U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Announcement for Progam Funding for Conservation Innovation Grants for Fiscal Year 2017

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIG-17-01

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 10.912

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

ACTION: Announcement for Program Funding for NRCS' Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for fiscal year (FY) 2017.

SUMMARY: NRCS is announcing the availability of CIG to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Proposals will be accepted from eligible entities in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). NRCS anticipates that the amount of funding available for support of this program in FY 2017 will be up to $25 million, subject to FY 2017 appropriations actions. Proposals are requested from eligible governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration.

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

DATE: Proposals must be received by NRCS before **January 9, 2017.**

ADDRESSES: Proposals must be sent electronically through www.Grants.gov with a PDF to nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov.

Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov as described in section IV of the supplementary information. Please note that the Grants.gov electronic submission system is relatively complex for first-time users and involves several preliminary registration steps before the applicant can submit the application. To register, go to www.grants.gov, click on "Applicants", then click on "Get Registered."

If you have completed a prior application, you may already have completed the registration process. Please allow sufficient time to submit the application electronically in Grants.gov and for possible computer delays.

Registered applicants may submit an application by following the steps outlined below:

- Go to www.grants.gov. Information about submitting an application using Grants.gov is located on the Grants.gov website, along with supplementary materials.
- Select the "Applicants" tab.
- Select the "Apply for Grants" heading
- Click on "Apply for Grants." Follow all steps.
- Select "Download a Grant Application Package." All necessary forms are included within the Grants.gov application package.

Submitting a CIG application through Grants.gov requires completing a variety of standard forms including requiring applicants to include a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). Information on how to obtain a DUNS number and to register in SAM can be found at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/?cid=stelprdb1257063

NRCS will not consider applications that do not meet the application requirements, are incomplete, are submitted after the deadline date listed in this notice, or are submitted via mail, facsimile, or courier.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape) should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Melleny Cotton, Program Analyst, 1400 Independence Avenue Southwest, Room 6141-S, Washington, D.C. 20250; telephone: (202) 720-7412; email: melleny.cotton@wdc.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) 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 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 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) to EQIP eligible producers, into NRCS technical manuals and guides, or to the private sector. CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology in order to increase adoption, with an emphasis on opportunities to scale proven, emerging conservation strategies. CIG promotes the 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 projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects, field demonstrations, and on-farm conservation research. On-farm conservation research is defined as an investigation conducted to answer a specific conservation-related question using a statistically valid design while employing farm-scale equipment on farm fields. Specifically, a valid study design will use an appropriate number of replications and statistical analysis of results. To the extent NRCS funds research projects through CIG, the agency will only fund on-farm research projects that stimulate innovative approaches to natural resource management in conjunction with agricultural production.

NRCS will accept proposals under this notice for single or multiyear projects, not to exceed 3 years, submitted by eligible entities from any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), or the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). Eligible entities include Indian Tribes, State and local units of government, non-governmental organizations, and individuals.

Complete proposals received by the deadline will be evaluated through a two-tier review process. The first-tier review will be performed by a technical peer review panel based on the Proposal Evaluation Criteria identified in the instructions in section V, part B. For the second-tier review, full proposals, along with evaluations from the technical peer review panel and State Conservationist, will be forwarded to the Grants Review Board. The Grants Review Board will make its recommendations for project approval to the NRCS Chief who will make the final selections.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must promote environmental protection or natural resources enhancement. The proposal must also encompass development and field testing, on-farm research and demonstration, evaluation, or implementation of:

- Conservation adoption incentive systems, including market-based systems; or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches.

Projects or activities under CIG must comply with all applicable Federal, Tribal, 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 (i.e., 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; or
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. National Component

For FY 2017, NRCS will consider proposals that demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address national resource concerns in the categories listed below. Additional topics not listed below may be considered at the NRCS Chief's discretion. Proposals must clearly identify the category being addressed as this will determine its technical peer review panel assignment. Up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG in FY 2017 may be set aside for proposals from historically underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. Please see Section III, part E below for more information.

