

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

ACTION: NOTICE

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

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. Applications will be accepted from all 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). NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2014 will be up to \$15 million. 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.

Funds will be awarded through a two-phase nationwide 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 by NRCS. 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 by NRCS before 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) on **March 7, 2014**. NRCS will announce selected pre-proposal applications by **April 7, 2014**. Selected applicants will then be required to submit a full proposal package to NRCS by 4:00 p.m. EDT on **May 5, 2014**.

ADDRESSES: Applications sent via express mail or overnight courier service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, CIG Program, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S, Washington, DC 20250. Applications sent via the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, CIG Program, P.O. Box 2890, Room 6143-S, Washington, D.C. 20013-2890. Applications sent electronically must be sent through www.grants.gov or to nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Gregorio Cruz, National CIG Program Manager, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S, Washington, D.C. 20250; telephone: (202) 720-8644; email: gregorio.cruz@wdc.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) (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8) under section 2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). 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; 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 targeting 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 three years, submitted by eligible entities from all 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). Eligible entities include federally recognized Indian Tribes, State and local units of government, and 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, 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. Complete applications received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Application Evaluation Criteria identified in the application instructions in section VI.B. Full proposal applications, along with their associated technical peer review, will then be forwarded to the Grants Review Board. The Grants Review

Board will make its recommendations for project approval to the NRCS Chief 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, field testing, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of the following:

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems;
- 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 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;
- 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. National Component

For FY 2014, NRCS will consider pre-proposals that demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one bulleted topic listed below. Bulleted topics shown as NRCS High Priority are highest priority needs and will be weighted accordingly in the proposal review process. Pre-proposals must identify the most appropriate bulleted topic the innovation/technology is addressing. Additional topics (not listed below) may be considered at the Chief's discretion. If an additional topic is proposed for the Chief's consideration, it must be identified as such in the pre-proposal.

1. Projects Benefitting Historically Underserved Producers, Indian Tribes, or Organizations Comprised of or Representing these Individuals or Entities (i.e. Outreach)

- Technology transfer to Historically Underserved Producers (Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers¹), Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these individuals or entities.
- Demonstration of new or novel technology that can easily and inexpensively be adopted by Historically Underserved Producers, Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these individuals or entities in order to address their natural resource concerns.

¹ The definitions of Historically Underserved Producers, Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers are located at [7 C.F.R. §1466](#).

- Projects that assess resource conditions and land capabilities for Historically Underserved Producers, Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these individuals or entities.
- Projects that emphasize program outreach to Historically Underserved Producers, Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these individuals or entities.
- Projects that develop technical training for Historically Underserved Producers, Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these individuals or entities.

2. *Nutrient Management*

- NRCS High Priority: Demonstrate and quantify the optimal combinations of nutrient source, application rate, placement, and application timing (4 Rs), as measured by impact on nutrient use efficiency and yield for one or more of the following: corn, soybeans, wheat, vegetables, hay/pasture, cotton, and/or rice. Demonstrations are encouraged that show how these optimal combinations change for one or more of the following comparisons: irrigated vs. non-irrigated management, tillage vs. reduced tillage systems, manure-amended vs. non manure-amended systems, and/or organic vs. conventional production systems.
- Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of bundling conservation measures to avoid, control, and trap nutrient losses from the field.
- Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of methods to capture dissolved phosphorus from field runoff and subsurface drainage.
- Demonstrate the applicability and utility of in-season nitrogen management tools for determining additional nutrient needs for a range of soils, climates and/or cropping systems.
- Demonstrate technologies that can improve cost efficiency of transporting manure nutrients from regions of dense populations of animal agriculture operations to areas with low densities of animal operations that have demand for manure nutrients.
- Demonstrate innovative techniques for keeping liquid manure applied via irrigation, surface application, or injection from entering subsurface drainage systems through macro pores.
- Demonstrate new alternatives to manure application to frozen or saturated soils.
- Demonstrate suite(s) of conservation practices and document the conditions for their optimal use in protecting surface and ground water quality if manure or nutrients were to be applied to frozen soil.

3. *Energy Conservation*

- NRCS High Priority: Evaluate and demonstrate renewable energy systems (e.g., hydropower, solar, and/or wind) that offset fossil fuel energy use and meet on-farm energy needs, while increasing energy efficiency and/or reducing environmental contaminants (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions, particulate matter).
- Develop and demonstrate innovative planning and decision aids to assess potential impacts of small on-farm renewable energy systems on wildlife and wildlife habitats and that can be used to identify appropriate sites to avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts.
- Develop and/or demonstrate innovative implementation systems to achieve greater use and quantify benefits of energy audits that address cropland, buildings, and equipment.

