the selected applicant is required to submit as a component of the semi-annual progress report:

- A list of producers, identified by name and social security number, of all EQIP-eligible producers or entities involved in the project.

- 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.
- 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.

E. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Applicants should be aware that part 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.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

A. CIG Program Contact

Blaine Delaney
CIG Program Manager
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1663
Email: Blaine.Delaney@va.usda.gov

B. CIG Administrative Contacts

Denise Burruss
Contract Specialist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1630
Email: Denise.Burruss@va.usda.gov

Allen L. Hunt, Jr.
Contract Specialist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1666
Email: Allen.Hunt@va.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions, is available on the NRCS CIG web page at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html>.

Attachments

- Pre-Proposal Package Check List
- Full Proposal Package Check List

Attachment A

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS FISCAL YEAR 2014 PRE-PROPOSAL PACKAGE CHECK LIST

Important: Applications Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered

- ☐ **1. Application Form:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- ☐ **2. Project Summary:** Submit a description including the information below (Three (3) pages maximum in length).
 - a) Project title;
 - b) Primary bulleted topic area for consideration (refer to pages 4 - 8);
 - c) Project duration (anticipated project start date of **September 5, 2014**, not to exceed 3 years);
 - d) Project director name, and contact information (including e-mail);
 - e) Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
 - f) Project background (describe the issue or problem and how the project addresses it innovatively as defined in Section I.C. – one paragraph);
 - g) Project objectives (purpose and goals);
 - h) Project methods (methodology, tools and processes);
 - i) Project area/location;
 - j) Project deliverables/products; and
 - k) Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement.
- ☐ **3. Budget Information:** Submit Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs.
 - a) Complete SF-424A;
 - b) Three-page maximum narrative (including the tables listed in 3.c.); and
 - c) Use the tabular format shown in Tables 1-4 in Section III. C.

Attachment B

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS FISCAL YEAR 2014 FULL PROPOSAL PACKAGE CHECK LIST

Important: Applications Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered
(Check List Items 1-12)

- ☐ **1. Application Form:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- ☐ **2. Project Executive Summary:** in one page or less, describe in non-technical language the issue or problem and how the project addresses it (one paragraph), objectives, methods, environmental outcomes, funding requested, participating partners, deliverables and any potential negative impacts.
- ☐ **3. Project Description:** (15 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)
 - a) Project background;
 - b) Project objectives;
 - c) Project methods;
 - d) Location and size of project area (include a map if possible);
 - e) EQIP eligible producer participation (Note: Producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements);
 - f) Project action plan and timeline;
 - g) Project management;
 - h) Project deliverables/products;
 - i) Benefits or results expected and transferability; and
 - j) Project evaluation.
- ☐ **4. Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts**
- ☐ **5. Budget Information:** Submit a completed Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs. (12 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)
 - a) Complete SF-424A;
 - b) Detailed budget description;
 - c) Budget narrative; and
 - d) Use the tabular format shown in Tables 1-4 in Section III. C.
- ☐ **6. Indirect Costs**
- ☐ **7. List of letters of support:** Include entity name, location, and if a commitment of cash or in-kind support has been made, the value.
- ☐ **8. Matching Information**
- ☐ **9. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement**
- ☐ **10. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.

- ☐ **11. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- ☐ **12. System for Award Management (SAM):** To register, visit <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration.

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