CIG Categories for FY 2017:

1. *Historically underserved producer or veteran farmers or ranchers.*

Projects that describe innovative environmental enhancement and protection approaches and technologies for the primary benefit of historically underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or organizations comprised of or representing these individuals may include:

- Technology transfer;
- Demonstration of new or novel technology that can be easily and inexpensively adopted;
- Projects that assess resource conditions and land capabilities;
- Projects that emphasize program outreach; or
- Projects that develop technical training.

2. *Data analytics for natural resources conservation.*

Data analytics is the science of examining raw data with the purpose of drawing conclusions about that information. Recent years have seen remarkable growth in the development and use of data analytics tools within the agricultural community. These tools are most often designed to help agricultural producers manage inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, fuel use) and increase yields, often through the use of precision agriculture techniques. Many of these tools are developed by private companies using a combination of publicly available data and proprietary algorithms for data analysis.

NRCS seeks to support the development of publicly available technical tools, akin to the production-oriented products described above, that harness the power of data analytics for natural resources conservation. These tools may be developed in the form of web-based software or mobile applications, and should be developed for a broad audience, including agricultural producers, scientists, and agricultural and environmental stakeholders. The objective of the proposed tools should be to increase producer knowledge of conservation benefits and alternatives, and should be designed to stimulate adoption of conservation practices by farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. The tools may address water quality, water quantity, air quality, climate change, soil health, and wildlife habitat.

The tool must: (a) be your, your team or your organization's original work product; (b) be solely owned by you, your team, or your organization, with no other person or entity having any right or interest in it; and (c) not violate intellectual property rights or other rights including but not limited to copyright, trademark, patent, contract, or privacy rights, of any other person or entity. You may contract with a third party for technical assistance to create the tool provided the tool's components are solely your work product, and you own all rights to them. You may submit a proposal that includes the use of open source software or hardware provided you comply with applicable open source licenses and, as part of the project, creates software that enhances and builds upon the features and functionality included in the underlying open source product.

3. *Pay-for-success models to stimulate conservation adoption.*

Pay-for-success (PFS) is an approach to contracting that ties payments to the achievement of measurable outcomes. PFS approaches require private financing to provide upfront capital for innovative projects. Investors are then repaid only if pre-determined outcomes are achieved. This approach shifts risk from project payers – typically public entities – to private investors, while allowing projects to scale through the use of private capital. PFS contracting has been used to scale up effective programs, as well as test innovative models of service delivery. Since the payer is not committed to paying for services if they do not achieve the desired outcomes, PFS can be particularly attractive as a way to realize greater accountability and efficiency by allocating resources to programs with demonstrable outcomes. To date, PFS has been most widely used in fields such as health care and education. PFS approaches can also work in the context of natural resource conservation, in particular for stimulating and incentivizing adoption of conservation practices on private lands.

For example, an applicant may propose a project to raise capital from investors to implement practices in a given watershed, with the goal of either improving water quality to a set standard or increasing adoption of identified conservation practices above a certain threshold. Private investors would then finance the implementation of these practices. A downstream water utility or other entity required to meet certain nutrient reduction targets would then repay the investors only if an independent evaluator determines that the implemented practices have met either the agreed upon water quality or conservation adoption threshold.

NRCS is inviting proposals that develop and demonstrate PFS approaches to stimulate conservation adoption on private lands.

4. *Precision conservation approaches.*

Farmers are increasingly adopting precision agriculture technologies that provide opportunities to improve their operation's economic performance through more precise management of inputs such as water, fertilizer and pesticides. Many of these precision technologies allow producers to analyze fields down to the square foot, providing cost-benefit calculations of growing crops at a granular scale. The resulting analyses can reveal that there may be parts of a field, or even whole fields that are not economically viable for production. In this way, precision agriculture can unmask previously hidden opportunities for producers to apply "precision conservation," by adopting conservation practices that support input management (for example, nutrient management addressing source, timing, rate and placement), or address in-field vulnerabilities while improving overall profitability.

