Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project FY 2020 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Please note that this document has been updated with additional questions for the final time as of June 19, 2020. The last day to submit questions was June 5, 2020.

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General

Q: What support will USDA be able to offer applicants during the application process?
A: USDA is happy to field any general, high-level inquiries that grantees may have regarding the application process. However, USDA is unable to offer specific guidance or advice on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal. In an effort to provide unbiased support to all those interested in the funding opportunity, USDA will refrain from providing advice that cannot otherwise be obtained through the resources that have been made publicly available via www.farmer.gov/urban and Grants.gov.

Q: Will USDA host a webinar about this funding opportunity?
A: Yes. NRCS hosted a webinar about the CCFWR Project on June 4, 2020 at 2:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. The presentation provided an overview of the CCFWR Project purpose, eligibility, and basic requirements for the submission of an application.

Q: I participated in the CCFWR webinar on June 4, 2020 and would like to view the recording. Is it available?
A: Yes. The webinar was recorded and is posted online at Farmers.gov/urban for any time viewing and is linked in the CCFWR Notice of Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov.

Q: Can I get a copy of the handout associated with the CCFWR webinar?
A: Yes. The handout associated with the CCFWR webinar was a copy of the PowerPoint presentation in PDF format. Both the CCFWR Webinar Presentation and the webinar transcript are posted under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov.

Q: Is this funding opportunity only available to organizations that participated in the webinar?
A: No. CCFWR is open to all of the eligible entities listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q: When will the FAQs be updated?
A: The period to submit questions about this funding opportunity closed on June 5, 2020. The Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated and available the week of June 15th on Grants.gov and at Farmers.gov/urban.

Q: What are the legislative authorities guiding this program?
A: Section 12302 (codified at 7 U.S.C. 6923) of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 also referred to as the 2018 Farm Bill, established the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production to carry out pilot projects by entering into cooperative agreements with local or municipal governments in not fewer than 10 States to develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.

Q: Who is the awarding agency for this funding program?
A: USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the awarding agency for this funding opportunity and is leading the USDA-wide Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP).

Q: What is the mission of OUAIP?

A: The mission of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including -

- community gardens and farms located in urban areas, suburbs, and urban clusters;
- rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production, and green walls;
- indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical technology farms;
- hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic farm facilities; and
- other innovations in agricultural production.

Q: Can a local government such as a city apply for the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) Competitive Grants Program and the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project?

A: Yes. Local governments are eligible entities under both funding opportunities offered by USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.

Q: What is the purpose of this funding opportunity?

A: The purpose of CCFWR is to provide assistance through a cooperative agreement to municipalities, counties, local governments, or city planners in the United States to carry out planning and implementation activities that will-

- generate compost;
- increase access to compost for agricultural producers;
- reduce reliance on, and limit the use of, fertilizer;
- improve soil quality;
- encourage waste management and permaculture business development;
- increase rainwater absorption;
- reduce municipal food waste; and
- divert food waste from landfills.

Q: What funding instrument type will be used for CCFWR pilot projects?

A: NRCS will enter into cooperative agreements with local or municipal governments in no fewer than 10 states.

Q: What is a cooperative agreement?

A: A cooperative agreement is a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and a non-Federal entity that, consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302–6305:

a. Is used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value from the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity to the non-Federal entity to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)); and not to acquire property or services for the Federal government or pass-through entity's direct benefit or use;

b. Is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.

c. The term does not include: (1) A cooperative research and development agreement as defined in 15 U.S.C. 3710a; or (2) An agreement that provides only: (i) Direct United States Government cash assistance to an individual; (ii) A subsidy; (iii) A loan; (iv) A loan guarantee; or (v) Insurance.

Q: How will the agency be substantially involved?

A: NRCS and its Federal partners will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement and will undertake activities such as:

- Connecting pilot projects with other USDA agencies and Federal partners to collaborate on project activities and outcomes that contribute to the U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 goal.
- Coordinating and convening the CCFWR pilot project team(s) and other Federal government, regional, institution, state, and local experts to share information and strategies related to CCFWR.
- Gathering the methods, results, and benefits derived from the project to evaluate and disseminate solutions.

Q: What is the U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 goal?

A: USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency announced the U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 goal in September 2015. It's the first domestic goal to reduce food loss and waste by half by the year 2030. It acknowledges that government alone cannot reach this goal and that effort and action from the entire food system is required, which is why the Federal government is seeking to work with communities, organizations and businesses along with our partners in state, Tribal and local government to reduce food loss and waste by 50 percent over the next 10 years.

Q: Is this a one-time funding opportunity or will there be future opportunities for this program?

A: NRCS cannot provide an answer regarding funding beyond fiscal year 2020 at this time. Approximately $900,000 is available for CCFWR Projects in fiscal year 2020.

Q: Will this application deadline be postponed due to COVID-19?

A: No. There is no planned extension at this time. Awards must be in place before September 30, 2020.

Pilot Projects

Q: What are the program priorities?