4. *Soil Health*

- NRCS High Priority: Demonstrate and quantify impacts of soil health promoting practices (e.g., no-tillage, cover crops, crop rotations) on yield, yield variability, and economics of crop production across a range of soils, cropping systems, and climates. Methodologies for demonstration may include case studies and enterprise budgets.
- Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of cover crops, crop rotations, tillage and/or soil amendments on soil chemical, physical, and/or biological properties and their relationships with nutrient cycling, soil water availability, and plant growth.
- Demonstrate and quantify the rate of increase in available soil water holding capacity as a function of soil properties (e.g., particle size, mineralogy), management practices (e.g., tillage, amendments, cover crop or crop residue inputs), and/or climate.
- Development of optimal species mixes, seeding rates and seeding methods (e.g., inter-seeding, inter-cropping, frost-seeding) to enhance cover crop establishment/survival and increase soil organic matter.
- Quantify and demonstrate the impacts of Soil Health Management Systems on nutrient losses through surface and subsurface pathways for tile-drained and non-drained soils.
- Development of a decision support tool that incorporates the impacts of crop residue/cover crop quality parameters (e.g., cellulose, lignin, C/N) on decomposition and nutrient turnover for designing Soil Health Management Systems that optimize nutrient availability, control soil-borne diseases, and increase available soil water holding capacity.
- Demonstrate and quantify the potential increases in water availability and reductions in nutrient losses given widespread adoption of soil health promoting practices such as cover crops and no-tillage.
- Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of cover crop presence, species mix, and management (e.g., termination growth stage, tillage practice) on soil water content and subsequent crop yield across a range of climates and cropping systems.
- Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of Soil Health Management Systems (e.g., cover crops, reduced tillage) on key soil health attributes (e.g., available water holding capacity, disease suppression, nutrient cycling) and determine the extent to which the rates of change are influenced by climate, organic input chemical composition/placement, and soil properties (e.g., particle size, mineralogy). This should be conducted across a range of inherent soil properties, cropping systems, and climates to develop a Decision Support Tool that promotes selection and design of the components of a Soil Health Management System.
- Demonstrate innovative approaches for adopting soil health promoting practices in relatively cool and/or wet climates (e.g., zone tillage, short season cultivars).
- Demonstrate and quantify at a watershed scale the water quality impacts of installing conservation systems that support and improve soil health.

5. *Air Quality and Atmospheric Change*

- NRCS High Priority: Demonstrate and evaluate technologies for filtration, biofiltration, scrubbing, capture, collection, and/or recovery of gaseous emissions (such as ammonia, methane, hydrogen sulfide, volatile organic compounds) from animal housing, manure management structures, and/or other structures. The demonstration and evaluation should address effectiveness, economics, energy use, and technical expertise required.
- Demonstrate and evaluate innovative technologies for mitigating air emissions from livestock and poultry production systems via alternative animal and/or manure

management strategies. The demonstration and evaluation should quantify/consider emissions reduction, economics, and animal health/performance.

- Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of advanced feed management strategies and alternative feedstocks on air emissions. These alternative feeding strategies should be planned to reduce nitrogen and/or sulfur excretion, reduce enteric methane emissions, and/or improve feed efficiency, while broadening the options of available feedstocks.
- Demonstrate and evaluate innovative technologies and/or new alternatives to application of solid and liquid manures to reduce ammonia and other gaseous emissions.
- Develop and demonstrate air quality assessment methodologies and procedures for identifying air quality issues and solutions related to livestock and poultry production systems or cropping systems. The methodologies and procedures should focus on one or more air contaminants and identify opportunities for mitigating emissions at multiple steps in the production process.
- Demonstrate and quantify the greenhouse gas and air quality benefits (co-benefits) of implementing innovative conservation practices on specialty crops, including orchards and vineyards, as well as agroforestry systems.
- Demonstrate and quantify ecosystem co-benefits and ancillary benefits associated with implementing NRCS conservation practices for air quality and atmospheric change purposes.

