

Conservation Innovation Grants-Massachusetts
Fiscal Year 2007 Announcement of Program Funding

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NRCS requests applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications are accepted from Massachusetts. Contingent on Congressional action, NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2007 will be approximately \$192,000. Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. There is one CIG category available in FY 2007: Technology Category--Improved On-Farm Energy Efficiency. Applications are requested from eligible government or non-government organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between one and three years in duration. This notice identifies the objectives for CIG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and associated instructions needed to apply to CIG.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE AND ADDRESSES: Proposals must be received in the NRCS State Headquarters by 4:00 pm (Eastern) on May 10, 2007.

Applications must be sent or delivered to the following address: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Conservation Innovation Grants Program, 451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002-2995.

To submit your application electronically, visit www.grants.gov and follow the instructions.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

CIG was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under Section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985, as added by section 2301 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-171). 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 a vice president of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). EQIP is 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 (such as market-based systems) into NRCS technical manuals, guides, and references, or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Instead, 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 three 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 Massachusetts.

Complete applications will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel and scored based on the Criteria for Proposal Evaluation identified in this document. Scored applications will be forwarded to a Grants Review Board. The Grants Review Board will make recommendations for project approval to the State Conservationist. Final award selections will be made by the Massachusetts State Conservationist of NRCS.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

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

- Conservation adoption 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:

- Will have 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.

D. CIG Category

For Fiscal Year 2007, one category of CIG will be offered.

Technology Category

Proposals must address the following specific technology needs area identified by NRCS:

Improved on-farm energy efficiency - Possible subtopics include:

- Renewable energy sources such as wind or solar;
- On-farm energy audits and audit processes.

II FUNDING AVAILABILITY

A. State Component

The intent of the State Component is to provide flexibility to NRCS State Conservationists to target CIG funds to individual producers and smaller organizations that may possess promising innovations, but may not compete well on the larger scale of the national grants competition. For FY 2007, the State Component of CIG will be available in Massachusetts at the discretion of the State Conservationist. Project proposals that request federal funds of \$75,000 or less and are not multi-state in scope will be forwarded to the appropriate state program manager. All proposals that are forwarded will be notified in writing, and provided with a contact for State Component information. Funding availability and application and submission information for state competitions will be announced through public notices (and on State NRCS websites). State Conservationists will determine the funding level for state competitions, with individual grants not to exceed \$75,000.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a Federally-recognized Indian Tribe; State or local unit of government; non-governmental organization; private business; or individual.

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive 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.

B. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (as amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002), 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 2002 and 2007. The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

a. CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements; these grant agreements are not EQIP contracts. Thus, CIG awards are not limited by the payment limitation.

b. 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 producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to NRCS. Direct or indirect payments can not be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds through any of the USDA Programs (EQIP, AMA, CSP, WHIP, etc) since this would be considered a duplicate payment.

Payment Limitation Examples

Following are two examples of how the \$450,000 EQIP payment limitation applies to CIG projects:

a. A \$500,000 CIG grant is awarded to a State environmental agency to demonstrate an innovative, market-based, water quality trading program. The money is used to finance the development of a market infrastructure, and none of the funds are used to implement structural, vegetative, or management practices. Producers in the trading market demonstration area may indirectly benefit from their eventual participation in the market, but there is no direct or indirect transfer payment of CIG dollars. If, on the other hand, part of the CIG award were used to make payments to producers who implement conservation practices on their land as part of a trading program, those payments would count towards each producer's \$450,000 EQIP payment limitation.

b. A \$1,000,000 CIG grant is awarded to a Conservation District to pilot a community-based animal waste treatment technology innovation. EQIP-eligible producers in the area transport their animal waste to a central treatment location. Because producers are not directly or indirectly receiving CIG funds, the payment limitation does not apply. If, however, the producers were paid for their waste, or for transporting their waste to the central treatment location using CIG funds, the payments would be subject to each producer's EQIP payment limitation.

D. Project Eligibility

To be eligible, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements of 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-1. Refer to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/> for more information on EQIP and eligibility requirements. Further, all agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract. Applications must describe the extent of participation of EQIP eligible producers.

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 NRCS State office, or by visiting the EQIP web site:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/EQIP_signup/2006_EQIP_Signup/index.html.

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, an Administrative Contact, and a Technical Contact to provide administrative and technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Application Materials

All OMB standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following website: www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp. An application checklist is available on the CIG website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig.

