

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Conservation Innovation Grants
Fiscal Year 2013 Announcement of Program Funding (APF)**

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Vermont (VT), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture, is announcing availability of Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of the Vermont State CIG competition in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 will be approximately \$196,000. Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. Only projects to be implemented within the state of Vermont will be considered.

There are three categories of natural resources concerns or technology needs in the State CIG for FY 2013. Applications are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations, individuals or legal entities for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration. This notice identifies the objectives for CIG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects, and provides the associated instructions needed to apply to CIG.

DATES: Applications must be received in the NRCS Vermont State Office by 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on Friday, June 7, 2013.

ADDRESS: The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using mail or overnight courier service is: Conservation Innovation Grants Program, c/o Robert Kort, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105, Colchester, Vermont 05446. Contact phone number for hand-delivered applications is (802) 951-6796 x233.

To submit your application electronically, visit [Grants.gov-Apply for Grants](http://Grants.gov-Apply) and follow the instructions, or email to bob.kort@vt.usda.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Kort, Vermont State CIG Program Manager, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105, Colchester, VT 05446; Phone: (802) 951-6796 x233; Fax: (802) 951-6327; email: bob.kort@vt.usda.gov, Subject: Conservation Innovation Grants APF; or consult the Vermont NRCS web site at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522

Table of Contents

PART I – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority	3
B. Overview.....	3
C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities.....	3
D. CIG Categories.....	4

PART II – FUNDING AVAILABILITY.....7

PART III – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Matching Funds.....	7
B. Beginning or Limited Resource Farmers and Federally Recognized Indian Tribes.....	8
C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments.....	8
D. Project Eligibility.....	9

PART IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Application Materials.....	9
B. Application Content and Format.....	10
C. How to Submit a Written Application.....	15
D. How to Submit an Application Electronically.....	15
E. Application Due Date.....	16
F. Acknowledgement of Submission.....	16
G. Withdrawal of Applications.....	16
H. Funding Restrictions.....	16
I. Patents and Inventions.....	17
J. Environmental Review Requirements.....	17

PART V – APPLICATION REVIEW

A. Application Review and Selection Process.....	17
B. Criteria for Application Evaluation.....	17
C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates.....	18

PART VI – AWARD INFORMATION AND ADMINISTRATION

A. Award Notification	18
B. Environmental Review Requirements.....	19
C. Grant Agreement.....	19
D. Reporting Requirements	19

PART VII – AGENCY CONTACTS20

PART VIII – OTHER INFORMATION.....22

A. Application Package Checklist	23
B. Project Summary Sheet	25

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) were authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under Section 2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). 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. Projects intended to formulate hypothesis do not qualify for a CIG project. CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology. It is a vehicle to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a high likelihood of success, and that are a candidate 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 that target innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

Vermont NRCS will accept applications for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years. Applications can be submitted to NRCS from eligible entities including Federally-recognized Indian Tribes, State and local governments, non-governmental organizations, individuals and legal entities. **Applications will only be accepted from entities in Vermont for projects that will take place in the state of Vermont.**

Complete applications received by the applicable deadline that comply with the provisions of this notice will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel and scored based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation identified in this document. Scored applications will be forwarded to the Vermont State Conservationist who will make the final award selections. The State Conservationist reserves the right to not fund any or all proposals.

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, implementation, and monitoring of:

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems; or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches; and
- Environmental soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement.

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

- Makes use of a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrates and verifies environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation technology in the field;
- Adapt conservation technologies, 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; and
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. CIG Categories

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, the Vermont State CIG has three categories of natural resources concerns and technology needs for possible funding. Applicants must identify the most appropriate category for the topic of their proposal. The categories are: Water Quality, Forestry/Wildlife, and Energy. *Note that the Water Quality and Forestry/Wildlife categories have priority topics identified, while the Energy category does not identify priority topics.* Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, Federally recognized Indian Tribes or members of Federally recognized Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities, are encouraged to submit application(s) in any of the categories.

1. Water Quality

The topics listed below have been identified as priority water quality areas for consideration and funding under the Vermont CIG in 2013. Other innovative conservation approaches and technologies will be considered if they demonstrate improved implementation of NRCS water quality improvement conservation practices.