NRCS invites proposals that design and implement precision conservation approaches, with priority given to approaches that are coordinated with and complement precision agriculture and data analytics technologies and tools.

5. *Projects that demonstrate the cost effectiveness of leveraged public and private impact investments in working lands conservation.*

For the purpose of this section, NRCS is seeking proposals that demonstrate the potential for new investment approaches that accelerate and expand private working lands conservation. Examples include:

- Climate or green bonds;
- Sustainable agricultural investments;
- Sustainable forestry investments; and
- Green infrastructure investments.

To be given consideration, the proposed project should demonstrate each of the following:

- Significant potential to leverage scalable investment from private capital markets to achieve conservation goals in areas such as soil and rangeland health, air quality, nutrient management, water quality and water use-efficiency, forest restoration, on-farm energy efficiency and generation, and green infrastructure;
- Commitment to improve measurement and metrics of conservation outcomes associated with investment strategies;
- Engagement of new conservation partners including diverse segments of the private investment community; and
- New models for retaining and enhancing the sustainable productivity of working farms, forests, and ranchlands consistent with ownership and natural resource management objectives.

CIG funding can be used for projects that help mitigate risk associated with new and innovative conservation investment vehicles through the use of approaches such as first loss strategies, price floors, guarantees, buyer-of-last-resort mechanisms, or other credit enhancements. Successful proposals will demonstrate a likelihood of success and clear metrics for conservation outcomes warranting the use of public funds to support risk mitigation strategies.

6. *Water management technologies and approaches to maximize agricultural production efficiency and minimize off-site impacts.*

For the purpose of this section, NRCS is seeking proposals that demonstrate, evaluate, and quantify the effects of water management practices and systems, including:

- Demonstrate and evaluate technologies and approaches to mitigate the impacts of long-term drought on agricultural production;
- Develop and demonstrate strategies for limited or deficit irrigation water management, and quantify its impact on water resources and farm profitability;
- Demonstrate and evaluate technologies to enhance agricultural water use efficiency at field, farm, or watershed scales;

- Demonstrate and quantify impacts of soil health promoting practices (e.g., no-tillage, cover crops, and crop rotations) on improving soil moisture, water infiltration, and soil water holding capacity coupled with an analysis of resulting production impacts on yield, yield variability, and economics of crop production across a range of soils, cropping systems, and climates;

Methodologies for demonstration may include case studies and enterprise budgets.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2017 will be up to $25 million, subject to final appropriations.

CIG will fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years (anticipated project start date of May 1, 2017). Funds will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed $2 million in FY 2017.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

A. Applicant Eligibility

CIG 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 7 CFR § 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 EQIP contract.

C. Matching Funds Requirements

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost. The amount of program funding will not exceed $2 million. CIG recipients must provide a non-Federal funding match equal to the amount of Federal funding requested. The non-Federal funds may be derived from a combination of cash and in-kind sources.

Matching funds must be secured at time of application. Proposals must 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 at 2 CFR Part 200.

D. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

The following payment requirements apply to CIG:

- 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 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 FY 2014 and FY 2018.
- All agricultural producers receiving a direct or indirect payment through participation in a CIG 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, or 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:

Criteria	Potential Verification Documentation*
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 on-line 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 on-line 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 FY 2014-2018 CIG 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 on-line 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.

E. Historically underserved producers and veteran farmers or ranchers

For the FY 2017 CIG award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG may be set aside for proposals from historically underserved producers or veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.

To compete for these funds, the applicant must make one of the following declarations in the application as described in section IV, part A-10 of this notice.

Funds not awarded from this pool will revert back into the general funding pool. The regulatory definitions of a historically underserved producer and a veteran farmer or rancher, can be found at 7 CFR 1466.3.

F. Activities Limitation and Implementation

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 applicable NRCS State office.