B. Proposal Content and Format

Proposals must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for a grant. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Submit applications in the following format:

Proposals should be typewritten or printed on 8½" x 11" white paper, double spaced. The text of the proposal should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, with one-inch margins. If submitting proposals for more than one project, submit a separate, complete application package for each project. Proposals should be saved as Microsoft Word or Adobe pdf files onto a 3 1/2" floppy or CD, and the electronic copy included in the application package.

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

1. **Cover Sheet:** Applicants must use **Standard Form 424** as the cover sheet for each project proposal. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp or obtained from NRCS Massachusetts State Office: Rick DeVergilio, 451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002-2953; phone: (413) 253-4379; fax: (413) 253-4375; rick.devergilio@ma.usda.gov
2. **Project Summary Sheet:** Applicants must submit a **Project Summary Sheet** (no more than 2 pages in length) that includes the listed information. A template for the Project Summary Sheet is available on the NRCS CIG website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig.
 - a. Project Title
 - b. Project Director name and contact information (including e-mail)
 - c. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
 - d. Project Purpose

- e. Project Deliverables/Products
- f. Project Scope/Area
- g. Project Start and End Dates (Projects should plan to begin no earlier than September 1, 2007)
- h. CIG State Category (Technology: Improved On-Farm Energy Efficiency)
- i. Certifications – EQIP Eligibility and Request for Federal Funds
- j. Brief summary of project

3. Project Description: Each project must be completely and accurately described in no more than 10 double-spaced pages. The description must include the following information:

- a. Project background: Describe 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, based on the description of innovative conservation projects and activities provided in section I.C., 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 and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible;
- e. Producer participation: Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (all producers involved in the project must be eligible for EQIP);
- f. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion;
- 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. 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—for example, agricultural producers by type or region or sector; rural communities; municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities;
- i. 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 report of progress, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.); and

- j. Environmental impacts: Describe the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project. This description will be used to determine whether an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed for any given project, prior to the awarding of grant funds. The applicant is responsible for the cost of an EA or EIS, should one be required. This cost may be counted as part of the grantee's in-kind contribution.
4. **Budget Information:** Use **Standard Form (SF) 424 A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs** to document budget needs. SF 424 A is available at www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp or obtained from a NRCS State Office. In addition to the SF424A, all applicants must provide a **detailed narrative** in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Itemize the costs necessary for successful completion of the proposed project. Indicate the total amount (both cash and in-kind) of non-Federal matching support that will be provided to the proposed project. Identify and provide documentation of the source(s), the amount, and the nature (cash or in-kind) of the matching funds. An indirect cost-rate agreement must be included if the applicant is claiming indirect costs. Indirect costs can not exceed 15%. In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel cannot exceed 50 percent of the applicant's match. The remainder of the match must be provided in cash.
 5. **Declaration of EQIP Eligibility:** Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP.
 6. **Certifications:** All applications must include a signed **Standard Form (SF) 424 B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs**. SF 424 B may be found at: www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp or contact a NRCS State Office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 Code of Federal Register (CFR):
 - a. Part 3017, Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement) http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3017_04.html;
 - b. Part 3021, Government wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance) http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3021_04.html.
 7. **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. A federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or call 1-866-705-5711.
 8. **Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.**

- 9. Required CCR Registration:** The Central Contractor Registry (CCR) is a database that serves as the primary Government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the Government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the Government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>. **Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.**

C. How to Submit a Written Proposal

Applicants must submit one signed original copy of each project application. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a 3½-inch diskette or compact disc (CD). Electronic files must be either Microsoft Word or Acrobat (pdf) files. **Applications submitted via facsimile or e-mail will not be accepted.**

The address for submission of all applications is:

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
451 West Street
Amherst, MA 01002-2953

D. How to Submit a Proposal Electronically

Applicants may submit proposals electronically through Grants.gov, the Federal government's e-grants portal. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete application outlined above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, abstract, narrative, and declarations are posted on Grants.gov. Instructions for adding attachments are available on Grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date. **Note that NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grants.gov submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process well before the submission deadline to avoid problems.**

E. Proposal Due Date

Proposals Must Be Received at NRCS State Headquarters by 4:00 pm (Eastern) on May 10, 2007. A postmark date is NOT a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in proposal delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to insure timely receipt by NRCS.

F. Acknowledgement of Submission

Proposals received by the due date will be acknowledged with an official letter. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgement within 30 days of the submission, they must contact the NRCS programmatic contact (See Part VII). Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel.

