

## Key Points

December 2010

## Conservation Innovation Grant Program

- Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is a voluntary program intended 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 was established in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) under Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The 2008 Farm Bill (Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008) reauthorized CIG. Funds made available for CIG come from EQIP. Proposed projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers CIG.
- Funding notices announcing the availability of funds are published annually on the NRCS website and on the Federal government's eGrants portal, [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
- CIG funds are awarded through a nationwide grants competition. CIG applications are accepted from State or local units of government, federally-recognized Indian tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals.
- The National grants competition will emphasize projects that have a goal of providing benefits over a large geographic area. These projects may be watershed based, regional, multi-State, or nationwide in scope.
- The State grants competition of CIG will be available in States designated at the discretion of the State Conservationists or Directors. Funding availability and application submission information for State competitions will be announced through public notices and on NRCS State websites separately from the national notice. 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. State Conservationists will determine the funding level for State competitions, with individual grants not to exceed \$75,000. Applications should describe the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address a natural resource conservation concern or concerns. The natural resource concerns and technology eligible for funding through CIG will be identified in the funding notice, and may change annually.
- Selected applicants may receive grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Applicants must provide non-Federal funding for at least 50 percent of the project cost, of which up to one-half (25 percent of the total project cost) may come from in-kind contributions.
- CIG provides for two programmatic exceptions for historically underserved groups to help ensure that these groups benefit from innovative technologies and approaches. Each year, up to 10 percent of



CIG funds may be set aside for applicants who are beginning or limited resource farmers or ranchers, or Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. Matching funds for grants awarded to any of the groups mentioned above may consist of up to 75 percent in-kind contributions.

- Qualified applications will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice.
- Evaluated applications will be forwarded to an NRCS Grant Review Board, consisting of the Deputy Chief for Financial Assistance and Community Development, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology, Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment, one Regional Conservationist, and one State Conservationist. The Grant Review Board will certify the recommendations from the technical peer review panels, and ensure that the proposal evaluations are consistent with program objectives.
- The Grant Review Board will make recommendations to the Chief for final selections.

### **For More Information**

If you need more information about CIG, please contact the National CIG Program Manager, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6227-S, Washington, D.C., 20250, telephone: (202) 720-8071, fax: (202) 720-4839.

Additional information is available on the World Wide Web at:

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html)

**Note:** This is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of farm legislation. Rather, it is preliminary and may change as USDA develops implementing policies and procedures. Please check back for updates.