- **Development of a Vermont Demonstration Farm Focusing on Soil Health:** Demonstration projects have been shown to be an effective method of accelerating the adoption of new technologies, including conservations practices. Using a Vermont working farm to showcase conservation practices is one means of demonstrating the success and effectiveness of these practices. The practices used on this farm would potentially have multiple benefits to the environment; however they would be focused on soil health improvement. Such a project will require a unique producer; one that is willing to make the commitment to the project over time and to implement different soil health management systems. The producer or landowner must be willing and the farm suitable to demonstrate soil health management systems, preferably on clay soils. The final product will be an identified demonstration farm(s), a coordination agreement completed with the producer(s), and a practice/system work plan.
- **Pilot Project to Evaluate Applications of the APEX Model in Vermont:** The Agricultural Policy / Environmental eXtender (APEX) model was developed to estimate nutrient and sediment export from agricultural fields. It can be configured for a variety of land management situations and numerous agricultural BMP's. The model has not been used for any extensive applications in Vermont or the northeast. Resource managers in Vermont are currently attempting to develop a database and BMP tracking system for the Lake Champlain Basin. This data will be an important component of the phosphorus TMDL evaluation that

will be soon forthcoming. Models such as APEX can also be powerful tools for conservation planners, providing valuable, real time information on the effectiveness of different BMP scenarios for specific agricultural fields. The final product will be an APEX model that has been populated with Vermont data and BMP options applicable to this region. Test runs of the model will be performed on example agricultural fields to evaluate its usefulness. Test runs will also be performed on fields where edge of field monitoring has been conducted in order to determine its relative accuracy. The model will be constructed/configured to promote ease of use by resource managers and conservation planners that may have little experience with modeling, and to minimize additional data input.

- **Development of Public/Private Partnerships to Accelerate Adoption of Water Quality BMPs:** Accelerated agricultural BMP implementation will be necessary in the Lake Champlain Basin of Vermont to meet the goals of the revised phosphorus TMDL for the Basin that will be released soon. At the same time federal and state funds will likely be limited to existing levels or may even see some decreases. Private funding is one potential source of new funds that could be used in conjunction with state and federal funding to accelerate BMP implementation rates on Vermont farms. This funding could be used in several ways: to target geographical areas or specific farms that are not eligible for state or federal funding, to support specific BMP practices that cannot be funded with existing sources, or to use as match with existing state and federal funding to increase allowable cost share rates (make payments that more closely match the full cost of the practices). In past projects, the provision of payment rates at or close to 100% of the practice cost has been shown to significantly increase farmer participation and to increase practice implementation. The awardee will be responsible for contacting appropriate private companies, foundations, etc., coordinating with state and federal agencies, and developing partnership agreements with interested parties that identify the specifics of any financial agreements necessary to accelerate BMP implementation in the Lake Champlain Basin of Vermont.
- **Better cover crop mixes and application methods:** The majority of cover crops in VT crop fields are cereal rye planted following corn silage harvest. This leaves corn grain, soybeans and other annual crop fields without cover crop options and thereby, vulnerable to soil erosion over the winter. This funding project is to demonstrate new and innovative multi-species cover crop mixes and application methods for VT. Cover crop mixes need to be developed to meet various attributes such as nitrogen scavenging, nitrogen source, soil builder, erosion protection, weed control, grazing source, quick growth, reduce compaction, lasting residue, forage harvest value, grain/seed harvest value and being able to be interseeded with cash crops.
- **Update of the P Index for Vermont:** In Vermont, nutrient management plans require using the Phosphorus Index as a phosphorus risk assessment tool. Vermont's Phosphorus Index was last revised on Jan. 25, 2005. Developed mainly for VT's dairy farms, it includes Modified Morgan soil tests, manure applications and crop/vegetation types of corn and other row crops, alfalfa and other forages, small grains, pasture, CRP land and woodland. Since 2012, other farm types are requesting nutrient management plans. These farms include vegetable, fruits and specialty crops along with greenhouse/high tunnels operations. In addition, the 2012 National NRCS Nutrient Management Practice

standard (590) discusses Phosphorus Index ratings that vary somewhat from the VT Phosphorus Index ratings. The combination of these issues indicate the present VT Phosphorus Index needs to be updated to include greenhouse media tests, more organic nutrient sources, crop types, and an adjustment of the ratings to match the 2012 National Nutrient Management Practice standard.