A: Priority will be given to a CCFWR pilot project that includes the following four components:

1. Anticipates or demonstrates economic benefits;
2. Incorporates plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners;
3. Integrates other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts; and
4. Collaborates with multiple partners.

Q: Could you define "agricultural producer" as outlined in priority #2?

A: According to Part 530.20 of the NRCS Working Lands Conservation Programs Manual an agricultural producer is defined as:

B. Agricultural Producer.—To be considered an eligible producer, the applicant must be—

1. A person, legal entity, Indian Tribe, Alaska Native corporation, or joint operation with signature authority.

2. Engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or have an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment. Interest in the agricultural operation means one of the following:

(i) Owner or renter of the land in the agricultural operation;

(ii) Have an interest in the agricultural products, commodities, or livestock produced by the agricultural operation; or

(iii) Be a member of a legal entity or joint operation that either owns or rents land in the agricultural operation or has an interest in the agricultural products, commodities, or livestock produced by the agricultural operation.

Note: NRCS must not establish or use any additional criteria for determining that an applicant is an agricultural producer other than criteria that is cited in this section. Use of the following criteria to determine eligibility as an agricultural producer is prohibited:

- Type of operation or agricultural enterprise
- Size of operation
- Location of operation
- Income; profit or loss

Q: Must a project include all four components?

A: Pilot projects do not need to include all four components. However, projects that 1) anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits; 2) incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners; 3) integrate other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts; and 4) collaborate with multiple partners will receive higher consideration during the review process. Through these pilot projects, USDA is tapping into the creativity of communities across the nation to rethink the lifecycle of food in ways that minimize waste and maximize use.

Q: Can projects include food waste to energy facilities?

A: Yes. Project activities may include turning food waste into valuable resources including natural fertilizer, energy, and animal feed.

Q: How do you define community composting? Is there any consideration for size and scale within a project?

A: Composting can be small scale, large scale, and everything in between. Composting can take place at many levels – backyard, schoolyard, community, and regional – and in urban, suburban, and rural areas. There are many methods and sizes and no size or scale limit has been placed on CCFWR Pilot Projects in FY 2020.

Q: Would incorporating a gleaning program be appropriate under CCFWR?

A: Projects should include innovative solutions for increasing access to compost and reducing municipal food waste through the integration of food recovery efforts such as gleaning and donations, secondary markets like produce delivery services, feeding animals, value-added products, on-farm storage, and others.

Q: Do you have examples of projects that have been funded under this program?

A: No. CCFWR is a newly established program under the 2018 Farm Bill and this fiscal year is the first time USDA is soliciting applications for pilot projects.

Q: How many projects can I lead or participate in?

A: There is no limit to the number of applications an eligible entity (i.e. unit of local government) can submit. Eligible and non-eligible entities may be listed as a partner on more than one application. However, if projects are duplicative, both will not be awarded.

Q: What is the expected funding amount for a CCFWR Project?

A: An applicant may only request a minimum budget amount of $45,000 or up to a maximum budget amount of $90,000. The range of $45,000 or $90,000 only refers to requested Federal funds within a budget.

Q: What is the time period for execution of a CCFWR Project?

A: Projects must be 2 years (24 months) in duration. Applicants should expect the grant life cycle to include start up activities, execution, and close out activities (final financial and program reports, accounting, etc.). Applicants are expected to plan accordingly in order to achieve project deliverables within the grant period specified.

Q: What should I put as my project's start and end date on the SF-424?

A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity states that applicants should plan their project with a start date of September 15, 2020. All projects must be two years in duration. Therefore, use a project start date of September 15, 2020 and a project end date of September 15, 2022 on your Application Form (SF-424).

Q: Can project activities take place outside of the United States?

A: No.

Q: Can a project have multiple sites or be multistate?
A: Yes. A project could occur in a single or multiple areas within any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

Q: Can a composting facility on private land or at a private home be considered an eligible site?
A: No, individuals including residential sites are not eligible beneficiaries under this program.

Subawards

Q: Can I subaward to another entity?
A: Subawards are allowed ONLY if an eligible entity subawards to another eligible entity as defined by authorizing legislative language. Subawards can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other on the form SF-424A and include the detailed subaward budget and scope in the Budget Narrative.

Q: Can I subaward to a partner?
A: Partners that are not eligible to receive a CCFWR Project award cannot receive subawards. However, a project partner that is essential to the proposed project may be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual on the form SF-424A or receive a stipend in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other on the form SF-424A. Remember to include details about the contractor and/or stipend budget and scope in the Budget Narrative. USDA will review applicant's budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable, and necessary.

Q: If CCFWR is awarded to a local government agency, can other local government agencies in that city be awarded subawards?
A: Yes. Only eligible entities can receive a CCFWR Project award and/or subaward. Eligible entities are a unit of local government in areas of the United States as defined by authorizing legislative language.

Q: What rules apply to subawards?
A: NRCS does not require subawards to be awarded through a competitive process. Subawards must be managed in accordance with 2 CFR 200.331.

