



United States Department of Agriculture

New Awardee Orientation for Lead Partners of FY 23 RCPP Awards

NRCS Projects Branch | December 6, 2023



Presenters:

Russell Ames, Projects Branch Chief
Kesha Harvey, Natural Resource
Specialist

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

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- **FY 2023 Awards**
- **Funding Sources & Overview**
- **Programmatic Partnership Agreement**
 - Deliverables
 - Outcomes
 - Exhibits
- **Next Steps**



- **NRCS selected 81 awards totaling \$1B**
- **51 Classic Awards and 30 AFA Awards**
- **21 projects awarded Farm Bill funds and 60 awarded inflation reduction act funds**
- **RCPP Awards are tentative and subject to negotiation**
- **Deadline for partnership agreement execution - **May 18, 2024****



RCPP Classic

- Partner defined project
- NRCS responsible for FA execution through producer contracts, easements, and watershed agreements
- Partner may deliver FA in support of NRCS producer contracts
- NRCS involved in technical assistance, may delegate some to partner

Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA)

- Partner led project
- Partner contracts directly with eligible producers/landowners or performs work on their behalf
- Partner expected to deliver all technical assistance





Farm Bill

- Funds do not expire

Inflation Reduction Act

- Funds expire in FY 2031
- Projects include conservation activities that mitigate the impact of climate change*