6. *Wildlife*

- NRCS High Priority: Develop regional, crop-specific guidance providing the vegetative species, landforms, and necessary acreage to support appropriate populations of managed and wild pollinators per unit area of pollinated crops (e.g., describe the components of the landscape).
- Develop planning and decision aids to assess and maximize wildlife habitat value on land used to grow biofuel crops.
- Demonstrate new techniques and/or technologies for monitoring and evaluating wildlife habitat both on-site and via remote sensing.
- Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of grazing as a habitat management tool.
- Develop and/or demonstrate fish screen, fish passage, and other fish related technology and criteria for native aquatic species of conservation concern.
- Demonstrate innovative approaches for restoring and reconnecting bottomland hardwood ecosystems that preserve hydrologic connectivity and aquatic organism passage.
- Develop metrics of measurable habitat improvement that could potentially be traded under a species-banking framework.

7. *Economics and Sociology*

- NRCS High Priority: Demonstrate the impacts of conservation practices and suites of conservation practices on net revenue, net cost, and yield variability (or other measures of economic risk). Methods to demonstrate these impacts may include both case studies and enterprise budgets.
- Develop tool for measuring economic returns of conservation for landowners. The tool should be useful for analyzing and demonstrating the financial costs and potential returns of alternative conservation practices, taking into account such factors as land characteristics and production potential. The tool should adhere to the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association standards for estimating farm costs and returns,

including estimating opportunity costs for operator labor and management, be easy to use and understand, and provide transparent calculations.

- Develop tool for assessing the economics of conservation that includes a defensible and acceptable valuation of environmental benefits and identification of knowledge gaps.
- Demonstrate, through coordinated case studies, how conservation efforts have benefited landowners and rural communities in different regions.
- Evaluation of the sociological/economic/farm management barriers to adoption and demonstration of ways to overcome those barriers for several conservation practices including: implementation of nutrient management plans, adoption of manure injection technologies, installation of stream bank fencing or riparian buffers, adoption of precision livestock feeding or precision grazing practices, manure redistribution, and/or other practices that landowners appear reluctant to adopt.

8. *Environmental Markets*

- NRCS High Priority: Projects facilitating development of agricultural wetland mitigation banks providing credits for wetlands converted for the purpose of agricultural production. These wetlands are agricultural wetlands subject to wetlands conservation compliance provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 3821-3824), as amended, and located in the Prairie Pothole Region of North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Minnesota. Projects may address market supply and demand, eligibility rules (e.g., crediting rates and verification systems), bank service areas, and infrastructure (e.g., registries, trading platforms).
- Projects designed to stimulate the development of environmental markets. Projects may address market supply and demand, rules (e.g., crediting rates and verification systems), and infrastructure (e.g., registries, trading platforms).

9. *Co-Management for Food Safety*

- NRCS High Priority: Demonstrate and quantify the effects of conservation practices (e.g., buffers) and/or systems of conservation practices for reducing manure-born zoonotic pathogen transport and survival for different climates and agricultural systems. This may include pathogens originating from animal production facilities or from wildlife.

10. *CIG Projects Assessment*

- NRCS High Priority: Conduct an assessment of completed CIG projects on a given topic to identify and recommend those projects that should be adopted and the most fruitful and appropriate techniques for technology transfer and adoption.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2014 will be up to \$15 million.

CIG will fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years (anticipated project start date of **September 1, 2014**). Funds will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed \$1 million in FY 2014.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

A. Applicant Eligibility

CIG applicants must be a federally recognized Indian Tribe, State or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, or individual.

B. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for a CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements set forth in [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-1](#). 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 \$1 million. 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 percent 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 percent 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. 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](#).

D. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Subject to limited exception, section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7](#), imposes a \$300,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between FY 2008 and FY 2014.

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, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program).

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

Criteria	Potential Verification Documentation*
Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 CFR 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 CFR 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
The average adjusted gross income of the individual, joint operation, or legal entity may not exceed \$1 million unless not less than 66.66 percent of the average adjusted gross income of the person, joint operation, or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income (7 CFR Part 1400)	If using FY 2009-2014 CIG funding, documentation of a producer's Adjusted Gross Income (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 have current records established with the Farm Service Agency or require that the producer establish new records.

E. Beginning or Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers, or Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities

For the FY 2014 CIG award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG may be set-aside for applications from Historically Underserved Producers (Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers), Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.