Partnerships

Q: What is the partnership requirement for CCFWR?
A: Priority will be given to an applicant that collaborates with multiple partners (2 or more) on their CCFWR Pilot Project. Partners may be eligible and/or non-eligible entities.

Q: Who can be a partner?

A: Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities including farms, institutions of higher education (IHEs), academic institutions (including minority-serving colleges and universities), cooperative extension, public and private schools, and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and Federal, state, local and Tribal government entities to achieve project objectives and outcomes. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements for CCFWR. Eligible and non-eligible entities may be partners on a project.

Q: Can you clarify how "partnership" is defined?

A: The eligible entity (i.e. local government) that submits the application to the Natural Resources Conservation Service is responsible for receiving and managing the award, if selected. Applicants that apply as "partnerships" or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the "partner" parties in the narrative of the Project Proposal. Each award will ONLY be made to a single entity.

Q: What documentation does NRCS need about the Partnership?

A: Applicants must include information about project partner(s) within their Project Proposal Narrative AND submit Letters of Commitment from Partner(s) and Collaborator Organizations with their application. More detailed information about this requirement is included in the Notice of Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov.

Q: Are letters of intent required to verify partners?

A: Yes. Documentation verifying support from EACH collaborator/partner is required. The agency may conduct reference checks to ensure that organization(s) identified are supportive and involved with the project. Letters documenting collaboration are not included in the 15-page limit of the Project Proposal Narrative. Please read section D.h. of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for more detailed information about this requirement.

Q: Who should the letters of support be addressed to?

A: Write a letter addressed to Louis Aspey, Deputy Chief for Management and Strategy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, if possible.

Q: My project partner would like to mail their letter of support to USDA directly, what is the mailing address?

A: Attach a copy of the letter(s) to your application in Grants.gov. Do not send a letter by postal mail or email.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of partners that can collaborate on a project?

A: There is no limit. Priority will be given to an applicant that collaborates with **two or more** partners on their CCFWR Project.

Q: Can partners be changed after the project begins?

A: Yes. Please review the General Terms and Conditions for award revisions that require prior approval requests posted under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov.

Q: How might I find others to partner with?
A: USDA recommends reaching out to public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, including academic institutions and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and government entities in your area of the United States. The USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement may have useful tools and information to assist with partnership development. You can find more information at www.usda.gov/partnerships.

Matching Funds

Q: Are matching funds required?
A: Yes. This opportunity requires applicants to match 25 percent of total project costs. Federal funds may constitute no more than 75 percent of the total project budget. For example, if the total CCFWR project budget is $90,000, the applicant would request $67,500 in USDA funds (75 percent of the budget) and must provide a match amount of $22,500 (25 percent of the budget). For assistance with calculating the required match amount, please use the FY 2020 CCFWR Matching Calculator.

Q: What if I'd like to provide more than the 25 percent matching requirement?
A: There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a match that exceeds the required amount. If the project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary.

Q: What types of match will be accepted?
A: Matching may be achieved with contributions of cash, supplies, services, third party in-kind contributions, or a combination of both from sources other than funds provided through this funding opportunity. Cash can be the recipients cash outlay, or cash donations from non-federal third parties or non-federal grants. In-kind can be the value of non-cash contributions typically in the form of value of personnel, goods, and services.

Q: Do I need all the required matching resources secured prior to submission of an application?
A: Yes, in order for NRCS to issue the award, the applicant must meet the requirement of 25 percent matching by providing information that they have secured the matching funds and by providing confirmation that the matching funds will be *available* during the award period. The match funds do not need to be *in hand* at the time of submission, but they must be confirmed as committed or secured for the project at the time of application. In addition, documentation of match must be maintained for audit or review of the project.

Q: What type of paperwork to verify matching funds is required?
A: Applications must include written documentation showing the amounts and sources of match (including both cash and in-kind contributions). Signed letters verifying matching funds for each cash and/or in-kind resource is required. 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. Please read section D. Application and Submission Information of the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov for more detailed information about this requirement.

Q: What if I do not include the required match with my application?
A: Applications that do not include matching will be ineligible for an award.

Q: Can unrecovered indirect cost be used as part of the matching?
A: No. It is unallowable to use unrecovered indirect costs as part of the match requirement. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount that could have been charged to the Federal award under the potential recipients approved negotiated indirect cost rate.

Q: Can municipal labor and equipment be used as part of the match?
A: Yes. A local government can use its own personnel or equipment to construct a facility as part of its match.

Q: How do I calculate staff hours as matching funds?
A: You can use staff hours (salary and fringe benefits) as matching; however, the cost must actually be incurred during the period of performance of the award. Staff hours cannot be used to prepare your CCFWR application and counted as match. For example, if the signed agreement is received on September 15, 2020, the match calculation should begin no earlier than September 15th and end at the project end date, which would be two years from the project start date.