CIG is designed to provide financial assistance to grantees. Procurement of any technical assistance required to carry out a project is the responsibility of the grantee. Technical oversight for grant projects will be provided by a Federal technical representative who will be designated by NRCS. NRCS will also designate a program contact and administrative contact for each project.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR PROPOSALS

All standard forms necessary for CIG submission are included within the Grants.gov application package. Additional information is posted on the CIG Web site at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html.

A. Content and Format

Proposals must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate proposal for each project. 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 a single copy of the application in the following format:

- Each page must be on numbered, letter-sized (8½" x 11") paper utilizing a white background that has one-inch margins; and
- The text of the proposal must be typed, single spaced, black, and in a font no smaller than 12-point.

Proposals that are incomplete or fail to comply with the required content and formatting requirements will not be considered for funding.

1. *Application form.*

Standard Form 424, "Application for Federal Assistance" is included as part of the application package posted on Grants.gov. Please refer to the CIG Web site for an example.

2. *Project abstract summary (1 page maximum).*

Applicants must complete the Project Abstract Summary, which is included as part of the application package posted on Grants.gov. Provide the applicant entity name, duration of project in months, amount of Federal funding requested, amount of non-Federal funding secured, and

project title. In the project summary section, identify the category of the project, the geographic location, and describe in non-technical language the issue or problem, the objectives to address the issue or problem, the innovative approach to be employed (including the role of participating partners, if applicable), how impact will be quantified, and the predicted benefits or deliverables of the project. If you wish to compete for the 10 percent set aside for historically underserved producers or veteran farmers or ranchers, please annotate this. Please refer to the CIG Web site for an example.

3. *Project description (15-page maximum)*

The project description must include the following information:

a. Project background: Describe the issue or problem, and the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high 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. Geographic location and size of project or project area: Describe the geographic location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map if possible.
e. EQIP eligible producer participation: Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers involved in the project, and describe the type and extent of their involvement. (Note: 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 project start date of May 1, 2017.
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. Resumes or CVs are not required. If submitted they will count towards the 15-page maximum.
h. Project deliverables/products: 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. Semi-annual progress reports;
    2. Supplemental narratives that explain and support payment requests;
    3. A final report;
    4. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress;
    5. A new technology and innovative approach fact sheet;
    6. A draft practice standard, if appropriate; and
    7. Participation in at least one NRCS-approved event during the grant period.

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; historically underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. Describe how the 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. Grant recipients will be required to provide a semi-annual progress report, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.

k. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, do not count towards the 15-page maximum.

l. Graphics, including pictures, charts, graphs and other types of like items that are included, will count towards the 15-page maximum.

4. Assessment of environmental impacts.

If implementation of the proposal is anticipated to have physical, chemical, or biological impacts on the environment, please describe, in general terms, what they will be and how extensive they will be. The description of the potential environmental impacts must address beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. The length of the description should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the natural environmental resources impacted directly, indirectly, 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. Natural environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other resources protected by law, regulation, executive order, and agency policy. NRCS may choose not to approve funding for projects that may result in unacceptable adverse environmental impacts.

Note #1: Please be aware that proposals for projects with potentially adverse impacts to natural resources 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.

Note #2: Please be aware that National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review and consultation by NRCS State or area office with consulting parties (such as the pertinent State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and federally recognized Tribes) may be required prior to the implementation of conservation practices or activities with the potential to affect cultural resources.

5. Budget Information, (12-page maximum).

The budget portion of the application consists of two parts, as described below:

a. Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs: The SF 424A is included as part of the application package posted on Grants.gov. Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds. This form is the summary budget for the project.

b. Detailed Budget Narrative: Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. In addition, any subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. The budget narrative should support the Federal funds requested and the applicant's matching funds.

The format of this information, which can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc., should be readable in letter-size, printable pages. 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 matching funds should be shown separately as in the SF 424A, not combined.