G. Funding Restrictions

The indirect costs (F & A) for CIG awards may not exceed 15 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. 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:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. 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,
- g. 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 below.

H. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR 3019.36. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 7 CFR 3019.2, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. 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.

V APPLICATION REVIEW

A. Proposal Review and Selection Process

Prior to technical review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the provisions of this notice will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be scored by the Energy Subcommittee of the State Technical Committee. Proposal rankings will be forwarded to the State Conservationist, who will make the final selection and funding decisions.

B. Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

The review panel will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals. Each of the four criteria carries an equal weight of 25 percent.

1. Purpose and goals:
 - a. The purpose and goals of the project are clearly stated;
 - b. The project adheres to the natural resource conservation concerns for FY 2007 stated in this notice; and,
 - c. There is clear and significant potential for a positive and measurable outcome.
2. Soundness of approach or design:
 - a. The project adheres to the description of innovative projects or activities found in Part I C. of this notice;
 - b. Technical design and implementation strategy is based on sound science;
 - c. There is a good likelihood of project success;
 - d. The project substantively involves EQIP eligible producers; and,
 - e. The project promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
3. Project management:
 - a. The proposal has clear milestones and timelines, designated staff, and demonstrates collaboration;
 - b. The project staff has the technical expertise needed to do the work; and
 - c. The budget is reasonable and adequately justified.
4. Transferability:
 - a. There is great potential to transfer the approach or technology to others and/or to other geographical areas; and,
 - b. The project will result in the development of technical or related materials (e.g., technical standards, technical notes, manuals, handbooks, software) that will help foster adoption of the innovative technology or approach by other producers, and in other geographic areas.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

CIG Awards are anticipated to be announced by June 1, 2007. Funds are not awarded until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee. All agreements are expected to be awarded by August 15, 2007.

VI AWARD INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected will receive a letter of official notification from NRCS State Headquarters. This notice will indicate the need to work with the administrative contact to develop an agreement prior to starting work on the project. Applicants who are not selected will be notified by official letter.

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 agreement will include:

- project purpose;
- project objectives and deliverables;
- the final project plan listing cooperators in the project, and identifying the grant applicant and the project manager;
- the project timelines and expected project completion date;
- the project progress and budget reporting requirements;
- award amount and budget information;
- information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement;
- the role of NRCS technical oversight in the project;
- reporting requirements including attendance at CIG grantee biannual meeting;
- changes in project plans; and
- other requirements and terms deemed necessary by the CCC to protect the interests of the United States.

C. Reporting Requirements

Grantees receiving an advance of Federal funds of more than \$25,000 are required to submit a SF-272 (Report of Federal Cash Transactions), and when necessary, the continuation sheet, SF-272-A, no later than 15 days following the end of each quarter or 90 days after project completion. These reports are used to monitor cash advanced to recipients and to obtain disbursement and outlay information for each award.

Grantees must submit a Financial Status Report (SF 269) no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. The SF-272 and SF-269 are available at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html>.

In addition, every six months the grantee must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program contact and the NRCS technical contact. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 6-month period, including any funded or unfunded time extensions, a comparison of actual accomplishments to project goals, and a statement of work projected to be completed in the next 6-month period.

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

1. A list of producers, identified by name and social security number, of all EQIP-eligible producers or entities involved in the project.
2. 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.
3. 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.

A progress report template will be provided to grantees by the NRCS program contact. This template is also available on the NRCS CIG website at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html>.

NRCS will designate a Program Contact and a Technical Contact for the project. These individuals will have technical oversight responsibility for the project. The grantee must send copies of each semi-annual progress report to these NRCS contacts, and comply with any requests for information from these individuals. NRCS recommends that the grantee work closely with these subject matter experts throughout the course of the project.

Upon passage of the completion date of the project, a final report must be submitted within 90 days detailing project activities, funding received, funding expended, results, and potential for transferability of results. The final report should address completion of the project deliverables listed in the grant agreement.

VII CIG STATE CONTACT

CIG Program Contact:

Richard DeVergilio
State Resource Conservationist
451 West Street
Amherst, MA 01002
Phone: (413) 253-4379
Fax: (413) 253-4375
e-mail: Rick.Devergilio@ma.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQs), is available on the CIG webpage: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig

Signed in Amherst, MA, on April 4, 2007.

CHRISTINE CLARKE
State Conservationist, Massachusetts
Natural Resources Conservation Service