Q: Can volunteer hours count as a match? How do you calculate the rate?
A: Yes. Volunteer services provided by third-party professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor may be counted as match, if the service is an integral and necessary part of an approved project. Rates for third-party volunteer services must be consistent with those paid for similar work by the non-Federal entity. In those instances, in which the required skills are not found in the non-Federal entity, rates must be consistent with those paid for similar work in the labor market in which the non-Federal entity competes for the kind of services involved. In either case, paid fringe benefits that are reasonable, necessary, allocable, and otherwise allowable may be included in the valuation under 2 CFR § 200.306.

Q: Does USDA have tips for calculating or tracking volunteer time, if this type of match is used?
A: The use of volunteer time as match must include the establishment of a wage scale based upon the applicant's internal scale or prevailing wages in the area. Salaries and wages used in meeting the matching requirements on Federal awards must be supported in the same manner as salaries and wages claimed for reimbursement from Federal awards. Supporting documentation should include:

- Volunteer's name
- The dates, including year, the volunteer provided services
- The duration of time of services the volunteer provided to the program
- The volunteer's supervisor's signature
- The volunteer's signature
- The volunteer activity
- The rate applied to this activity
- Total valuation for the time period

Documentation should be maintained on a regular basis. Programs may choose to use a monthly timesheet for regular volunteers or daily time sheets for occasional volunteers.

Q: Can other grants that a local government receives be used as match?
A: Yes, if the funds are not Federal in nature and are relevant to the CCFWR project.

Q: Are there any types of Federal funds including Farm Bill funds that can be used as a match for CCFWR?
A: No. Federal funds cannot be used as match.

Q: Can a loan such as a zero-interest loan be used as match?
A: Yes, as long as the loan is not from the Federal government nor a Federally guaranteed loan.

Eligibility

Q: Who is eligible to apply?
A: The following entities in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) are eligible to apply for a CCFWR Project:

- A unit of local government

Q: How is eligibility determined?
A: Entities that are legally eligible for this specific funding opportunity are listed under section 12302 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–334), (7 USC 6923).

Q: Is a description of the eligible applicant type available?
A: The following term for local government is from the Common Data Element Repository (CDER) Library. The CDER Library is the authoritative, Federal-wide source of financial and business terms, which is based on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Uniform Grants Guidance and the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act).

Entity Type	Description
Local government	Any unit of government within a state, including a county; borough; municipality; city; town; township; parish; local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937 (50 Stat. 888 (P.L. 75—412); special district; school district; intrastate district; council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law; and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state or local government.

Q: Are soil and water conservation districts eligible for CCFWR?
A: Yes.

Q: Are councils of government eligible for CCFWR?
A: Yes. Council of governments is part of the definition of local government.

Q: Would a neighborhood business improvement district or regional planning agencies qualify as a local government?
A: It could be under local government or it may not be depending on how established. If unsure, please check with the organization directly to ensure they fall under the CDER Library definition of local government.

Q: Who is not eligible to apply?
A: Individual such as a farmer or gardener, for-profit organizations and small businesses, Federal agencies, Tribal governments, state governments, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) including extension programs, and foreign applicants are not eligible to apply for a CCFWR Project. It is important to note that non-eligible entities can be partners on a project.

Q: Can Individuals apply?
A: No. Individuals such as a farmer, gardener, etc. are not eligible to apply for the CCFWR Project. USDA offers a variety of funding opportunities to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners finance their businesses. Please visit www.farmers.gov/fund for information about programs that individuals are eligible for.

Q: I am a for-profit entity, am I eligible for this grant?
A: No. For-profit organizations and small businesses are not eligible to receive a CCFWR Project award. However, for-profit organizations and small businesses can be partners on a project.

Q: Can Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) apply for this funding opportunity?
A: No. IHEs as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001 are not eligible. However, IHEs can be a partner on a project.

Q: If an institution of higher learning or extension program is considered a non-profit 501(c)(3); can they apply as a non-profit?
A: No.

Q: If an institution of higher learning or extension program is considered a state or local agency; can they apply as a state or local agency?
A: No.

Q: Are Tribal governments eligible for this funding opportunity?
A: No. Tribal governments are not eligible. However, Tribal governments can be a partner on a project.

Q: Are State governments eligible for this funding opportunity?
A: No. State governments are not eligible. However, state governments or agencies can be a partner on a project.

Q: Can a local government apply as a fiscal agent/sponsor on behalf of a non-eligible entity?
A: No. The fiscal agent or sponsor would need to be an eligible entity to apply for and receive CCFWR Project funds as defined by authorizing legislative language and an active participant/partner on project activities. The fiscal agent or sponsor cannot provide a subgrant to a non-eligible entity. A local government can only serve as fiscal sponsor to another eligible local government under the CCFWR Project.

Budget

Q: What does CCFWR fund?
A: Project activities that may be funded under CCFWR include the following:

- Materials, supplies and other costs related to the development and testing of strategies to generate compost and reduce food waste.
- Purchase, lease or rental of special purchase equipment, vehicles, land, and building space.
- Activities that encourage composting and food waste reduction.
- Construction such as building a permanent or a non-permanent, temporary or moveable structure such as fencing.
- Contractual costs including labor such as a consultant, engineer or other professional service.
- Personnel costs.