- **Creation of a Public/Private Partnership to Acquire LiDAR Data for Vermont:** Since 2005, NRCS has partnered with other federal and state agencies to acquire LiDAR data for use in geospatial projects for Vermont regions. All of the projects have been limited in extent by available public funds, and federal discretionary funds are limited for the foreseeable future. The benefits of LiDAR based high-resolution elevation data and its derivative spatial layers are many: the agriculture, transportation, telecommunications, forestry, wildlife, climate and urban planning sectors find that the landscape clarity LiDAR provides assists them with critical decisions in their work. Businesses that base some of their decisions on landscape and geographic factors can also make use of these layers, and could profit by investing in LiDAR.

A partnership between the business sector and public agencies is likely to speed the acquisition of publicly available LiDAR data for areas not currently covered in Vermont. The existing workgroup among agencies, led by the Vermont Center for Geographic Information, could be expanded to include business leaders and bring their interests and capabilities to the table for project planning and acquisition. The final product will be a more sustainable LiDAR partnership, which includes public and private entities that leverage new funding sources from all sectors toward acquiring publicly available data. The partnership team will develop a Vermont LiDAR Plan that includes: identification of team members, identification of potential funding sources for LiDAR acquisition, and opportunities for the post-processing, archiving, hosting and data deployment necessary to get LiDAR data quickly into the hands of users. Project management, scheduling and subcommittee follow-up meetings will be key to the effort's success.

2. Forestry/Wildlife

The topics listed below have been identified as priority forestry/wildlife areas for consideration and funding under the Vermont CIG in 2013. Other innovative conservation approaches and technologies (see "Overview" on page 3) will be considered if they demonstrate improved implementation of NRCS forestry or wildlife habitat improvement conservation practices:

- **Evaluation of NRCS Funded Wildlife/Forestry Practices:** Evaluate and determine the efficacy of NRCS funded wildlife and forestry conservation practices. Practices may include but are not limited to invasive plant control, early successional habitat management, and forest stand improvement. Provide recommendations based upon findings to increase effectiveness, consistency and/or site suitability of specific practices.
- **Restoration of Native Plant Species:** Develop and demonstrate innovative approaches to restore native plants or communities that have been placed at-risk by non-native pests such as disease, insects, plants or animals. Priority will be given to projects addressing species of concern including state ranked S1, S2 and

S3 species or natural communities, and that clearly can lead to on-the-ground NRCS conservation practices.

3. Energy

*The objective of this category is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to conserve energy or utilize agricultural and forest lands as a source of reliable, affordable, and environmentally sustainable biofuels and renewable energy. Topics that will be considered for funding include but **are not limited to:***

- Life cycle analyses for current conservation practices to assess the energy and fossil fuel implications associated with the use of the practice including analyzing the fossil fuel embedded in materials and agrochemicals;
- Innovative implementation systems to achieve greater use of energy audits, including energy audits that address cropland in addition to buildings and equipment;
- Utilizing crops for energy production and water quality protection to provide financial incentives to the farm operation; and
- Evaluate and demonstrate the use of fast growing woody biomass species in agroforestry systems e.g., alley cropping, riparian forest buffers, windbreaks, etc.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Vermont NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2013 will be \$196,000. Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed \$75,000. CIG will fund single-year and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years. Multi-state proposals will not be considered under this State CIG option.

Due to the limited amount of funds, NRCS reserves the right to offer less funding than what is requested in the grant application.

The anticipated start date for awarded projects is September 13, 2013. Awards will be made using agreements with the NRCS Vermont State Office.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a Federally recognized Indian Tribe, State or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, individual or legal entity.

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. The recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions. Up to half of the applicant's matching funds (up to 25 percent of the total project cost) may be from in-kind contributions (except in the case of projects carried out by either a Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, Federally recognized Indian Tribes or members of Federally recognized Indian Tribes, or community-

based organizations comprised of or representing these entities). The remainder of the match must be provided in cash.