To compete for these set-aside funds, the applicant must make a declaration in the application as described in Part V.A.10. of this notice. Applications that are unsuccessful in the set-aside competition will automatically be placed in the general application pool for consideration. Funds not used in the set-aside pool will revert back into the general funding pool. Listed are the

regulatory definitions of a Beginning Farmer or Rancher and a Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, which are found at [7 CFR 1466.27](#):

Beginning Farmer or Rancher - a person or legal entity who:

- Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch;
- In the case of a contract with an individual, individually, or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located; and
- In the case of a contract with an entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher

- A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$155,200 in each of the previous 2 years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service); and
- Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years (to be determined annually using Department of Commerce data).

F. 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 the appropriate State's EQIP Eligible Practices List by contacting the applicable [NRCS State office](#).

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 on the following Web sites: www.grants.gov and <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html>.

B. Content and Format

Applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of

NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application.

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:** (Three (3)-page maximum.) Applicants must submit a description including the information below:
 - a. Project title;
 - b. Primary area for consideration (refer to page 3) and why;
 - c. Project duration (anticipated project start date of September 1, 2014, not to exceed three years);
 - d. Project director name, and contact information (including email);
 - 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. 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. Applicants must prepare this document to identify budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: Grants.gov - Forms Repository
 - b. (One (1)-page maximum.) A narrative describing the budget needs and justifying why the budget is appropriate should also be included.

Note: Please note that we understand these are preliminary figures at this point. If the application is approved for full submission there may be differences once the full details of the budget are developed. Please include \$3,000 in the project budget for grantee’s travel to NRCS designated events. These funds are required and can be part of the Federal portion, the cost share, or both.

C. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov or to the email address listed. Alternatively, applications may be submitted via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed. Applications must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described. 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 Web site. All applications, regardless of how they are submitted, must be received by NRCS before 4:00 p.m. EST on **March 7, 2014**.

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

The address for submitting an application by email is nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov

The address for submitting an application via express mail or overnight courier service is:
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S
Washington, D.C. 20250

The address for submitting applications via the United States Postal Service is:
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program
P.O. Box 2890, Room 6143-S
Washington, D.C. 20013-2890

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, email and/or equipment in filing applications is a violation of Federal law and will disqualify you from consideration.

D. Due Date

Applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. EST on **March 7, 2014**. The applicant assumes the risk of delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early via email to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

E. Acknowledgement of Submission

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

CIG Program Contact:
Gregorio Cruz
National CIG Program Manager
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S
Washington, D.C. 20250
Phone: (202) 720-8644
Email: gregorio.cruz@wdc.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, Federal partners, and non-Federal partner agency 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.

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

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems;
- 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 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;
- 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.

H. Anticipated Notification

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the pre-proposal application via email by **April 7, 2014**. Applicants selected for full proposals will be required to submit a full proposal package by **May 5, 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 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**— (One (1)-page maximum.) 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:** (Fifteen (15)-page maximum.) The description must include the following information:
 - 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).
 - 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 1, 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 approved 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 a semi-annual progress report, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting 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:** (Twelve (12)-page maximum.) The budget portion of the application consists of the two parts described below:
- 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. This form is the summary budget for the project.

- b. Detailed 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, any subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. The budget narrative should support the Federal funds requested and the cost share.

The format of this information, which can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc., should be readable in 8 ½” by 11” printable pages. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the evaluators and NRCS can readily understand what expenses will be incurred to support the project. The breakdown of the Federal share and the cost share should be shown separately as in the SF-424A, not combined.

Note: Please include \$3,000 in the project budget for travel designated by NRCS. These funds are required and can be part of the Federal portion, the cost share, or both. Please identify whether the funds are part of the Federal portion, the cost share, or both.

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 that 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 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 the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) cost principles; (ii) costs treated as indirect have not been claimed as direct; (iii) similar types of costs have been accounted for consistently; and (iv) the applicant will notify the Federal Government of any account changed that would affect the rate. This certification should be signed by the applicant’s approving official or the applicant’s chief financial officer.
- c. If applicant does not have a federally approved indirect cost rate, it is at 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.

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

- 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 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.

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. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or federally Recognized Indian Tribe: If an applicant wishes to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool, applicants must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, federally recognized Indian Tribe, member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these individuals or entities. This declaration is also required in order to be eligible for the in-kind contribution exception. (Refer to Part III.E. that describes the provision of a set-aside pool of funding for Beginning or Limited Farmers or Ranchers, Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.)