Q: What can I include in my budget?
A: Budget expenses can include personnel and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractors, construction, other (direct costs), and indirect charges.

Q: What should I include in the Budget Narrative?
A: In a separate narrative titled Budget Narrative justify all budget items and costs. Detail how the totals on the form SF-424A were determined and provide a description for every allowable cost line item. Descriptions should demonstrate a clear connection between the costs and the proposed project. For example, the narrative should describe the positions, related duties, rates, and the percentage of time to be spent on the project, the number of travel trips, rates, and the average cost per trip, the types of supplies to be purchased, the specific equipment to be purchased, contractor tasks, etc.

Q: What rules apply to local government in regards to procurement?
A: Local governments must use their own documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable local laws under 2 CFR 200.318 through 2 CFR 200.326.

Q: Can CCFWR funds be used to develop strategies, feasibility studies?
A: Leading feasibility studies or surveys, conducting outreach such as marketing campaigns, hosting demonstrations, job trainings or workshops, or developing educational materials are allowable activities, if they are necessary to achieve the scope and objectives of the CCFWR Project. Marketing activities cannot be used to solely promote the local government and must directly relate to the purpose and priorities of the CCFWR Project.

Q: Can you provide examples of allowable supplies?
A: Supplies or materials necessary to generate compost such as bin systems, static pile and aerated static piles, passive aeration, in-vessel systems, or vermicomposting are allowable. Supplies or materials needed to collect food waste, reduce food waste or participate in food recovery efforts are allowable. Supplies and materials needed to host a demonstration or training are allowable. This list is not exhaustive.

Q: What is the maximum allowable amount for supplies?
A: The per unit cost of each supply item requested in the project budget must be below $5,000 dollars. Any item with a per unit cost of $5,000 dollars or above and having a useful life of more than one year is considered equipment under 2 CFR § 200.33 and not a supply.

Q: Can a project budget include equipment like a large scale in-vessel composting machine? Is there a maximum allowable amount for equipment?
A: Yes. The purchase, lease or rental of special purpose equipment is allowable and there is no maximum threshold. The purchase, lease or rental of general purpose equipment is unallowable.

Q: What type of equipment is considered “general purpose equipment”?
A: General purpose equipment means equipment which is not limited to research, medical, scientific or other technical activities under 2 CFR § 200.48. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicle.

Q: How is "special purpose equipment" defined?
A: Special purpose equipment is defined as equipment that is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activity under 2 CFR § 200.89.

Q: Is construction an allowable cost?
A: Yes. CCFWR funds may be used to construct, alter, or repair (including dredging, excavating, and painting) of buildings, structures, or other real property. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be considered a construction project. Funds can be used to expand or improve current compost operations or facilities.

Q: Can land or building space be purchased under a CCFWR Project?
A: Yes. However, an applicant that submits a budget that includes the rental or lease of land or building space during the length of the grant (instead of purchase) will be given higher consideration as listed under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Is it true that equipment must be leased or rented and not purchased?
A: No. An applicant may include the purchase of special purpose equipment in their Project budget. However, an applicant that submits a budget that includes the rental or lease of special purpose equipment during the length of the grant (instead of purchase) will be given higher consideration as listed under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Can an applicant rent equipment and lease land from a project partner?
A: Yes. An applicant can rent or lease equipment, building space, or land from a project partner and/or other. The cost of rental or lease can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual.

Q: If we are to rent a facility, equipment, etc. are we expected to terminate those contracts at the end date of the project?
A: Yes. Any lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the award period.

Q: What if land is donated?
A: Project activities may occur on donated land. Please be clear in your submission who is donating the land and for what length and purpose.

Q: Why will Projects that include the lease or rental of vehicles, land, building space, and special purchase equipment receive higher consideration?
A: Each project proposal will be evaluated on its fiscal plan and resources. As part of the administrative review process, USDA will review applicants' budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Due to the high demand and limited ability of NRCS to manage the acquisition and disposition of real property, applications with budgets that include the rental or lease of land, special purpose equipment, building space, and vehicles will receive higher consideration.

Q: Will a project be negatively scored if it does not include the rental or purchase of vehicles, land, building space, and special purchase equipment in its budget?
A: No. Projects that do not include the purchase of or lease or rental of special purpose equipment, land, building space, or vehicles will not weigh lower under the Application Review Information section of the NFO.

Q: Can CCFWR cover insurance expenses as a part of the budget?
A: Yes. The cost of insurance can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other (direct costs).

Q: Could an applicant be reimbursed if they need to purchase a state permit for their CCFWR Project?
A: Yes. The cost of permits related to the project can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Other (direct costs).

Q: Are pre-award costs allowable such as paying for a grant writer?
A: No. Any pre-award costs incurred will not be reimbursed.

Q: Can I use funds to purchase food?
A: Food purchases should be limited to costs related to incidental food and refreshments for participants at workshops or trainings.

