

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**AGENCY:** Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

**ACTION:** Notice of request for pre-proposals - Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Announcement for Program Funding - Idaho

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 Idaho. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2014 will be up to **\$150,000.00**. Applications are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between one and three years in duration.

Funds will be awarded through a two-phase statewide competitive grants process that will include (1) a pre-proposal process and (2) a full proposal process. The full proposal process will only be open to applicants whose pre-proposal applications are selected 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.

Pre-proposals must be received at the Idaho NRCS State Office by 4 p.m. Mountain Standard Time (MST), on **April 25, 2014**.

Full Applications: Project pre-proposal applicants selected for funding consideration by Idaho NRCS will be notified by **May 9, 2014**, and if requested, a full application must be submitted to the Idaho NRCS State Office by 4 p.m. MST, on **June 6, 2014**.

**ADDRESSES: Pre-proposals and applications and associated support materials should be sent to:** Chris Catherman, Grants and Agreements Specialist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C, Boise, Idaho 83709. To submit your application electronically, visit [Grants.gov-Apply for Grants](http://Grants.gov-Apply for Grants) and follow the instructions. You may also email your pre-proposal to [chris.catherman@id.usda.gov](mailto:chris.catherman@id.usda.gov).

For general information on the Idaho CIG Program and project topics, contact: Denise Adkins, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C, Boise, Idaho 83709. Phone: (208) 685-6991; Facsimile (FAX): (208) 378- 5735; Email: [Denise.Adkins@id.usda.gov](mailto:Denise.Adkins@id.usda.gov).

The Idaho CIG Program technical lead is Gene Schock, Assistant State Conservationist (Technical Resources). Information on the Idaho CIG program is also available on the Idaho NRCS Website at: <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/index.html>

## 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 2207 of the Agricultural Act of 2014. The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who is Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

#### B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies, while leveraging the Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches into NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides, and references, or to the private sector. **CIG does not fund research projects and projects intended to test hypotheses do not qualify for a CIG award.** CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology. It is a vehicle to stimulate development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a high likelihood of success, and that are candidates for eventual technology transfer or institutionalization. CIG promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, technologies, and facilities among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. CIG funds projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

Idaho NRCS will accept applications under this notice for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, submitted by eligible entities from Idaho. 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.

Idaho NRCS will only request a full proposal package from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal process. Pre-proposal selection will be based on recommendations from NRCS staff and the State Technical Committee. Complete applications received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated by a technical review panel and scored based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation identified in the application instructions in section VI.B. The members of the review team will make its recommendations for project approval to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

### C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

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

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems;
- 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. Idaho CIG Categories

For FY2014, Idaho will offer a variety of categories that address soil health and erosion, water, energy, wildlife, and plant-related resource concerns using innovative technologies or approaches, or both. Applicants will not receive more than one award within each component category. Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, and Indian tribes or eligible entities servicing Beginning, Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, and Indian tribes are encouraged to submit application(s) in any of the categories. Pre-proposals must identify the most appropriate category and subtopic for the proposal.

Pre-proposals addressing the following categories and subtopics will be considered. Pre-proposals that address bulleted items identified as a “**Priority Need**” will receive priority ranking for selection.

#### *Soil Health*

- **Priority Need:** 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 conservation technologies that help maintain soil quality on former Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands converted back to crop production.
  - Demonstrate residue management/strip-till techniques in dry bean production and other applicable crops.
- Demonstrate and quantify the rate of increase in available soil water holding capacity as a function of soil properties, management practices (e.g. tillage, amendments, crop residue inputs), and/or climate.

- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate new cover crop strategies, or seeding methods of cover crops and multiple species cover crop mixes to allow for earlier establishment and increased biomass production.
  - Demonstrate successful inter-seeding of legumes in corn.
  - Demonstrate innovative cover crop species and management strategies for areas with less than 20 inches of precipitation. This includes fall-seeded legumes as cover crops in a variety of cropping systems in Idaho.
- Demonstrate the effects of grazing management of cover crop mixes on soil chemical, physical and biological properties health and water quality.
- Demonstrate and quantify differences in nutrient and available water holding capacity of a soil system resulting from long-term no-till with cover crops compared to systems using tillage or rotational tillage.