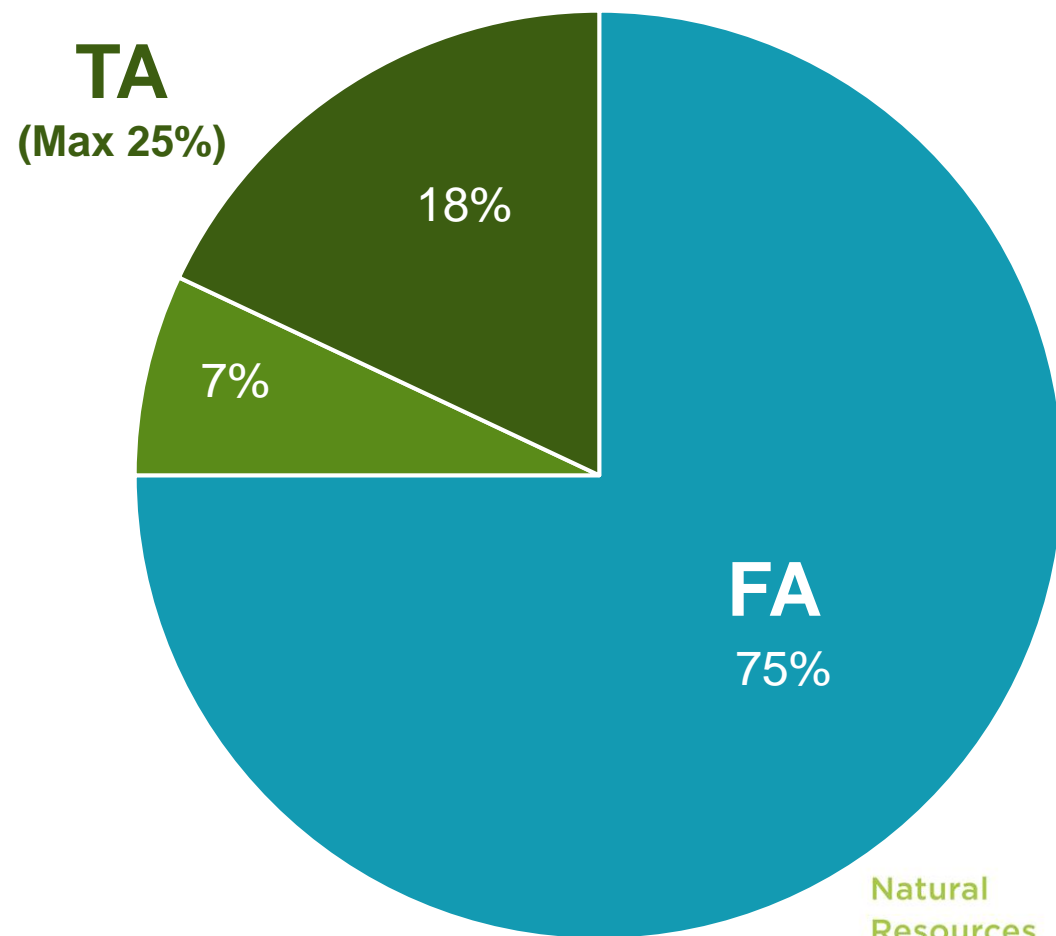
Shared Features

- Same project/agreement structure
- Same reporting requirements



Typical RCPP Project Budget

- **Proposals were capped at 7% for project-wide TA (outreach, outcomes assessment, and project management).**
- **Portal Proposals automatically include 18% TA to support FA**
- **During negotiation only limit is total TA cannot exceed 25%**
- **NRCS must ensure sufficient TA is available to support FA activities (for partner or NRCS)**



Negotiate Programmatic Partnership Agreement

Financial Assistance

Technical Assistance

NRCS
Delivers FA
(Classic only)

Negotiate
Supplemental
Agreement

Partner
Delivers FA

NRCS
Delivers TA
(rare in AFA)

Negotiate
Supplemental
Agreement

Partner
Delivers TA



- **Defines expectations for project deliverables – how will money be spent, where, and when?**
- **Defines expected partner contributions and outcomes & how partner will report.**
- **Provides framework for**
 - 1) partner input on FA delivery in Classic
 - 2) documents how partner will deliver FA in AFA.
- **Does not obligate funding**



- **NRCS Obligating Document**
- **Provides flexibility to obligate project funding as needs arise.**
- **Require that NRCS and partners have mutual understanding of cost basis of proposed expenditures, and the documentation required for reimbursement.**



- **State Coordinator is your primary POC**
- **Flexible project management approach**
 - Faster reimbursements
 - Flexible Supplemental Agreement Obligations
 - Flexible agreement management
 - Streamlined reporting
- **NRCS reporting to lead partners**
 - every six months, a report describing the status of each pending and obligated producer contract
 - annual report describing NRCS use of project TA



What's in a Programmatic Partnership Agreement?

- **Agreement Template – Non-negotiable**
- **Attachments**
- **Exhibits**



- **Project Type (AFA or Classic)**
- **Funding Source (Farm Bill or IRA)**
- **Geographic area (map)**
- **Resource Concerns or Conservation Benefits**
- **Pre-Selected Contracts/Parcels/Projects**

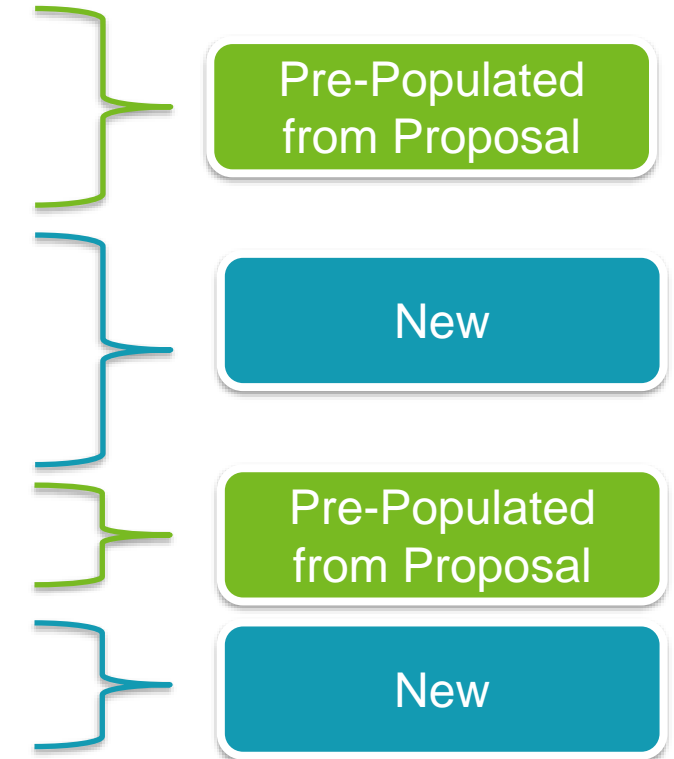
Note: Changes to the map or resource concerns are only possible to correct errors.