Q: Is building a permanent structure an allowable cost?
A: Building a non-permanent, temporary or movable structure is an allowable cost. Building a permanent structure, which may include, but not limited to, pouring concrete, laying asphalt or installing plumbing is also an allowable cost.

Q: Would it be allowable to use funds to hire an engineer or composting consultant?
A: Yes. Contractual costs such as hiring a consultant or labor can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Contractual. Contractual costs are expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship.

Q: Would the CCFWR Project provide funding for personnel to lead job trainings or educational demonstrations that encourage or teach community composting techniques?
A: Yes. It is allowable to fund personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Q: Is the creation of a new position for project coordination an allowable cost?
A: CCFWR Project funds may be used for personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Q: Does the Budget Narrative have a specific page length?
A: No. The Notice of Funding Opportunity does not have a length for the Budget Narrative.

Q: Does the page limit also include the Budget Narrative?
A: No. NRCS includes instructions for completing the Budget Narrative in the funding opportunity under the "Related Documents" tab in Grants.gov.

Q: Are there any mandatory costs not mentioned in the NFO that should be added to the project proposal such as mandatory grantee training or gatherings?
A: Yes, applicants should include costs for the CCFWR Pilot Project team (one representative from the applicant and each partner) to attend a meeting with USDA staff and other Federal partners in Washington, DC during the period of award. These costs can be included in an applicant's budget as a line item under Travel.

Q: If the project includes construction costs such as the building of a compost facility should we submit both the form SF-424A and form SF-424C?
A: Use the form SF-424A for projects that include construction and non-construction. Put the construction costs in the Construction Object Class category in Section B of the form and include the detailed construction budget in the Budget Narrative.

Q: How do I determine where to input salary costs on the SF-424A?
A: Salaries for personnel that are employed by the applicant would go on the Personnel line and all other labor costs from sources outside the organization would go under the Contractual section. Any associated fringe benefits should be separated from personnel costs on the SF-424A.

Q: What rate should I use for indirect costs?
A: To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either 1) have a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; 2) have an existing De Minimis Agreement; or 3) qualify for use of the De Minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). If requesting indirect costs, use the rate and base specified in your organization's NICRA or existing De Minimis Agreement. The NICRA or De Minimis Agreement must be in PDF format and attached to the Grants.gov application package.

Applicants requesting indirect costs who do not have a NICRA or De Minimis Agreement can use an indirect cost rate of 10% with a base of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). Such applicants selected for an award will be required to execute the 10% De Minimis Agreement with NRCS, which constitutes establishing an approved rate. Recipients who do not request indirect costs are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award.

Q: Can the compost generated be sold?
A: Yes. Compost produced during a CCFWR Project can be sold to generate program income. Program income is the gross revenue generated by a Federally funded activity earned during the length of the award. Program income may be earned by recipients from fees charged for conference or workshop attendance, from rental fees earned from real property or equipment acquired with Federal funds, or from the sale of commodities or items developed under the grant. Any program income generated during the grant period must be used to further the objectives of the project. All program income must be recorded on the Federal Financial Report (SF-425) for the period in which it was earned. Recipients are not accountable for program income earned after the grant period.

Q: Can compost generated with a CCFWR Project be provided for free?
A: Compost produced with award funds can ONLY be made available to agricultural producers or community and school gardens free of charge in lieu of sale. However, a nominal fee may be charged to generate program income.

Grants.gov

Q: How do I find the CCFWR funding opportunity on Grants.gov?
A: You can find and download the Notice of Funding Opportunity and related documents by going directly to Grants.gov and either 1) conduct a keyword search for the program acronym "CCFWR"; 2) enter the Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CCFWR-20-NOFO0001018; or 3) search the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.935.

Q: Is the CCFWR Project Notice of Funding Opportunity available in Spanish?
A: Not at this time.

Q: If I have problems with Grants.gov, will USDA staff help me submit or accept my application package?
A: No. USDA cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts or provide applicants technical assistance with the Grants.gov system. The Grants.gov technical support center can be reached at 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov.

Q: Do I have to register with Grants.gov before submitting an application through Grants.gov?
A: Yes. The applicant must be registered with Grants.gov. There is a free, one-time registration for using Grants.gov, regardless of the Federal agency you may be submitting an application to through Grants.gov. Information about how to register is included on the Grants.gov registration page.

Q: What is involved in the Grants.gov registration process?
A: More detailed information is included on the Grants.gov registration page and the Grants.gov On-line User Guide. The following information is a general overview.

1. Obtain a TIN/EIN from the IRS (if your organization does not have one).
2. Obtain a DUNS number (if your organization does not have one).
3. Register with SAM.gov (if your organization does not have an active account)
4. Create a Grants.gov username and password. You will need to create a Grants.gov user profile by visiting the Get Registered section of the website.
5. The E-Business Point of Contact (POC) at your organization must respond to the registration email from Grants.gov and login at Grants.gov to authorize you as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Note there can be more than one AOR for an organization.
6. At any time, you can track your AOR status by going to the Applicant Login with your username and password.