11. Documentation of Submission to State Conservationist: Applicants must include documentation showing that the application was sent to the appropriate State Conservationist(s) for review by 4:00 p.m. EDT on **May 5, 2014**. If a project is multi-State in scope, all State Conservationists in the project area must be sent the application for review. A list of State office addresses and phone numbers is included at the end of this notice. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the appropriate State Conservationist(s) during application development.

12. **Certifications:** Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. All applications must include this document. The SF-424B may be found at: 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:
- 2 CFR Part 417, [Government wide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#)
 - 7 CFR Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#)
 - 2 CFR Part 421, [Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#)

The following items must be obtained prior to entering into an agreement with the Federal Government. Applicants are encouraged to apply early for their Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)/System for Award Management (SAM) number.

13. **DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) DUNS number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. 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.

14. **SAM:** Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS. 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 an Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov or to the email address listed below. Alternatively, applications may be submitted via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses 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 Web site. All applications regardless of how they are submitted must be received on **May 5, 2014**. Emailed applications must be received by NRCS before the submission deadline.

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

The address for submitting an application by email is nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov

The address for submitting an application via express mail or overnight courier service is:
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S
Washington, D.C. 20250

The address for submitting applications via the United States Postal Service is:
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program
P.O. Box 2890, Room 6143-S
Washington, D.C. 20013-2890

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, email and/or equipment in filing applications is a violation of Federal law and will disqualify you from consideration.

C. Due Date

Applications must be received in 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S, Washington, D.C. 20250 by 4:00 p.m. EDT on **May 5, 2014**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early email to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

D. Acknowledgement of Submission

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

CIG Program Contact:
Gregorio Cruz
National CIG Program Manager
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S
Washington, D.C. 20250
Phone: (202) 720-8644
Email: gregorio.cruz@wdc.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 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 on Part VI.

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 technical peer review panel based on the Application Evaluation Criteria identified in the application instructions in section VI.B.

Applications, along with their technically-based recommendations from the peer review groups, will then be forwarded to the Grants Review Board. The Grants Review Board will make its recommendations for project approval to the NRCS Chief 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 part 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. There are three steps in evaluating full CIG proposals. First, proposals will be divided among technical peer review groups and then will be reviewed by a Technical Peer Review Panel. The Technical Peer Review Panel consists of NRCS national technical specialists, and technical specialists from other appropriately related Federal agencies, and non-Federal agencies. Applications will be reviewed based on the CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria listed in Part VI.B below.

The Technical Peer Review Panel will forward their recommendations and the proposals to a Grants Review Board, which will certify the peer review panels' recommendations and ensure that the application evaluations are consistent with program objectives. The CIG Grants Review Board consists of five members of NRCS leadership, specifically the Deputy Chief for Science and Technology (Chair), the Deputy Chief for Soil Science and Resource Assessment, the Deputy Chief for Programs, one Regional Conservationist, one State Conservationist, and the Director of the Office of Outreach and Advocacy. The Grants Review Board will forward its recommendations to the NRCS Chief for final review and selection.

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 Technical Peer Review Panels 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 High Priority bulleted topics.
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 states and territories
- 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 1, 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 1, 2014**.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification from National Headquarters. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental review process and financial review.

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

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

The grant will permit the NRCS National 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 6 months the selected applicant must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program, technical, and administrative 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
- 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 cost
- Lessons learned that inform future project activities or broader efforts in the project's topic area
- Work to be performed during the succeeding period
- 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 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 Web sites 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. Additional information, forms, and templates can be found at

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=stelprdb1045412>

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, Highly Erodible Lands, and Wetlands Conservation Compliance Farm Bill provisions.

E. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Applicants should be aware that some or all of the information submitted in their application may be subject to public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Applicants are advised to mark confidential information, such as proprietary information, to prevent disclosure.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

A. CIG Program Contact

Gregorio Cruz
 National CIG Program Manager
 USDA-NRCS
 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6143-S
 Washington, D.C. 20250
 Phone: (202) 720-8644
 Email: gregorio.cruz@wdc.usda.gov

B. CIG Administrative Contact

Shelia Leonard
Grants and Agreements, Team Leader
USDA-NRCS
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 5224-S
Washington, D.C. 20250
Phone: (202) 720-4102
Email: sheila.leonard@wdc.usda.gov