- **HEL/WC, payment eligibility and AGI compliance checks**
- **NEPA requirements**
- **Contractual nature of RCPP agreements**
 - Payment Methods – Pay for Performance or Actual Costs
 - PPA does not obligate RCPP funding
 - Supplemental Agreements may include technical standards to be met



- **Activity Type & Conservation Benefits**
- **Deliverables (FA, TA, and Contributions)**
- **Outcomes**
- **Exhibits**
- **Maps**
- **Confidentiality**



PPA is an MOU, keep FA/TA deliverables simple

- **Financial Assistance**
- **Technical Assistance**
- **Partner Contributions**

The number of rows in
your PPA deliverables

=

The number of rows in
your annual report



Work with your coordinator to find the right balance

#	CALENDAR YEAR	STATE	ACTIVITY TYPE	CONTRACT TYPE	TYPICAL ACTIVITY	BUDGET	NOTES
1	2022		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for Non-Practice Based Activities	\$60,000.00	Install two rainwater harvesting for aquifer recharge systems at a cost of \$30,000 each. Cost estimate has increased since original market.
2	2023		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for Non-Practice Based Activities	\$60,000.00	Install two rainwater harvesting for aquifer recharge systems at a cost of \$30,000 each. Cost estimate has increased since original market.
3	2023		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for Non-Practice Based Activities	\$432,000.00	Install juniper silt dams on four ranches. It is anticipated that each ranch will include four silt dams with brush rocks and t-posts; silt dams with juniper sediment wattles and t-posts at a cost of \$6,000 each; and seven with brush and t-posts at a cost of \$2,000 each. Cost estimates are based on a completed demonstration on the Barney-York Ranch.
4	2024		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for Non-Practice Based Activities	\$324,000.00	Install juniper silt dams on three ranches. It is anticipated that each ranch will include four silt dams with brush rocks and t-posts; silt dams with juniper sediment wattles and t-posts at a cost of \$6,000 each; and seven with brush and t-posts at a cost of \$2,000 each. Cost estimates are based on a completed demonstration on the Barney-York Ranch.
5	2022		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for NRCS Practice or Enhancement Based Activities	\$99,000.00	Thin approximately 330 acres of juniper trees at a cost of \$300/acre to support manufacturing of juniper silt dams; juniper chips amendment; biochar infused with juniper chips in wattles for contaminant filtration.
6	2023		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for NRCS Practice or Enhancement Based Activities	\$80,400.00	Thin approximately 268 acres of juniper trees at a cost of \$300/acre to support manufacturing of juniper silt dams; juniper chips amendment; biochar infused with juniper chips in wattles for contaminant filtration.
7	2025		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for Non-Practice Based Activities	\$57,600.00	Install 7,200 linear feet of juniper chip wattles on 4 ranch sites at a cost of \$8/linear foot or \$57,600.
8	2022		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for Non-Practice Based Activities	\$57,600.00	Install 7,200 linear feet of juniper chip wattles on 4 ranch sites at a cost of \$8/linear foot or \$57,600.
9	2023		AFA FA Funds for Partner Led Land Management	Supplemental Agreements	FA for Non-Practice Based Activities	\$57,600.00	Install 7,200 linear feet of juniper chip wattles on 4 ranch sites at a cost of \$8/linear foot or \$57,600.



