

## **Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Frequently asked Questions**

- 1. Who administers the Conservation Innovation Grants?**  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- 2. What is the purpose of CIG?**  
CIG is 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.
- 3. What program funds CIG projects?**  
CIG was authorized under Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and funds for CIG come from EQIP.
- 4. Where can I find CIG funding opportunities?**  
Funding notices announcing the availability of funds are published annually on the NRCS CIG website <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html> and on the Federal government's eGrants portal, [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
- 5. How many years can a project last?**  
CIG project are limited to three years.
- 6. Who is eligible to apply?**  
CIG applications are accepted from State or local units of government, federally-recognized Indian tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals.
- 7. Where can I implement my project?**  
CIG project implementation is limited to the 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).
- 8. Do the eligibility requirements apply to the organization or the location of the project?**  
The eligibility requirements for location apply to both the applicant organization and the location of the project.
- 9. Do I need to provide additional funding for the project?**  
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.
- 10. What other requirements do I need to meet?**  
CIG projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers. Applicants must describe the level of producer involvement in the application narrative.
- 11. Who should I contact for additional information?**

For programmatic information, please contact the National CIG Program Manager at (703) 235-8065 or gregorio.cruz@wdc.usda.gov, or Stacy Swartwood, Program Analyst, (703) 235-8061. For budget and administrative information, please contact the Grants and Agreements, Team Leader at USDA-NRCS (202) 720-4102 or sheila.leonard@wdc.usda.gov

**12. What is the funding opportunity number?**

USDA-NRCS-NHQ-13-03

**13. May multiple agencies join together for a single application?**

Multiple agencies can work together as collaborators in one project proposal. However, only one agency can be the applicant.

**14. Is there any guidance on sub-contractors arrangements?**

The grantee is responsible for all sub-awards and assuring the responsible parties follow the appropriate terms and conditions. All sub-awards are subject to the same federal requirements as the grantee. The grantee is responsible for assuring/monitoring that the sub-awards follow the requirements. The grantee will also be the one penalized if there are issues with sub-award actions. (7CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3016)

**15. Please expand on the project eligibility regarding Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) landowners. Do they have to be a matching partner in the grant or may they be participants?**

In order for a project to be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in 16 USC 3839aa-1. At the discretion of the applicant and project needs, a landowner can be either a matching funds partner or a participant.

**16. How do applicants show matching commitments?**

At the time of application, applicants must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-federal third parties.

**17. Are corporations eligible to apply?**

Yes, eligible entities include Federally recognized Indian tribes, State and local units of government, and non-governmental organizations and individuals. Corporations fall under the non-governmental organizations category.

**18. Would staff time committed to the project by a project partner be considered cash or in-kind match? What other types of activities or experiences can be considered in-kind match?**

Generally, staff time is considered in-kind since that person will be a paid staff member of the organization whether the NRCS proposal is funded or not. In some situations it might be cash: for example, if the staff incurs additional hours specifically for the project or if a person is hired specifically for the purpose of meeting a project requirement, then those hours could be counted as cash, unless their salary is to be paid by the grant. There may some donated equipment, information, or assistance where cash is not transferred that would be considered in-kind.

**19. Is it necessary to involve EQIP eligible landowners directly in the project? We are considering a tool building project at the regional scale and there is not an on the ground component at this time.**

Yes, in order for a project to be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in 16 USC 3839aa-1.

**20. What involvement might a local NRCS office have in this application or project process?**

CIG is a competitive grants process. Local NRCS office can provide general program information but cannot assist with the development of an application.

**21. Is there a way for researchers to be involved in this grant program?**

Even though CIG cannot fund research projects, researchers can offer or collaborate in projects that encompass the development, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems; or conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches; or environmental soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement.

**22. Could a proposal qualify if it focuses purely on education and outreach?**

Yes. One element of the announcement includes outreach and education.

**23. Standard forms for application: I downloaded standard form 424 for federal assistance from grants.gov but the expiration date is 31/12/2012. Is it the correct form to fill in?**

Yes, the forms are correct.

**24. Can a company submit several applications?**

Yes. Page 14, Section IV.B, last paragraph, 2nd sentence states “If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project.”

**25. Could the grant be used for the cost of the solar greenhouse for the cost of a feasibility study?**

Maybe. Depending on the type of entity, please reference the applicable cost principle to determine what costs are allowable:

<b>Type of Organization</b>	<b>Applicable Federal Cost Principle</b>
Education Institution	2 CFR Part 220
Nonprofit Organization	2 CFR Part 230
State, Local, Indian Tribal Governments	2 CFR Part 225
Commercial Organizations	48 CFR Section 31.2

**26. Can you confirm that we can request our full indirect cost rate on the USDA CIG program? We do have a federally negotiated rate of XX% for Research and XX% for Public Service/Extension.**

Per the 2013 CIG announcement, page 19, section V.A.6.a, “applicants wishing to claim indirect costs must have a federally approved indirect cost rate.” This means that if you have a federally negotiated rate, you may claim indirect costs. Once your indirect cost rate agreement is received, eligible charges to the grant are dependent on that approved rate.

Are individual object class codes needed for cash and in-kind contribution documentation?  
For the pre-proposal, the overall totals are sufficient.

**27. If you are a current grantee can you still apply for the current CIG RFP?**

Please refer to requirements found on page 20 of the APF: “8) Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement: Identify any previously awarded CIG projects related to this proposal and any of their principal investigators. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award.” It is recommended that there not be substantial overlap with or duplication of any previous or current CIG project’s goals.