### *Nutrient Management*

- **Priority Need:** 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.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate application of and procedures for refining the usefulness of the Phosphorus Index for reducing P loss across a range of soil, topographic, climatic, crop, or management conditions.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate suite(s) of conservation practices and document the conditions for their optimal use in protecting surface and ground water quality if manure was to be applied to frozen soil.
- Demonstrate new and innovative advances in precision farming technologies related to low disturbance fertilizer injection and quantify the effects on nutrient use efficiency, yield, and producer risk.
- Demonstrate feed management, or adoption of new or novel feedstuffs or additives, and quantify their impact on manure nutrient content.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate active methods which improve on the capture of nitrogen in manure management systems and provide the opportunity to recycle the manure nitrogen in lieu of synthetic fertilizers. Examples may include: use and quantifying effectiveness of zeolite or other nitrogen adsorptive materials; use, effectiveness and economics of “ammonia stripping” technologies for animal manures; technologies that help growers deal with excess manure by means of exports or other value added products that generate income for the grower; and quantifying the impacts of innovative technologies that decrease nitrogen and phosphorus losses from the field (e.g., biofilters, wetland restoration, drainage water management).
- **Priority Need:** 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 Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizer products; including inhibitors, delayed release products, or biological solutions; on yield and nutrient use efficiency.

- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of methods to capture dissolved phosphorus from field runoff and subsurface drainage.
- **Priority Need:** 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, especially on small grains.
- Compile, summarize, and develop appropriate recommendations from the peer-reviewed literature on projects demonstrating and quantifying the application of various management practices, models, and/or other tools for increasing nitrogen use efficiency by crops.
- Demonstrate effective outreach programs for delivering technical assistance to small dairies for implementing whole farm strategies to reduce nutrient/sediment losses.
- **Priority Need:** Evaluate the use and cost effectiveness of technologies and/or programs that demonstrate removal of manure nutrients from areas of high concentrations of animal feeding operations to areas where they can be used for the production of agricultural crops, for example: demonstration of the ability to partition nutrients in dry poultry litter through screening; and demonstration of baling, wrapping and transport of poultry litter from high phosphorus concentration areas.
- Demonstrate and evaluate effectiveness and economics of innovative alternative systems for managing and handling liquid manure on farms to reduce nutrient losses, for example: use of polymers and/or other chemicals to enhance solid/liquid separation and nutrient partitioning; use of geotextile bags for solid separation and nutrient partitioning of swine and/or dairy waste streams; and optimizing the use of existing separation technologies for separation efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Demonstrate technologies which 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.

### *Energy Conservation*

- **Priority Need:** Evaluate and demonstrate renewable energy systems (e.g. hydropower, solar, and/or wind) that displace fossil fuel energy and meet on-farm energy needs, while increasing energy efficiency and/or reducing environmental contaminants (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions).
- Develop and/or demonstrate innovative implementation systems to achieve greater use of energy audits that address cropland, buildings, and equipment.
- Demonstrate the use of immediate feedback devices such as smart meters and their effect on increasing energy conservation and efficiency in the farming sector.
- Evaluate and demonstrate energy savings through adaptive management grazing systems that utilize grazing techniques that reduce the need for making and feeding hay, while also using manures and legumes rather than synthetic fertilizers. Deliverables should include energy lifecycle comparison of grazing and haying systems.
- Evaluate and demonstrate energy savings through adaptive management cropping systems that utilize crop rotations that include legumes and grasses in long term no-till systems that will increase nutrient cycling through enhanced soil biological activity.
- 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.

- Demonstrate the feasibility and document the relevant issues associated with using low-head hydropower turbines in surface water sources such as in-stream installations and small dams (e.g. using a flow-through or pumpback configuration).