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

IX. OTHER INFORMATION

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 area for consideration (refer to page 3) and why;
 - c. Project duration (anticipated project start date of September 1, 2014, not to exceed three years);
 - d. Project director name, and contact information (including email);
 - 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, and
 - b. One page narrative

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2014 FULL APPLICATION 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 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
 - 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.
 - a. Complete SF-424A
 - b. Detailed budget narrative
- 6. Indirect Cost**
- 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. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Farmer or Rancher, or federally Recognized Indian Tribe (Special Provisions):** If an applicant wishes to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool, applicants must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or federally recognized Indian Tribe or members of a federally recognized Indian Tribe or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities.
- 11. State Conservationist Review:** Include documentation showing that the proposal was sent to the State Conservationist(s).

- 12. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.
- 13. 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.
- 14. 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.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE STATE CONSERVATIONISTS

Northeast Region

CT – Lisa Coverdale, STC
344 Merrow Road, Suite A
Tolland, Connecticut 06084
Phone: 860/871-4011
Fax: 860/871-4054
(E) lisa.coverdale@ct.usda.gov

DE – Kasey Taylor, STC
1221 College Park Drive, Suite 100
Dover, Delaware 19904-8713
Phone: 302/678-4160
Fax: 302/678-0843
(E) Kasey.taylor@de.usda.gov

MA – Barbara Miller, Acting STC
451 West Street
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002-2995
Phone: 413/253-4351
Fax: 413/253-4375
(E) barbara.miller@ma.usda.gov

MD – Jon Hall, STC
John Hanson Business Center
339 Busch's Frontage Road, Suite 301
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-5534
Phone: 410/757-0861
Fax: 410/757-0687
(E) jon.hall@md.usda.gov

ME – Juan Hernandez, STC
967 Illinois Avenue
Suite #3
Bangor, Maine 04401
Phone: 207/990-9585
Fax: 207/990-9599
(E) juan.hernandez@me.usda.gov

MI – Garry Lee, STC
3001 Coolidge Road, Suite 250
East Lansing, Michigan 48823-6321
Phone: 517/324-5270
Fax: 517/324-5171
(E) garry.lee@mi.usda.gov

NJ – Carrie Mosley, STC
220 Davidson Ave 4th floor
Somerset NJ, 08873
Phone: 732/537-6040
Fax: 732/537-6096
(E) carrie.mosley@nj.usda.gov

NY - Don Pettit, STC
441 South Salina Street
Suite 354
Syracuse, New York 13202-2450
Phone: 315/477-6504
Fax: 315/477-6550
(E) Donald.pettit@ny.usda.gov

NH – Richard Ellsmore, STC
Federal Building
2 Madbury Road
Durham, New Hampshire 03824-2043
Phone: 603/868-7581 ext. 105
Fax: 603/868-5301
(E) rick.ellsmore@nh.usda.gov

OH – Terry Cosby, STC
200 North High Street, Room 522
Columbus, Ohio 43215-2478
Phone: 614/255-2472
Fax: 614/255-2548
(E) terry.cosby@oh.usda.gov

PA - Denise Coleman, STC
1 Credit Union Place, Suite 340
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110-2993
Phone: 717/237-2203
Fax: 717/237-2238
(E) denise.coleman@pa.usda.gov

RI - Richard "Pooh" Vongkhamdy, STC
60 Quaker Lane, Suite 46
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886-0111
Phone: 401/828-1300
Fax: 401/828-0433
(E) pooh.vongkhamdy@ri.usda.gov

VT – Vicky Drew, STC
356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105
Colchester, Vermont 05446
Phone: 802/951-6796
Fax: 802/951-6327
(E) vicky.drew@vt.usda.gov

WV – Kevin Wickey, STC
West Virginia State Office
1550 Earl Core Road, Suite 200
Morgantown, West Virginia 26505
Phone: 304/284-7540
Fax: 304/284-4839
(E) kevin.wickey@wv.usda.gov

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE STATE CONSERVATIONISTS

Southeast Region

AL – William Puckett, STC
3381 Skyway Drive P.O. Box 311
Auburn, Alabama 36831
Phone: 334/887-4500
Fax: 334/887-4552
(E) william.puckett@al.usda.gov

AR – Mike Sullivan, STC
Federal Building, Room 3416
700 West Capitol Avenue
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-3215
Phone: 501/301-3100
Fax: 501/301-3194(V)
(E) Michael.sullivan@ar.usda.gov