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 in [2 CFR 215](#).

B. Beginning or Limited Resource Farmers and Federally Recognized Indian Tribes

An exception regarding matching funds is made for projects funded for Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, Federally recognized Indian Tribes or members of Federally recognized Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. Up to three-fourths of the required matching funds for such projects (up to 37.5 percent of the total project cost) may derive from in-kind contributions. This exception is intended to help Beginning or Limited Resource Farmers and Federally recognized Indian Tribes meet the statutory requirements for receiving a CIG. *The applicant must make a declaration in the application* as described in Part IV.B.12 in this notice. Below are the regulatory definitions of a Beginning Farmer and a Limited Resource Farmer, which are found at [7 CFR 1466.3](#):

Beginning Farmer - a person or legal entity who:

- Has not operated a farm, or who has operated a farm for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm;
- In the case of a contract with an individual, individually, or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located; *and*
- In the case of a contract with an entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm would be seriously impaired.

Limited Resource Farmer -

- A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$155,200 in each of the previous 2 years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service); *and*
- Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years (to be determined annually using Department of Commerce data).

C. 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 \$300,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between fiscal years 2008 and 2013. 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 producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. All direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to the Vermont State CIG Program Manager in the quarterly report. Direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds, through any of the USDA Programs (EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, etc.) because that would be considered a duplicate payment.

D. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in [16 USC 3839aa-1](#). Further, all agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at the [Vermont EQIP](#) website. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

A person or legal entity shall not be eligible to receive any benefit during a crop, fiscal, or program year, as appropriate, if the average adjusted gross non-farm income of the person or legal entity exceeds \$1,000,000, unless not less than 66.66 percent of the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income ([7 CFR Part 1400](#)).

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance and Wetland Compliance provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

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 Vermont State EQIP Eligible Practices List by contacting the NRCS State Office or visiting the [Vermont EQIP](#) website.

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. The Vermont State CIG Program Manager is the NRCS contact to provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION and SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Application Materials

The announcement for the Vermont CIG funding opportunity can be found on the following websites: <http://www.grants.gov> and http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/farbill/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522

All Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following website: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#). An application package checklist and project summary sheet is included in Part VIII of this announcement. Standard

forms, samples of certain completed forms, as well as editable versions of the checklist and summary sheet are on the Vermont NRCS website.

B. Application Content and Format

Applications are required to 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 the application. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project. Applicants may submit either a written application accompanied by an electronic copy on compact disc (CD) or an electronic application via email or through Grants.gov.

Applications should be formatted for and printed on numbered 8½” x 11” white paper. The text of the application should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, single-spaced, single-sided, with one inch margins. *Applications that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding.*

Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. *All forms and narrative sections must be properly completed* (e.g., fill out *all* sections of Standard Form (SF) 424A and other forms). Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- 1. Application Form:** Applicants must use SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance as the cover sheet for each project application. SF-424 can be downloaded from Grants.gov - [Forms Repository](#) , [Vermont state CIG](#) or obtained from the Vermont NRCS State Office.
- 2. Project Summary Sheet:** Applicants must submit a Project Summary Sheet (no more than three pages in length) that includes the information listed below. A template for the Project Summary Sheet is in Part VIII.B.
 - 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 area/location
 - g. Project start and end dates (Anticipated start date is September 13, 2013)
 - h. CIG category (Water Quality, Forestry/Wildlife, or Energy)
 - i. Declaration of Previous CIG Project
 - j. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement and description for level of involvement
 - k. Declaration of Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Federally recognized Indian Tribe
 - l. Total project cost and Federal funds requested
- 3. One-Page Abstract:** Include a one-page, non-confidential technical summary that describes the work to be undertaken and the expected outcome and benefits. The technical summary should take into account the priorities and evaluation factors described in this solicitation.