Important Note: These steps are a general overview and include the main steps a new organization or organizations that have never applied for a Federal grant before must complete outside of Grants.gov prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov.

Q: Does USDA have any helpful tips when seeking assistance on registration steps?
A: Don't wait until the last minute to apply at Grants.gov. Keep a record of any correspondence with Grants.gov or other helpdesks, including any ID or case numbers provided.

Q: How long does the registration process take?
A: The time it takes to complete each step varies. Don't wait until the last minute to complete the steps listed above. The Grants.gov registration process must be completed prior to submission of an application. You should allow two full weeks to register with Grants.gov, but additional time may be required.

Q: Who should I contact for help if I need assistance or have technical difficulties while trying to complete any of the registration steps?

A: These systems are not owned or managed by USDA. You must contact the applications directly for assistance.

1. IRS TIN/EIN issues or questions: Businesses: 1-800-829-4933 and Non-profit taxes: 1-877-829-5500
2. DUNS Number issues or questions: 1-866-705-5711 (U.S. Only) or SAMHelp@dnb.com
3. SAM.gov assistance and user guides: Go to the Help tab on the SAM.gov website
4. Grants.gov support: 1-800-518-4726 or support@Grants.gov

Q: Can you get an EIN within minutes through IRS.gov?

A: Please send issues or questions regarding an Employer Identification Number (EIN) also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number (TIN) to the Internal Revenue Service.

Q: Is there a cost to use the System for Award Management (SAM)?

A: SAM.gov is an official website of the U.S. government. There is no cost to use SAM. You can use the site for free to register to do business with the U.S. government; update or renew your entity registration; check status of an entity registration; and search for entity registration and exclusion records. More detailed information on how to use SAM is included on the SAM.gov Help page.

Q: Why does my organization need to register with SAM.gov?

A: Registering with the System for Award Management (SAM) is a required step in order for your organization to be able to apply for Federal grants. The registration process is free. In order to register for a SAM account, you must have either EIN, TIN or a DUNS number. If you don't have a DUNS, you cannot register in SAM. If your organization previously registered in SAM and has received Federal grants in the past, check to make sure your organization's SAM account is active.

Q: Is the SAM requirement being waived for this grant?

A: Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has offered some flexibility to the SAM registration requirements. Right now, the awarding agency can relax the requirement to have the SAM registration at the time of application. Currently, Grants.gov will accept applications without it. However, to do so, you must contact the Grants.gov applicant support. The delay or the absence of an active SAM registration must be due to the loss of operational capacity and increased costs due to the COVID-19 crisis. It cannot be because the application process was started late.

Q: What website is free for the DUNS number?

A: A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit identifier for businesses. Obtaining a DUNS number is free for anyone required to register with the Federal government. There are a lot of scam websites that charge a fee to help you obtain your DUNS number. Go to the DUN & Bradstreet website to obtain a DUNS number.

Application

Q: I'm an individual; however, I have my EIN and DUNS number. Does that make me eligible?

A: No. Individuals are not eligible applicants for this opportunity. However, individuals can be a partner.

Q: Will all the specifics for submitting a CCFWR Project application be on the website?
A: All instructions and requirements for this funding opportunity are posted on Grants.gov under the Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CCFWR-20-NOFO0001018. Once you click on the opportunity, there are four tabs. The very first tab on the left is the "Synopsis" tab, which is an overall view and summary of the grant opportunity. The main information is located under the "Related Documents" tab – where you can find and download the full announcement (NFO) with details and instructions along with the Frequently Asked Questions (PDF), webinar handout and transcript, General Terms and Conditions, supporting documents and forms, and other instructions. When ready to apply, select the "Package" tab and click on apply.

Q: What do I need to include in my grant application?
A: Please refer to the NFO as well as Appendix A under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov. Appendix A is an Application Checklist that lists the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

Q: Is the application downloadable before logging into Grants.Gov?
A: Yes. You do not need to be logged into Grants.gov to find and download the Notice of Funding Opportunity and related documents.

Q: Can you start the application, save and go back in to work on it in Grants.gov?
A: Yes. You can start the application at Grants.gov and return to work on it within the workspace feature.

Q: Does the grant require specific headings in the narrative?
A: Yes. Please refer to Section D. *Application and Submission Information* of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the content and format of the Project Summary and Proposal Narrative, which includes the required headings.

Q: Is there a narrative template required or provided?
A: There is not one provided for the Budget Narrative. For the Project Summary and Proposal Narrative, a Word document entitled Appendix B has been posted under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov. Appendix B is a sample. The sample form may be thoroughly filled out and included as your CCFWR Project Summary and Proposal Narrative.

Q: Where can I find instructions for the Project Proposal Narrative?
A: Please refer to Section D. *Application and Submission Information* of the Notice of Funding Opportunity in Grants.gov for the content and format of the application submission. The NFO includes page limits, fonts, structure, and the project narrative headings.