■ **Technical Assistance to Support FA (TA-I)**

- For support of FA activities such as planning, practice survey, layout, design, installation, certification.
- For Classic TA-I is an NRCS responsibility and may be delegated to the partner only after demonstrating the capacity to perform work according to NRCS specifications and the NRCS planning process.
- For AFA, TA-I is a partner responsibility.

■ **Technical Assistance to Support the Project (TA-E)**

- Outreach
- Outcomes Assessment
- Project Management



- **Verifying producer eligibility for a USDA payment**
 - Highly Erodible Lands and Wetlands Conservation Compliance
 - Adjusted Gross Income (unless waived)

- **NEPA/NHPA/ESA Compliance**

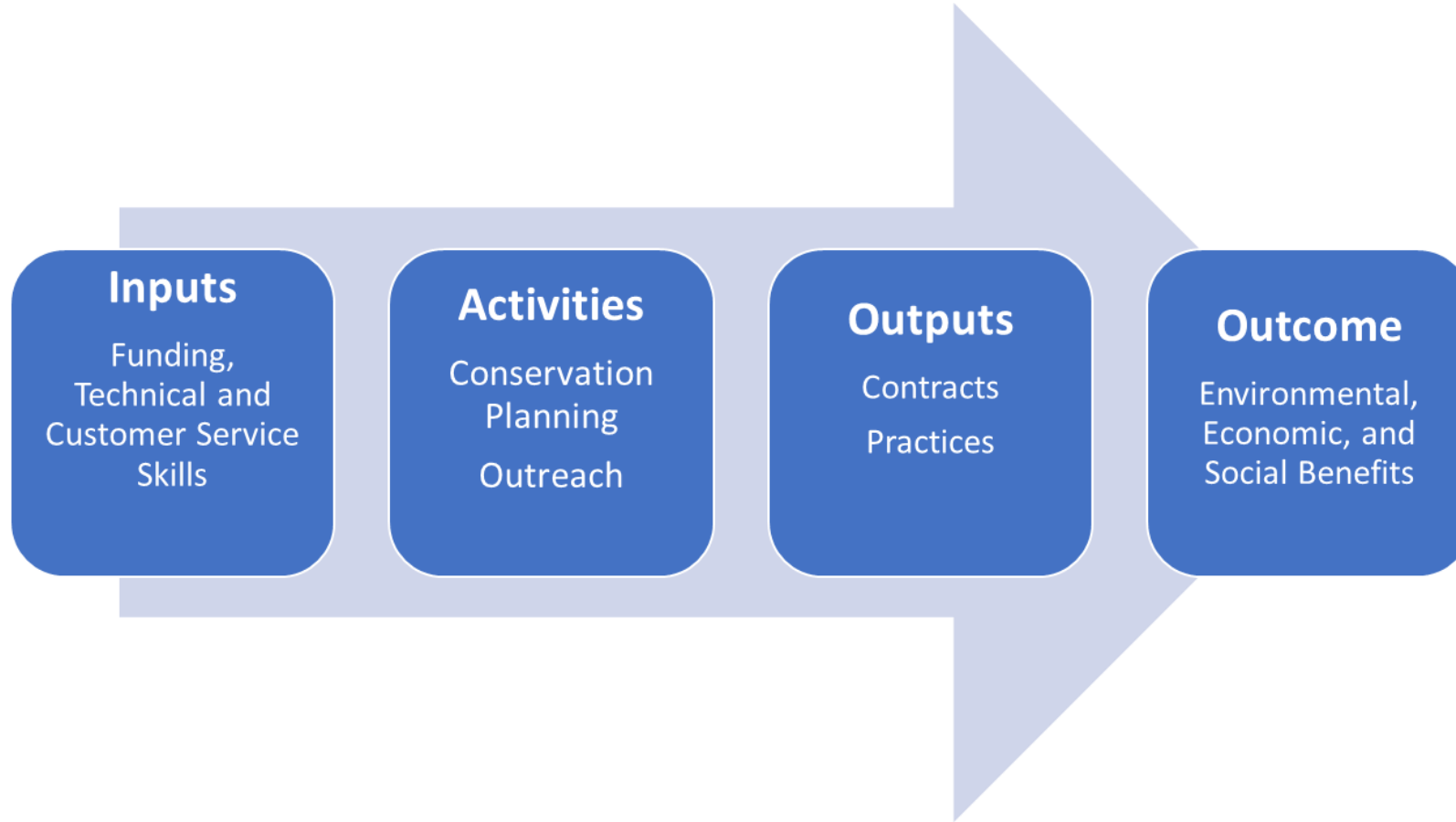
- **Managing project agreements and payments**
 - ❖ **Critical to work with NRCS to ensure these items are completed prior to providing RCPP funding to producers.**