- 4. Project Description:** The description must include the following information and is limited to 15 pages in length. It should provide a clear description of the work to be undertaken and how it will be accomplished, and provide sufficient information for the reviewers to evaluate the application in accordance with the merit review criteria listed in Part V.B.
- a. Project background: Describe the issue or problem including 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 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 (EQIP eligible producers must be involved in the project). 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 start date is September 13, 2013.
 - 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. Failure to disclose ongoing, completed, or funded projects in a category similar to that for which CIG funds are being requested could lead to termination of a CIG award. 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: 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) Quarterly reports;
 - 2) Supplemental narratives that explain and support payment requests;
 - 3) A final report;
 - 4) Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress; and
 - 5) A new technology and innovative approach or "lessons learned" fact sheet, or a case study, as is appropriate.
 - 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; 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.
- 5. Additional Information:** Bibliographies and/or resumes (not to exceed two pages per person), and references.
- 6. Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts:** Describe and assess the anticipated environmental effects 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 potentially impacted environmental resources must be disclosed. One line or short descriptions of environmental impacts are not acceptable. The length of the analysis should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the environmental resources impacted either directly, indirectly (later in time), 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 specific resources protected by law, Executive Order, and agency policy. These resources are outlined in the NRCS Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, NRCS Conservation and Planning Application (CPA) form 52, which is available at: [NRCS-CPA-52](#). The NRCS CPA-52 form can be used as a guide for the scope of environmental information that should be prepared for this section of the application (note that CPA-52 does not need to be completed unless awarded a CIG). 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. Applicants may consult with the NRCS Environmental Liaison concerning the scope of what should be addressed in this section of the application. A list of the Environmental Liaisons can be found on the following website: [Environmental Liaison](#)
- 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.*
- 7. Budget Information:** The budget portion of the application consists of three parts described below.
- 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.
 - Detailed Budget Description:** 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 should be readable in 8.5 by 11 printable pages. It may be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc. 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

organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, email, 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 outside the applicant organization should 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 for other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

- 10. Declaration of Previous CIG Project:** Identify involvement in any previously awarded CIG projects related to this proposal and any of its principal investigators. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award. Also identify any federal funds requested or received from other sources (non-CIG) for the same or a similar project.
- 11. Declaration of EQIP Eligibility and Producer Involvement:** Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers. Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP (if EQIP eligible producers are not involved, the proposal will be considered ineligible). The declaration must describe and certify the level of involvement by EQIP eligible producers.
- 12. Declaration of Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Federally Recognized Indian Tribe:** If an applicant wishes to be eligible for the in-kind contribution exception, applicant must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, Federally recognized Indian Tribes or members of Federally recognized Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.
- 13. Certifications:** All applications must include a signed SF-424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. SF-424B may be found at: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](http://www.grants.gov) , http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/farbill/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522 , or the Vermont NRCS State Office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following federal:
 - a. 2 CFR Part 417, [Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#);
 - b. 7 CFR Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#); and
 - c. 2 CFR Part 421, [Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#).
- 14. 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 call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

15. 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 is 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 <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/> Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

C. 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 fax will not be accepted.

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 mail or overnight courier service is:

Conservation Innovation Grants Program
c/o Robert Kort
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105
Colchester, Vermont 05446

Contact phone number for hand-delivered applications is (802) 951-6796 x233.

D. How to Submit an Application Electronically

Applicants may submit applications electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) or to the email address listed below. Applications submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) or email must contain all of the elements of a complete application and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, abstract, narrative, and declarations are posted on [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov). Instructions for adding attachments are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov). Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) and must be received by the identified closing date. Emailed applications must be *received* by NRCS before the submission deadline. It is recommended that applicants verify the receipt of emailed applications with the Vermont CIG Program Manager before the application deadline has passed.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) or emailed submissions. Applicants should begin the [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) process or send their email well in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems.

Email address: bob.kort@vt.usda.gov

E. Application Due Date

Applications must be received in the NRCS Vermont State Office by 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), on Friday, June 7, 2013. A postmark date is NOT a factor in whether a written application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit written applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS. Applicants submitting an electronic application by email are strongly encouraged to contact the CIG Program Manager before the application deadline to verify its receipt.

F. Acknowledgement of Submission

Applications received by the due date will be acknowledged with an email. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgement within 15 days of the submission, but believes they submitted a timely application, 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. Withdrawal of Applications

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

H. 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:

- 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 in Part VII.