Q: Are the forms such as the SF-424 included in the 15-page limit?
A: No. The page limit only applies to the Project Summary and Proposal Narrative. The SF-424 forms and other letters are not included in the 15-page limit.

Is it okay to use a 10-point font for tables, charts, and footnotes?
A: No. The text of the proposal must be single spaced and typed in New Times Roman, no smaller than 12-point font and must not exceed 15 pages. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages of written text, and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (15 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. This page limit only applies to the Project Proposal Narrative.

Q: Will NRCS accept applications that do not follow the required format?
A: No. 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. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered.

Q: When are applications due by for the CCFWR Project?
A: USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:59 P.M. Eastern Standard Time (i.e. 8:59 P.M. Pacific Time) on Friday, June 26, 2020.

Q: Can I apply through the mail instead of electronically?
A: No. Only applications submitted through the electronic Grants.gov system will be considered.

Q: Will applications submitted after the deadline be reviewed?
A: No. Applications must be received by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time on June 26, 2020 through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

Q: How will the agency know if my application was submitted on time?
A: NRCS will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received.

Q: Can I apply for CCFWR and a grant from a different USDA agency and/or Federal agency?
A: Yes. If the projects have specifically different objectives, you may apply for and receive both a CCFWR Project and a grant from a different USDA agency or other Federal agency. Please check with the other Federal programs to ensure that you are not violating their terms and conditions.

Priority Consideration

Q: How would an applicant receive higher consideration?
A: Priority will be given to an application for a CCFWR pilot project that:

- Anticipates or demonstrates economic benefits;
- Incorporates plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners;
- Integrates other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts; and
- Collaborates with multiple partners.

Q: Does CCFWR give preference to disabled individuals or veterans?
A: No. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has other programs that offer preference to disabled veterans. More information is available on the NRCS Outreach & Advocacy website.

Q: Is higher consideration given to projects that scale versus projects focused on a single location?
A: No.

Evaluation and Notification

Q: What happens after I submit my application?
A: USDA will conduct an initial screening of all applications to ensure they are eligible and fully responsive. Eligible and responsive applications are those that meet the following requirements: 1. Submitted by eligible applicants; 2. Meet all other eligibility criteria; 3. Submitted on or before the required deadline; 4. Are complete; and 5. Meet required content, format and formatting structure.

Q: How will my application be reviewed?
A: After initial screening, applications that meet the administrative review requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel. Appropriate members of NRCS and other USDA agencies will review all applications submitted, and where necessary, also may seek the opinions of others who are qualified to give expert advice on that specific topic. Reviews will be conducted by teams comprised of three USDA employee who represent different agencies, subject areas and geographic locations.

Q: Can you elaborate on the specific weights and scoring of the evaluation criteria?
A: Applications will be evaluated on a 100-point scoring scale based on information provided in your application. Refer to the NFO under Section E.1.B. for the specific weights and evaluation criteria.

Q: How will applications be selected for funding?
A: The Notice of Funding Opportunity contains the specific weights and evaluation criteria that reviewers will be considering when evaluating each proposal. Be sure to review the five criteria yourself so that you can understand what you should address in your project and budget narratives. After reviews have been completed, Pilot Projects recommended for funding will be submitted to the approving official – who is the Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service – to make the final award decisions.

Q: What is the timeline of the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project?
A: USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:50 P.M. Eastern Standard Time on June 26, 2020. The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31, 2020 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2020.

Q: How many grants will be awarded?
A: There is no commitment by NRCS to make a specific number of awards.

Q: Will my application be funded at the amount requested?

A: As part of the technical review process, USDA will review applicants' budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Applications selected and approved for funding with budgets that are realistic, well justified, and supported will likely be funded at the requested amounts. However, USDA reserves the right to fund applications at a lower amount if USDA determines that the project can be implemented with less funding; or at lesser amounts if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards. This is subject to availability of funds.

Q: What type of financial and progress reporting is required by awardees?

A: Please review the General Terms and Conditions for financial and performance report requirements posted under the "Related Documents" tab in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at Grants.gov.

Q: Will funds be provided to awardees as a lump sum, or will they be reimbursed?

A: This depends on the agencies business evaluation of your organization and risk assessment. Recipients will either receive reimbursement or advances using a properly completed and executed SF-270, submitted with supporting documentation to either the ezFedGrants system or to the e-mail address specified in the grant agreement.

Q: Can I be an application reviewer?

A: USDA is not seeking external reviewers for this funding opportunity. Applications submitted to NRCS for the FY 2020 CCFWR Project will be evaluated by a panel of internal USDA reviewers to ensure that applicants receive full and uniform consideration, and that the selected proposals merit receipt of Federal funds. If you are a USDA employee and would like to receive more information about being a reviewer, please email UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov.

Contact Information

Q: Where can I get more help if I still have questions about the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project or application?

A: The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Team strongly recommends that you read the CCFWR Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) before submitting questions. Questions must be submitted by June 5, 2020 to: UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.