FL – Russell Morgan, STC
2614 N.W. 43rd Street
Gainesville, Florida 32606-6611 or
P.O. Box 141510, Gainesville, FL 32614
Phone: 352/338-9500/ 9507
Fax: 352-338-9574
(E) russell.morgan@fl.usda.gov

GA – Gregory Kist, Acting STC
Federal Building, Stop 200
355 East Hancock Avenue
Athens, Georgia 30601-2769
Phone: 706/546-2272
Fax: 706/546-2120
(E) jack.lewis@ga.usda.gov

KY – Clifford Thornton, Acting STC
771 Corporate Drive Suite 210
Lexington, Kentucky 40503-5479
Phone: 859/224-7350
Fax: 859/224-7399
(E) Clifford.thornton@ky.usda.gov

LA – Kevin Norton, STC
3737 Government Street
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302
Phone: 318/473-7751
Fax: 318/473-7626
(E) kevin.norton@la.usda.gov

MS – Kurt Readus, STC
Suite 1321, Federal Building
100 West Capitol Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39269-1399
Phone: 601/965-5205 x2140
Fax: 601/965-4940
(E) kurt.readus@ms.usda.gov

NC – Tim Beard, STC
4407 Bland Road, Suite 117
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-6293
Phone: 919/873-2102
Direct: 919/873-2101
Fax: 919/873-2156
(E) tim.beard@nc.usda.gov

PR – Edwin Almodovar, Director
Director, Caribbean Area
IBM Plaza, Suite 604
654 Munoz Rivera Avenue
Hato Rey, Puerto Rico 00918-4123
Phone: 787/766-5206, ext. 237
Fax: 787/766-5987
(E) edwin.almodovar@pr.usda.gov

SC – Ann English, STC
Strom Thurmond Federal Building
1835 Assembly Street, Room 950
Columbia, South Carolina 29201-2489
Phone: 803/253-3935
Fax: 803/253-3670
(E) ann.english@sc.usda.gov

TN – Kevin Brown, STC
675 U.S. Courthouse
801 Broadway
Nashville, Tennessee 37203-3878
Phone: 615/277-2531
Fax: 615/277-2577
(E) Kevin.brown@tn.usda.gov

VA – Jack Bricker, STC
Culpeper Building, Suite 209
1606 Santa Rosa Road
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014
Phone: 804/287-1691
Fax: 804/287-1734
(Email) jack.bricker@va.usda.gov

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE STATE CONSERVATIONISTS

West Region

AK – Robert Jones, STC
800 West Evergreen
Atrium Building, Suite 100
Palmer, Alaska 99645-6539
Phone: 907/761-7747
Fax: 907/761-7790
(E) robert.jones@ak.usda.gov

AZ – Keisha Tatem, STC
230 North First Avenue
Suite 509
Phoenix, Arizona 85003-1733
Phone: 602/280-8810
Fax: 602/280-8809
(E) Keisha.tatem@az.usda.gov

CA - Carlos Suarez, STC
430 G Street
Suite 4164
Davis, California 95616-4164
Phone: 530/792-5600
Fax: 530/792-5790
(E) carlos.suarez@ca.usda.gov

CO – Phyllis Philipps, STC
Denver Federal Center
Building 56, Room 2604
PO Box 25426
Denver, CO 80225
Phone: 720-544-2810
Fax: 720-544-2965
(E) phyllis.philipps@co.usda.gov

GU – Christine Clarke, Acting Director
Director, Pacific Islands Area
FHB Building, Suite 301
400 Route 8
Mongmong, Guam 96910
Phone: 671/472-7490
Fax: 671/472-7288
(E) christine.clarke@ma.usda.gov

HI – Christine Clarke, Acting Director
300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 4-118
P.O. Box 50004
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850-0002
Phone: 808/541-2600 x105
Fax: 808/541-1335
(E) christine.clarke@ma.usda.gov

ID – Jeffery Burwell, STC
9173 West Barnes Drive
Suite C
Boise, Idaho 83709
Phone: 208/378-5700
Fax: 208/378-5735
(E) Jeffery.burwell@id.usda.gov

MT – Joyce Swartzendruber, STC
Federal Building, Room 443
10 East Babcock Street
Bozeman, Montana 59715-4704
Phone: 406/587-6811
Fax: 406/587-6761
(E) joyce.swartzendruber@mt.usda.gov

