



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

# 2009 Conservation Innovation Grant Program (CIG)

Fact Sheet - February 2009

## **Introduction**

The Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) Program was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

## **Overview**

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovation 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 (such as market-based systems) into NRCS technical manuals, guides, and references or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. It is a vehicle to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success, and to be candidates for eventual technology transfer or institutionalization. CIG funds projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations. NRCS will accept applications for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years, submitted to NRCS from eligible entities including Federally-recognized Indian Tribes, State and local governments, and non-governmental organizations and individuals. Applications are accepted from all 50 States. Applications will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation which can be found in more detail at:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/pdf\\_files/Fiscal\\_Year\\_2009\\_Announcement\\_for\\_Program\\_Funding.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/pdf_files/Fiscal_Year_2009_Announcement_for_Program_Funding.pdf)

There are nine technical (or peer) review groups for FY 2009 applications: Water Quality-Livestock; Water Quality-Not Livestock; Water Quantity; Soils Resources; Atmospheric Resources; Grazing Land; Forest Health; Wildlife Habitat; and On-Farm Energy Resources. Applicants should indicate which of these review groups should review the application. Applications with technically-based recommendations from the peer review groups will be forwarded to the Grants Review Board. The Grants Review Board will make recommendations for project approval to the Chief. Final award selections will be made by the Chief of NRCS.

## **CIG Proposed Projects**

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

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems, including market-based systems; or,
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches.

To be given priority consideration, the innovative project or activity:

- Has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success;
- Demonstrates, tests, evaluates, and verifies environmental (soil, water, air, plants, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability in the field;
- Adapts conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduces conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector; and
- Adapts conservation technology, management, or incentive systems to improve performance.

## **National Component CIG Categories**

For FY 2009, CIG will offer four categories. Applicants must identify the most appropriate category for their proposal. The categories are Natural Resource Concerns, Technology, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and Grant Leveraging.

For more specific information regarding these categories, please go to:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/pdf\\_files/Fiscal\\_Year\\_2009\\_Announcement\\_for\\_Program\\_Funding.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/pdf_files/Fiscal_Year_2009_Announcement_for_Program_Funding.pdf)

## **Funding Availability**

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2009 will be approximately \$20 million. The anticipated funding breakdown for each category is:

- National Natural Resource Concerns Category: Up to \$5 million
  - National Technology Category: Up to \$6 million
  - National Grant Leveraging Category: Up to \$4 million
  - Chesapeake Bay Watershed Category: Up to \$5 million
- The anticipated start date for awarded projects is October 1, 2009.

# (Continuation) 2009 Conservation Innovation Grant Program (CIG)

## **Eligibility Information**

CIG applicants must be a federally recognized Indian Tribe, State, or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, or individual. Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Applicants must provide non-Federal funding (matching funds) for at least 50 percent of the project cost. Up to half of the applicant's matching funds (up to 25 percent of the total project cost) may be from in-kind contributions. Up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG may be set-aside for applications from Beginning Farmers or Rancher, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers, 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.

## **EQIP Payment Limitation, Duplicate Payments and Eligibility**

CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements; these grant agreements are not EQIP contracts. 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. All agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements.

## **Application Submission Information**

All Office of Management and Budget standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following website:  
[www.grants.gov/agencies/approved\\_standard\\_forms.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/agencies/approved_standard_forms.jsp)  
An application checklist is available on the CIG website:  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig)

## **Application Content and Format**

Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

1. Application Cover Sheet 8. Declaration of EQIP Eligibility
2. Project Summary Sheet 9. State Conservationist Letter of Review
3. One-Page Abstract 10. Certifications
4. Project Description 11. DUNS Number
5. Budget Information 12. Required Central Contract Registry
6. Budget Narrative
7. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher

## **Application Due Date**

Complete applications must be received in Room 5239-S at NRCS National Headquarters by 5:00 pm EST on March 2, 2009. A postmark date is NOT a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

## **How to Submit a Written Application**

Applicants must submit one signed original copy of each project application. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a compact disc (CD). Electronic files must be either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat (pdf) files. Applications submitted via facsimile or e-mail will not be accepted.

Applicants must submit seven copies of the application in the following format:  
Applications should be typewritten or printed on 8½" x 11" white paper. The text of the application should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, double spaced, with one-inch margins. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate, complete application package for each project.

The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using express mail or overnight courier service is:  
**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Conservation Innovation Grants Program  
Financial Assistance Programs Division, Room 5239-S  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250**

Contact phone numbers for hand-delivered applications (needed to enter the USDA South Building) are:  
**(202) 720-1845, or (202) 720-2335**

The address for applications sent via the U.S. Postal Service is:  
**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Conservation Innovation Grants Program  
Financial Assistance Programs Division  
Room 5239-S, Post Office Box 2890  
Washington, D.C. 20013-2890**

For more information, go to:  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/pdf\\_files/Fiscal\\_Year\\_2009\\_Announcement\\_for\\_Program\\_Funding.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/pdf_files/Fiscal_Year_2009_Announcement_for_Program_Funding.pdf)