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

I. 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.

J. 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 (both regulations found at [NRCS-CPA-52](#)) require that an environmental review be prepared for actions where the agency has discretion and control. Accordingly, 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 (described further under Part IV.B.6) 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/or pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment and/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.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW

A. Application Review and Selection Process

Prior to the technical (peer) 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. To help avoid an application that is incomplete or does not comply with the provisions of this notice, the applicant can contact the Vermont State CIG Program Manager prior to submission of their application with questions about application materials, for assistance in completing the required forms, or for the screening of a draft application.

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be reviewed and scored by a peer review panel based on criteria which includes that listed in Part V.B below. The peer review panel will include a sub-committee of the Vermont State Technical Committee and NRCS or other technical specialists. Scored applications will be forwarded to the Vermont State Conservationist for final selection and funding decisions.

B. Criteria for Application Evaluation

A technical peer review panel will include the following criteria in its evaluation of project applications.

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 local in nature).
 - Project conforms to description of innovative projects or activities in proposal request announcement.
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. Transferability
- Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technologies or approaches.
 - Potential to transfer the approach or technology nationally or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas, including limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally 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.).
5. Other
- Addresses more than one Vermont CIG category/topic.
 - Timing and synergy with other Vermont or regional projects.
 - Match leverages Federal funds better than one to one minimum.
 - Dollar amount requested leverages Federal funds.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

CIG awards are anticipated to be announced by August 5, 2013. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start, until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee. All agreements are expected to be awarded by September 13, 2013.

VI. AWARD INFORMATION AND ADMINISTRATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for grant funding will receive a letter of official notification from the NRCS Vermont State Office. All selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental review process and financial review. Applicants who are not selected will be notified by official letter.

B. Environmental Review Requirements

Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the NRCS Vermont State CIG Program Manager and NRCS Environmental Liaison to determine the scope and level of documentation needed for compliance with NEPA and NRCS regulations. Selected applicants may be required to prepare and/or pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document if an Environmental Assessment and/or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met. A list of the [NRCS Environmental Liaisons](#) can be found at the national NRCS website.

C. Grant Agreement

The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), through NRCS, will use a grant agreement with selected applicants in order to participate in the CIG component of EQIP. The applicant will need to work with the administrative contact to develop an agreement prior to starting work on the project. The grant agreement will include:

- a. Project purpose;
- b. Project objectives
- c. Project deliverables;
- d. Final project plan listing cooperators in the project and identifying the grant applicant and project manager;
- e. Project timelines and expected project completion date;
- f. Project progress and budget reporting requirements;
- g. Award amount and budget information;
- h. Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement;
- i. Role of NRCS technical oversight in the project;
- j. Reporting requirements;
- k. Changes in project plans; and
- l. Other requirements and terms deemed necessary by the CCC to protect the interests of the United States.

D. Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to provide a quarterly report of progress, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Reporting requirements will be detailed in the grant agreement.

Grantees must submit a Financial Status Report (SF-425) no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. The SF-425 is available at: [Grants Management Forms](#) and the [Vermont NRCS website](#).

In addition, the grantee must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS Vermont CIG Program Manager every 3 months. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 3-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 3-month period.

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. The NRCS Vermont State CIG Program Manager will have technical oversight responsibility for each project receiving an award.

To satisfy the requirements of EQIP ([7 CFR 1466](#)) compliance measures, the grantee is required to submit as a component of the quarterly progress report:

1. A list of producers, identified by name and address, 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; and
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, adjusted gross income, highly erodible land, and wetland conservation compliance Farm Bill provisions.