### *Wildlife*

- **Priority Need:** Develop planning and decision aids to assess and maximize wildlife habitat value on land used to grow biofuel crops.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate new techniques and/or technologies for monitoring and evaluating wildlife habitat both on site and via remote sensing.
- **Priority Need:** 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 (i.e., describe the components of the landscape).
- Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of grazing as a habitat management tool.
- **Priority Need:** Develop and/or demonstrate fish screen, fish passage, and other fish related technology and criteria for native aquatic species of conservation concern.
  - Demonstrate the installation of low cost and low maintenance fish screens on small streams in Idaho.
- **Priority Need:** Development of state-and-transition models for riparian ecological site descriptions (ESDs) using current and developing protocols in relation to stream and valley types, plant communities, and in association with MLRA and LRU boundaries.
- Develop planning guidance for the selection of stream bank treatment options based on site conditions, including watershed context, landscape management legacy, and geomorphic potential/trajjectory.
- Demonstrate effectiveness, cost, and longevity of various types of fence markers to reduce or prevent grouse mortality due to fence collisions.
- Demonstrate cost, effectiveness, and durability of alternatives or modifications to wood fence corner posts that provide raptor perches.
- Demonstrate technologies to control the spatial positioning and social groupings of cattle without fences.
- Develop sagebrush management guidelines to assist planning Brush Management in grouse habitat related to Ecological Sites.
- Develop planning and decision aids to assess the value of habitat development projects by estimating sage-grouse population responses to conservation practices.
- Develop metrics of measurable habitat improvement that could potentially be traded under a species-banking framework.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate the effectiveness and document the economics of alternate pest control methods in agricultural crops to protect pollinators and their habitats (e.g., ground application versus aerial application of pesticides, provision of habitat for “beneficial” insects).
  - Demonstrate technology to determine the amount of beneficial habitat required to provide pest control, matching plant species to attract desirable beneficial insect species, and managing habitat to provide pest control during the cropping season.

- Estimate and document the effects upon pollinator populations and health due to the conversion to biofuel feedstock or agricultural production of lands presently enrolled in CRP or other suitable conservation easement programs.
- Demonstrate and quantify the effects of NRCS-recommended pollinator habitat seed/plant mixes on pollinator habitat.
- Document the benefits to other wildlife species of improving pollinator habitat.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate effective methods of establishing and maintaining the most beneficial pollinator-friendly plant materials for Idaho.
  - Demonstrate effective methods of establishing and maintaining beneficial pollinator-friendly herbaceous and woody plant materials in Idaho.
- Evaluate the following NRCS conservation practice standards using a large diversity of flowering plants in order to quantify and demonstrate the revised practice standard benefits to pollinators: 332-Contour Buffer Strips, 342-Critical Area Planting, 393-Filter Strip, 391-Riparian Forest Buffer, 311-Alley Cropping, 380-Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment, and/or 580-Streambank and Shoreline Protection.
- Develop strategies to integrate pollinator habitat management into the agricultural working lands matrix to promote holistic, ecosystem-based conservation plans that support the full suite of ecosystem services.
- Develop region-specific and crop/orchard-specific plans that address the nesting and foraging needs of crop/orchard-specific pollinators.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate innovative techniques to reduce or eradicate invasive plant and animal species in aquatic and terrestrial habitats in Idaho.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate techniques to successfully inter-seed native forbs and shrubs into perennial grass stands.

#### *Additional Resource Concerns*

- **Priority Need:** Adaptation and demonstration of technologies and approaches to aid organic farming and organic transition in Idaho, especially with respect to specialty crops.
- **Priority Need:** Adaptation and demonstrations of technologies and approaches to aid small scale farming in Idaho.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate implementation strategies and approaches for Idaho's water quality trading framework in impacted watersheds.
- **Priority Need:** Adaptation of forest inventory and analysis technology in order to aid in resource assessment, planning, and conservation application for forest ecosystems, especially for use by landowners.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate the use of producer-friendly irrigation water management software along with monitoring systems to promote efficient use of water.

## **II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2014 will be up to **\$150,000.00**.

CIG will fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed three 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 **\$75,000.00** 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 USC 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 \$75,000.00. CIG recipients must match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions. Of the applicant's required match (at least 50 percent of the total project budget), the contribution from cash sources must be at least 50% of the federal request; the remainder may come from in-kind contributions.