NM – Xavier Montoya, STC
6200 Jefferson Street, N.E.
Suite 305
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109-3734
Phone: 505/761-4400
Fax: 505/761-4481
(E) xavier.montoya@nm.usda.gov

NV – Bruce Petersen, STC
1365 Corporate Blvd.
Reno, Nevada 89502
Phone: 775/857-8500 ext 102
Fax: 775/857-8524
(E) bruce.petersen@nv.usda.gov

OR – Ron Alvarado, STC
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd. Suite 900
Portland, Oregon 97232
Phone: 503/414-3200
Fax: 503/414-3103
(E) ron.alvarado@or.usda.gov

UT – David Brown, STC
W.F. Bennett Federal Building
125 South State Street, Room 44402
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138
Phone: 801/524-4555 or 4564
Fax: 801/524-4403
(E) david.brown@ut.usda.gov

WA – Roylene Rides at the Door, STC
W. 316 Boone Avenue, Suite 450
Spokane, Washington 99201-2348
Phone: 509/323-2900
Fax: 509/323-2909
(E) roylene.rides-at-the-door@wa.usda.gov

WY – Astrid Martinez, STC
Federal Building, Room 3124
100 East B Street
Casper, Wyoming 82602-1911
Phone: 307/233-6750
Fax: 307/233-6753
(E) astrid.martinez@wy.usda.gov

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE STATE CONSERVATIONISTS

Central Region

IA – Jay Mar, STC
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2180
Phone: 515/284-6655
Fax: 515/284-4394
(E) jar.mar@ia.usda.gov

MN – Don Baloun, STC
375 Jackson Street
Suite 600
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1854
Phone: 651/602-7900
Fax: 651/602-7913 or 7914
(E) don.baloun@mn.usda.gov

OK – Gary O'Neill, STC
100 USDA, Suite 206
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074-2655
Phone: 405/742-1204
Fax: 405/742-1126
(E) gary.o.neill@ok.usda.gov

IL – Ivan Dozier, STC
2118 W. Park Court
Champaign, Illinois 61821
Phone: 217/353-6600 or 6601
Fax: 217/353-6676
(E) ivan.dozier@il.usda.gov

MO – JR Flores, STC
Parkade Center, Suite 250
601 Business Loop 70 West
Columbia, Missouri 65203-2546
Phone: 573/876-0909
Fax: 573/876-9439
(E) jr.flores@mo.usda.gov

SD – Jeffrey Zimprich, STC
Federal Building, Room 203
200 Fourth Street, S.W.
Huron, South Dakota 57350-2475
Phone: 605/352-1200
Fax: 605/352-1288
(E) Jeffrey.zimprich@sd.usda.gov

IN – Jane Hardisty, STC
6013 Lakeside Blvd.
Indianapolis, Indiana 46278-2933
Phone: 317/290-3200
Fax: 317/290-3225
(E) jane.hardisty@in.usda.gov

ND – Mary Podoll, STC
220 E. Rosser Avenue, Room 278
P.O. Box 1458
Bismarck, North Dakota 58502-1458
Phone: 701/530-2000
Fax: 701/530-2110
(E) mary.podoll@nd.usda.gov

TX – Salvador Salinas, STC
W.R. Poage Federal Building
101 South Main Street
Temple, Texas 76501-7602
Phone: 254/742-9800
Fax: 254/742-9819
(E) salvador.salinas@tx.usda.gov

KS - Eric Banks, STC
760 South Broadway
Salina, Kansas 67401-4604
Phone: 785/823-4565
Fax: 785/452-3369
(E) Eric.banks@ks.usda.gov

NE – Craig Derickson, STC
Federal Building, Room 152
100 Centennial Mall, North
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508-3866
Phone: 402/437-5300
Fax: 402/437-5490
(E) craig.derickson@ne.usda.gov

WI – Jimmy Bramblett, STC
8030 Excelsior Drive, Suite 200
Madison, Wisconsin 53717
Phone: 608/662-4422
Fax: 608/662-4430
(E) jimmy.bramblett@wi.usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or participating in a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. Information about how to file a discrimination complaint is available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign and mail a program discrimination complaint form, available at any USDA office location or online at www.ascr.usda.gov, or write to:

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

Or call toll free at (866) 632-9992 (voice) to obtain additional information, the appropriate office or to request documents. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

Equal Employment Opportunity Data Posted Pursuant to the No Fear Act –

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