

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Community Credit Corporation (CCC)

**ACTION:** NOTICE

StrikeForce Funds for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Announcement for Program Funding – South Dakota (SD)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

**SUMMARY:** The NRCS, an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing availability of StrikeForce funds to assist Tribes with conservation activities and practices. Proposals will be accepted from applicants within SD. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY2017 will be up to \$900,000. Proposals are requested from eligible Tribes or Tribal units. Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive process.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for StrikeForce projects. Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals may be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant.

**DATES:** Proposals must be received by NRCS no later than November 1, 2016. The NRCS will announce selected proposals by December 1, 2016.

**ADDRESSES:** Proposals sent via United States Postal Service (USPS), express mail, or overnight courier service must be sent to the following address: USDA-NRCS, StrikeForce Program, 200 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW Suite 203, Huron, SD 57350. Proposals sent electronically must be sent to [jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**StrikeForce Program Contact**

**Jennifer Wurtz**

Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

Phone: (605) 352-1225

E-mail: [jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**

**I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

**A. Legislative Authority**

The StrikeForce Program is authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP, including StrikeForce, to the Chief 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 StrikeForce is to provide specific funding for producers located in historically impoverished areas of the state. Proposals should focus on a local natural resource need such as sustainable ranching or farming, rangeland health, or soil health. The NRCS will accept proposals under this notice submitted by eligible entities from SD. Eligible entities include Indian Tribes, state and local units of government, non-governmental organizations, and individuals.

The applicant is to submit a proposal. Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. The NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on how they demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one local resource concern. Complete proposals received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel.

## **II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

The NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY2017 will be up to \$900,000. Funds will be awarded through a competitive process.

## **III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION**

### **A. Applicant Eligibility**

StrikeForce applicants must be a federally-recognized Indian Tribe, state or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, or an individual.

### **B. Project Eligibility**

To be eligible, projects must involve producers who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements set forth in § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3). Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip>. Participating producers are not required to have an existing EQIP contract.

### **C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments**

The following payment requirements apply to StrikeForce:

- StrikeForce funds are awarded through a competitive process. These are EQIP contracts; thus, StrikeForce contracts are limited by the payment limitation found at Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, which imposes a \$450,000 payment limitation for all payments made to persons or legal entities under an EQIP contract entered into between FY2014 and FY2018.
- All agricultural producers receiving a direct or indirect payment through participation in a StrikeForce project must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3).
- In addition, Section 1240B of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-2, prohibits duplicative payments. Accordingly, direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which an individual or legal entity has already received funds, or is

contracted to receive funds through any USDA conservation program (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program, EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program).

To participate in EQIP financial assistance, an individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements in 7 CFR § 1466.6, which include the following:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Potential Verification Documentation*</b>
Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 CFR, Part 12)	Documentation of their compliance status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service online portal
Have an interest in a farming operation as defined in 7 CFR, Part 1400	Documentation of their interest in a farming operation can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service online portal showing that the producer has established farm records
Have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract period	Documentation can be provided in the form of a deed, lease, or other documents which show the producer has adequate control for the term of the proposed contract period
The average adjusted gross income of the individual, joint operation, or legal entity may not exceed \$900,000	If using StrikeForce funding, documentation of a producer's Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) eligibility status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center, or through the USDA customer service online portal.

\*Many of the verification documents will require that the producer have current records established with the Farm Service Agency or require that the producer establish new records.

#### **D. Activities Limitation and Implementation**

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are eligible for StrikeForce. Applicants should reference the State's EQIP Eligible Practices List.

### **IV. SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR PROPOSALS**

#### **A. How to Obtain Materials**

The announcement for this StrikeForce funding opportunity can be found on the following Web site: [www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov).

## **B. Content and Format**

Proposals must contain the content, format, and information set forth below 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 their application.

Applicants must submit only one original copy of the proposal in the following format:

- Each page must be on numbered 8½" x 11" white paper that has one-inch margins; and
- Text must be typed single spaced in a font no smaller than 12-point.

Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate proposal for each project. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered.

1. **Project Summary:** (Three (3)-page maximum.) Applicants must submit a description including the information below:
  - a. Project title;
  - b. Primary area for consideration (refer to page 3) and why;
  - c. Project director name, and contact information (including address, e-mail, and telephone number);
  - d. Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
  - e. Project background (describe the issue or problem and how the project addresses it innovatively as defined in Section I.C. - one paragraph)
  - f. Project objectives (purpose and goals);
  - g. Project methods (methodology, tools, and processes)
  - h. Project geographic area/location (where project activities will take place)
  - i. Project deliverables/products; and
  - j. Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement. Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers and describe and certify their type and level of involvement in the project. Projects that do not involve EQIP eligible producers are ineligible for a StrikeForce award.
2. **Budget Information:**
  - a. **Budget Narrative:** (One (1)-page maximum.) A narrative describing the budget needs and justifying why the budget is appropriate should also be included.

## **C. How to Submit an Application**

Applicants may submit proposals electronically to the e-mail address listed below.

Alternatively, proposals may be submitted via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed. Proposals must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described. All proposals, regardless of how they are submitted, must be received by NRCS before 5:00 p.m. CDT on November 1, 2016.

**Note:** The NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or Web site problems or e-mailed submissions.

The address for submitting by e-mail is [jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov).

The address for submitting via express mail or overnight courier service is:  
USDA-NRCS, StrikeForce Program  
200 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Suite 203  
Huron, SD 57350

The address for submitting via the United States Postal Service is:  
USDA-NRCS, StrikeForce Program  
200 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Suite 203  
Huron, SD 57350

**Note:** Applicants must submit only one signed original copy of each project proposal. Proposals submitted by fax will not be considered. The use of Federal Government postage-paid envelopes, e-mail and/or equipment in submissions is a violation of Federal law and will disqualify you from consideration.

**D. Due Date**

Proposals must be received by November 1, 2016. The applicant assumes the risk of delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed proposals early via e-mail to ensure timely receipt by the NRCS.

**E. Acknowledgement of Submission**

The NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely pre-proposals via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission, but believes he/she submitted a timely pre-proposal, must contact the NRCS program contact within 30 days of submission deadline. Failure to do so will result in the pre-proposal not being considered.

**StrikeForce Program Contact**

Jennifer Wurtz  
Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs  
200 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Suite 203  
Huron, SD 57350  
Phone: (605) 352-1225  
E-mail: [jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.wurtz@sd.usda.gov)

**F. Withdrawal**

Applicants or their authorized representative may withdraw a proposal by written notice at any time before selections are made.

**G. Review**

Proposals will be evaluated by NRCS, federal partners, and non-federal partner agency staff. Each proposal will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice, including EQIP payment limitations. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals may be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant.

The projects or activities under StrikeForce must comply with all federal, state, and local regulations throughout the duration of the project and:

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

The NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on how they demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one local resource concern

#### **H. Anticipated Notification**

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the proposals via e-mail by December 1, 2016.