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

**Matching funds must be secured at time of application.** 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 \$450,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between fiscal years 2008 and 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 C.F.R. 1466.8, which include the following:

Criteria	Potential Verification Documentation*
Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 C.F.R. Part 12)	Documentation of their compliance status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service on-line portal
Have an interest in the agricultural operation as defined in 7 C.F.R. Part 1400	Documentation of their farm interest can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service on-line portal showing that the producer has farm records established
Have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract period	Documentation can be provided in the form of a deed, lease, or other documents which show the producer has adequate control for the term of the proposed contract period
The average adjusted gross income of the individual, joint operation, or legal entity may not exceed \$1,000,000, 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 C.F.R. Part 1400)	If using FY 2009-2014 CIG funding, documentation of a producer’s AGI eligibility status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center, or through the USDA customer service on-line portal.

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

**E. Activities Limitation and Implementation**

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project’s geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach. Applicants should reference the State’s EQIP Eligible Practices List.

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](http://www.grants.gov) and [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/id/programs/farmbill/?cid=nrcs144p2\\_046500](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/id/programs/farmbill/?cid=nrcs144p2_046500)

##### **B. Pre-proposal Content and Format**

Pre-proposal applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below in order to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application. Applicants must submit only one original copy of the application in the following format:

- Each page must be on numbered 8½” x 11” white paper that has one-inch margins; and
- The text of the application must be typed single spaced in a font no smaller than 12-point.

Applications that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered.

- 1) **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must submit 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 e-mail);
  - e) Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
  - f) Project background (describe the issue or problem and how the project addresses it innovatively)
  - g) Project objectives (purpose and goals);
  - h) Project methods (methodology, tools, and processes)
  - i) Project area/location;
  - j) Project deliverables/products; and
  - k) Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement. Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers and describe and certify their level of involvement in the project. Projects that do not involve EQIP eligible producers are ineligible for a CIG award.

- 3) **Budget Information:** (Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs).
- a) Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the cost share. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. Applicants must prepare this document to identify budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](http://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.

### C. How to Submit Pre-Proposals

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov or to the e-mail address listed below. Alternatively, applications may be submitted via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed below. Applications must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Grants.gov provides date and time stamps on applications submitted through its website. All applications regardless of how they are submitted must be received by NRCS before 4:00 p.m. on April 11, 2014.

Pre-proposals submitted via facsimile will not be accepted.

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

The address for submitting an application by e-mail is [chris.catherman@id.usda.gov](mailto:chris.catherman@id.usda.gov).

The address for submitting an application via express mail or overnight courier service is:

Chris Catherman, Grants and Agreements Specialist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C  
Boise, Idaho 83709

The address for submitting applications via the United States Postal Service is:

Chris Catherman, Grants and Agreements Specialist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C  
Boise, Idaho 83709

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

### D. Pre-Proposal Application Due Date

Applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. on **April 11, 2014**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early via e-mail to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

**E. Acknowledgement of Submission**

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 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:

Denise Adkins, Resource Specialist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C  
Boise, ID 83709  
(208) 685-6991

**F. Withdrawal of Pre-Proposal**

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

**G. Pre-Proposal 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 e-mail by **May 9, 2014**. Applicants selected for full proposals will be required to submit a full proposal package by **June 6, 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](http://Grants.gov - Forms Repository).

#### **A. Content and Format**

Applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below in order to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application.

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

- Each page must be on numbered 8½” x 11” white paper that has one-inch margins; and
- The text of the application must be typed single spaced in a font no smaller than 12-point.

Applications that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered. Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- 1) **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](http://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 three 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. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. This form is the summary budget for the project.
  - b. **Detailed Budget Description:** A specific item-by-item breakdown of the totals provided in Item 6 of the SF-424A should be provided. This detail should show what individual costs were added together to arrive at the totals presented in each of Object Class Categories on the SF-424. 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. This may be in separate documents or in different sections of the same one. Items provided to NRCS in the budget details should include, but are not limited to, the following:
    - 6a. Personnel: list of personnel, salary, hourly rate, hours, % time.
    - 6b. Fringe Benefits: % of salary, differing rates for different staff.
    - 6c. Travel: basis for airfare, mileage rate (NTE Federal govt. rate), per diem, hotel, car rental, how many trips, how many days, number of staff.
    - 6d. Equipment: type of equipment, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity.
    - 6e. Supplies: type of supplies, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity (a general statement such as “office supplies \$3,000” is not acceptable).
    - 6f. Contractual; Cost of each subcontract – the total of all subcontracts should be shown on the SF-424, but an itemized budget should be provided for each potential subcontract. The budgets for the subcontracts should follow this same format and be submitted with your proposal.
    - 6g. Construction: N/A.
    - 6h. Other: Cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity.
  - c. **Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. In addition to the information above, any subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. The budget narrative should support the federal funds requested and the cost share.