A progress report template will be provided to grantees by the NRCS Vermont State CIG Program Manager and is also available on the Vermont NRCS CIG website at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522

The grantee must send copies of each quarterly progress report to the NRCS contact, and comply with any requests for information from this individual. NRCS recommends that the grantee work closely with the Vermont CIG Program Manager 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 application for program funding and the grant agreement. Transferability is one of the priorities for CIG - a person or organization should find the answers they need in the final report if they want to consider doing something similar.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For programmatic questions (e.g., CIG categories, application completion and review, etc.), please contact:

Robert Kort
Vermont State CIG Program Manager
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105
Colchester, VT 05446
Phone: (802) 951-6796 x233
Fax: (802) 951-6327
Email: bob.kort@vt.usda.gov

For administrative questions (e.g., indirect costs, contracts, forms, etc.), please contact:

Carol Vartuli
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105
Colchester, Vermont 05446

Phone: (802) 951-6796 x226
Fax: (802) 655-0638
Email: carol.vartuli@vt.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQs), is available on the National CIG webpage:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=nrcs143_08205 and the Vermont State CIG webpage:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522

Signed in Colchester, Vermont on May 8, 2013.

Vicky Drew
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Application Package Checklist

B. Project Summary Sheet

Important: Applications Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered

**VERMONT STATE CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT
FISCAL YEAR 2013 APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST**

- 1. Application Form:** Complete Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Application for Federal Assistance

- 2. Project Summary Sheet:** (Three pages maximum, template available)
 - 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 area/location
 - g. Project start and end dates (Anticipated start date is September 13, 2013)
 - h. CIG category (Water Quality, Forestry/Wildlife or Energy)
 - i. Declaration of Previous CIG Project
 - j. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement
 - k. Declaration of Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Federally recognized Indian Tribe
 - l. Total project cost and Federal funds requested

- 3. One-Page Abstract:** (non-confidential summary describing the project and expected outcomes and benefits)

- 4. Project Description:** (12 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. Producer participation
 - f. Project action plan and timeline
 - g. Project management
 - h. Project deliverables
 - i. Benefits or results expected and transferability
 - j. Project evaluation

- 5. Additional Information:** Bibliographies, resumes and references.

- 6. Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts:** Describe and assess the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project.

- 7. Budget Information:**
 - a. Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs (*completely filled out*)
 - b. Detailed budget description
 - c. Budget narrative

- 8. Indirect Costs:** Information required if you have a current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement you want to claim indirect costs in this application.

- 9. Matching Information:** Provide details on both cash and in-kind third party matching support.

- 10. Declaration of Previous CIG Project:** Identify involvement in any previously awarded CIG projects, and federal funds requested or received from other sources (non-CIG) for the same or a similar project.

- 11. Declaration Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility:** Include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP-eligible producers. Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP. (If EQIP eligible producers are not involved, the proposal will be considered ineligible.)

- 12. Declaration of Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Federally Recognized Indian Tribe.** If applicable, include a statement declaring your status as a Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer, Federally recognized Indian Tribe or member of Federally recognized Indian Tribe, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities.

- 13. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs

- 14. 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.

- 15. Required Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration:** Visit <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/> to register.

Note: This checklist is for use by the applicant and does not need to be included with the application.

VERMONT STATE CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT
FY 2013 Project Summary Sheet

Project Title:

Project Director:

Contact Information:

E-mail:

Telephone:

Fax:

Project Collaborators and Affiliations:

Project Purpose:

Project Deliverables/Products:

Project Area/Location:

Project Start and End Dates:

Applicable Category: (Check one):

Water Quality

Forestry/Wildlife

Energy

Declaration of Previous CIG Project:

The applicant or any of the principal investigators has been involved in a previously awarded CIG project(s) related to this application. (Check one)

Yes. Identify _____

No

The applicant is requesting or has received federal funds from other sources (non-CIG) for the same or a similar project. (Check one)

Yes. Identify _____

No

Declaration of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility

1) The applicant has read and understands the responsibilities related to EQIP eligibility and payment limitations as outlined in Part III of this announcement. (Check one)

Yes

No

2) The applicant and any producers that will receive direct or indirect payments through this project are eligible to participate in the EQIP program. (Check one)

Yes

No

3) Describe the EQIP eligible producer's level of involvement in the project.

Declaration of Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Federally Recognized Indian Tribe

The applicant wishes to be eligible for the in-kind contribution exception, and declares their status as a Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer, Federally recognized Indian Tribe or member of a Federally recognized Indian Tribe, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. (Check one)

Yes. Specify _____

No

Total Cost of Project: \$

Federal Funds Requested: \$

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."