- **Required: One deliverable per partner per activity type**
- **Contribution Letter = Valuation Method**
- **Contributions delivered as of award announcement date (11/1/2023), but no eligibility determinations made until the PPA**



What is an environmental outcome?



Outcomes

- **Statute requires partners to report on environmental outcomes for every project**
- **Bare minimum we need a solid environmental outcome for the primary resource concern**
- **Economic and social outcomes are optional, unless they were included the proposal**



- **Describes NRCS and lead partner responsibilities**
- **Narrative of data collection and outcomes reporting approach**
 - Baseline data
 - Monitoring, modeling, best scientific estimate or other??
 - Support for outcomes approach
 - Other entities involved
 - Economic/social outcomes inclusion and approach
 - Annual timelines and milestones
- **Note: outcomes must be reported for totality of project activities (i.e., those funded both by NRCS and partner contributions)**



Exhibits

- Exhibit 1: Land Management Activity Expectations
- Exhibit 2: Rental Activity Expectations
- Exhibit 3: US Held Easement Activity Expectations
- Exhibit 4: Entity Held Easement Activity Expectations
- Exhibit 5: Watershed Activity Expectations
- Exhibit 6: Technical Assistance Activity Expectations

Per PPA, purpose of exhibits is to:

- *...help inform NRCS administration of RCPP funded FA and TA activity type within the project.*
- *Remember, 5 FA activity types: Land Management, Rental, US Held Easements, Entity Held Easements, Watersheds/Infrastructure*



- **Resource Concerns**
- **Historically Underserved producer priority**
- **Land use type (s)**
- **Priority conservation practices/activities**
- **Payment rates (Pay-for-Performance?)**
- **Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)**



- **Resource Concerns**
- **Compensation cap/right of enforcement**
- **Historically Underserved Producer Priority**
- **Types of easements (e.g., habitat, working lands)**
- **Priority Parcels**
- **Buy-protect-sell**
- **Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)**



- **Partners may request to waive the applicability of AGI for the project.**
 - Applies to all producers receiving funding through this project
 - Producers will not need to obtain an AGI determination (CCC-941)
 - Producers must still submit forms to verify their eligibility (CCC-901/902)
 - Must be requested during PPA negotiation.

- **If not, individual producers may request to waive the AGI limit for a specific contract.**
 - Applies only to a specific contract and producer
 - Justification must document how the waiver will protect environmentally sensitive land of special significance



- **Annual progress report**
 - **Project Outputs** (# producer engaged, # practices applied, producer demographics)
 - **Progress on completing deliverables (NRCS-funded and contributions)**
 - **Outcome reporting**
- **Final report**
 - **Summary of all project outputs and outcomes**
- **Fact Sheet**



- **Complete & sign PPAs by May 18, 2024**
- **Negotiate Supplemental Agreements – As Needed**
- **For Classic – Work with NRCS to plan signups to enroll producers/landowners**
- **Submit annual calendar year progress reports in March of each year**



RCPP Classic

- Implement work included in active SAs
- Work with NRCS to provide input (as allowed in the PPA) on NRCS signups
- Provide outreach to help NRCS enroll additional producers/landowners

Alternative Funding Arrangements

- Implement work included in active SAs
- Submit payment requests on recurring basis



Let the negotiations begin...





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Questions?



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