## 6) Indirect Costs

- a. Applicants wishing to claim indirect costs must have a federally approved indirect cost rate. The approved indirect cost rate must be included in the application package.
- b. An indirect cost rate not to exceed 15 percent may be approved for applicants without a preexisting, federally approved indirect cost rate. To be considered for an indirect cost rate not to exceed 15 percent, applicants must submit an indirect cost rate proposal with the application 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 OMB cost principles; (ii) costs treated as indirect have not been claimed as direct; (iii) similar types of costs have been accounted for consistently; and (iv) the applicant will notify the Federal government of any account changed that would affect the rate. This certification should be signed by the applicant's approving official or the applicant's chief financial officer.
- c. If applicant does not have a federally approved indirect cost rate, it is at the agency's (NRCS) discretion whether to allow indirect cost.

- 7) **List of letters of support:** Include entity name, location, role, and if a commitment of cash or in-kind support has been made, the value.

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 any third-party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the contributor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash contribution, and (5) a statement that the contributor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

#### In-Kind Match

"In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third-party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of "in-kind" contributions include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and verifiable.

For any third-party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the

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

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

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

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

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

A. Applicant has previously received an NRCS CIG

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

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

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

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

- 10) **Certifications:** Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. All applications must include this document. The SF-424B may be found at: Grants.gov - Forms Repository or by contacting the State office. In addition, applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following federal regulations:
- a) 2 CFR Part 417, [Government wide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#)
  - b) 7 CFR Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#)
  - c) 2 CFR Part 421, [Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#)

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

- 11) **DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. CIG applicants must obtain a DUNS Number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- 12) **System for Award Management (SAM):** Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS. 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 e-mail 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 website. All applications regardless of how they are submitted must be received on **May 23, 2014**. E-mailed 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 e-mailed submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process or send their e-mail in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems.

The address for submitting an application by e-mail is [chris.catherman@id.usda.gov](mailto:chris.catherman@id.usda.gov)

The address for submitting an application via express mail or overnight courier service is:  
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program

Chris Catherman, Grants and Agreements Specialist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C  
Boise, Idaho 83709

The address for submitting applications via the United States Postal Service is:  
USDA-NRCS, CIG Program

Chris Catherman, Grants and Agreements Specialist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C  
Boise, Idaho 83709

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

**C. Due Date**

Applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. on **June 6, 2014**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications early via e-mail to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

**D. Acknowledgement of Submission**

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 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:  
Denise Adkins, Resource Specialist  
State CIG Program Manager  
9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C  
Boise, ID 83709  
Phone: (208) 685-6991  
E-mail: denise.adkins@id.usda.gov

**E. Withdrawal**

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

**F. Funding Restrictions**

Awardees may not use unrecovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds.

CIG funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs:

1. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
2. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
3. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;

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

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person listed 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 meeting the provisions will be reviewed based on the CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria listed in Part VI.B below. Pre-proposals will be reviewed by a committee that includes NRCS staff and members of the Idaho State Technical Committee. For full proposals, the Technical Review Panel will include NRCS technical specialists. Scored applications will be forwarded to the Idaho NRCS Leadership Team, which will certify the review panels' rankings and ensure that the application evaluations are consistent with program objectives. The Idaho NRCS Leadership Team will make recommendations to the Idaho NRCS State Conservationist for final selection of pre-proposals and proposals, and funding decisions.

### **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. Applications will be reviewed based on the CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria listed in Part VI.B below.

Applications meeting the provisions will be reviewed based on the CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria listed in Part VI.B below. Pre-proposals will be reviewed by a committee that includes NRCS staff and members of the Idaho State Technical Committee. For full proposals, the Technical Review Panel will include NRCS technical specialists. Scored applications will be forwarded to the Idaho NRCS Leadership Team, which will certify the review panels' rankings and ensure that the application evaluations are consistent with program objectives. The Idaho NRCS Leadership Team will make recommendations to the Idaho NRCS State Conservationist for final selection of pre-proposals and proposals, and funding decisions.

### **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 State regions
- A balanced distribution of projects across resource concerns
- Whether the applicant is a Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or Indian Tribe, or a community based organization comprised of or representing these entities;
- Whether full participation by historically underserved individuals and groups will be achieved.
- Fair distribution of funds between urban and non-urban areas

**D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

NRCS anticipates announcing CIG selections by **June 30, 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 the Boise NRCS State Office. However, all selections are contingent upon successful

completion of the environmental review process and financial review. NRCS reserves the right to have grant award(s) administered by a third party. In the event that a third party administers the grant award(s), the applicant/recipient will be notified in writing.

**Note:** Appropriations Restrictions: Awards made under this solicitation are subject to the provisions contained in the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. No. 112-55), Division A, Sections 738 and 739, regarding corporate felony convictions and corporate federal tax delinquencies.

## **B. Grant Agreement**

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

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

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

## **C. Environmental Review Requirements**

Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the NRCS Environmental Liaison to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation required for the project. The environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to award of grant funds.

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

## **D. Reporting Requirements**

Selected applicants will be required to submit a SF-425, Federal Financial Report to the NRCS administrative contact, no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. In addition, every six months the selected applicant must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program, 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
- Any current problems or unusual developments or delays
- The reasons why goals and objectives were not met, if appropriate

- Additional pertinent information including, where appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit 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
- Any preliminary results that can inform NRCS standards, policy, training or programs
- Products and/or technologies currently ready for adoption and/or transfer
- Potentially promising products and/or technology not yet ready for adoption and/or transfer, and a description of what is needed to reach that maturity.
- Identification of any new data or research needs to inform broader efforts in the project's topic area
- Project activities that have been featured on recipient or partner websites and success stories that could be amplified by NRCS
- Any funded or unfunded time extensions
- Any changes to the project's original objectives, methods, or timeline with a summary of the justification for the changes

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

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

- A list of producers, identified by name and social security number, of all EQIP-eligible producers or entities involved in the project.
- The dollar amount of direct and indirect payment made to each individual producer or entity for any structural, vegetative, or management practices. Both quarterly and cumulative payment amounts must be submitted.
- A self-certification indicating that each individual or entity receiving a direct or indirect payment through this grant is in compliance with the EQIP Payment Limitation, AGI, HEL, and Wetlands Conservation Compliance Farm Bill provisions.

#### **E. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act**

Applicants should be aware that 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**

Program Administrative Contact:

Chris Catherman, Grants and Agreements Specialist  
 Natural Resources Conservation Service  
 9173 W. Barnes Dr., Suite C  
 Boise, Idaho 83709  
 Phone: (208) 685-6982

Fax: (208) 378-5735  
Email: [chris.catherman@id.usda.gov](mailto:chris.catherman@id.usda.gov)

CIG Program Technical Contact:  
Denise Adkins, Resource Specialist  
9173 W. Barnes Drive, Suite C  
Boise, Idaho 83709  
Phone: (208) 685-6991  
Fax: (208) 378-5735  
Email: [denise.adkins@id.usda.gov](mailto:denise.adkins@id.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>. The Idaho CIG website has examples of previously funded projects: <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/index.html>.

Signed this 26 day of March in Boise, Idaho.

Jeff Burwell, State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Attachments

## 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 e-mail);
  - e) Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
  - f) Project background (describe the issue or problem and how the project addresses it innovatively as defined in Section I.C. - one paragraph)
  - g) Project objectives (purpose and goals);
  - h) Project methods (methodology, tools, and processes)
  - i) Project area/location;
  - j) Project deliverables/products; and
  - k) Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement
- 3. **Budget Information:** Submit Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs.
  - a) Complete SF-424A, 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 description
  - c) 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. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.
- 11. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

- **12. System for Award Management (SAM):** To register, visit <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration.

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