Note: Please include $3,000 in the project budget for travel designated by NRCS. These funds are required and can be part of the Federal portion, the applicant's matching funds, or both. Please identify whether the funds are part of the Federal portion, the cost share, or both.

6. *Indirect costs.*

a. Applicants wishing to claim indirect costs must have a federally approved indirect cost rate. The approved indirect cost rate must be included in the application package.
b. An indirect cost rate not to exceed 15 percent may be approved for applicants without a preexisting, Federally approved indirect cost rate. To be considered for an indirect cost rate not to exceed 15 percent, applicants must submit an indirect cost rate proposal with the application that includes the following:
    1. The applicant's written policy for allocating and identifying direct and indirect costs;
    2. The contact information of the person who prepared proposal;
    3. The breakdown of indirect salaries by position title and amount;
    4. Line item expenditure descriptions describing how the costs are being allocated between direct and indirect costs;
    5. The applicant's tax identification number; and
    6. A signed certification attesting that: (i) all the costs are allowable under the Office of Management and Budget cost principles; (ii) the costs treated as indirect have not been claimed as direct; (iii) similar types of costs have been accounted for consistently; and (iv) the applicant will notify the Federal government of any account changed that would affect the rate. This certification should be signed by the applicant's approving official or the applicant's Chief Financial Officer.
c. Additional information on indirect costs can be found in 2 CFR 200.

7. *Matching.*

Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-Federal third parties. Proposals without signed written verification will be deemed incomplete.

Cash Match: For third-party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the contributor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash contribution; and (5) a statement that the contributor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

In-Kind Match: "In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third-party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of in-kind contributions include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and verifiable.

For third-party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the contributing organization and the applicant, which must include: (1) the name, address, 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 value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to 2 CFR 200.306 for additional guidance and other requirements relating to matching, to include third-party in-kind contributions and allowable costs.

8. *Letters of support.*

Letters of support should include the entity name, location, and role. This is not required for those providing pledge agreements for cash or in-kind support under paragraph 7 above.

Note: NRCS may conduct reference checks to ensure that organizations identified are supportive and involved with the project.

9. *Declaration of previous CIG projects involvement and past performance.*

Identify any previously awarded National or State CIG projects related to this proposal and any of their principal investigators and please respond to item 9.a below. If you have never received an NRCS CIG, but have received other Federal or non-Federal assistance agreements (an assistance agreement is a grant or cooperative agreement and not a contract), please respond to item 9-B below. If you have never received any type of Federal or non-Federal assistance agreements, please indicate this in your proposal.

A. Applicant has previously received an NRCS CIG:
   1. Identify any current or past CIG(s). Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award(s). For up to the five most recent projects that are either in progress or have been completed within the past 2 years, indicate how you successfully managed the grant(s), and successfully performed all phases of work under

the previous or existing grant(s), including whether the desired outcomes of the project(s) were met by providing information on the following:

a. Funds expenditure; i.e., the balance of grant funds currently remaining or deobligated; and
b. Describe your compliance with grant requirements, including, but not limited to, information regarding your compliance with the work plan, schedule, terms and conditions, and timely reporting (e.g., semiannual progress reports, financial status reports, and any other required submittals). Also, describe your success using NRCS grant funds, including whether you reported accomplishments to NRCS.

B. Applicant has received other Federal or non-Federal assistance agreements:

1. Identify current or prior Federally or non-Federally funded assistance agreements that are in progress or have been completed within the past 2 years. Please provide information on no more than five of your most recent assistance agreements (if received within the past 2 years). Describe your history of successfully managing these agreements and performing the agreements, including meeting and complying with reporting requirements, submitting final acceptable technical reports, and reporting on whether you were making progress towards achieving the results under those agreements and, if not, whether you explained why.

10. Declaration of historically underserved and veteran farmers or ranchers.

To compete for the 10 percent of funds set aside for historically underserved producers or veteran farmers or ranchers, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities, applicants must make one of the following declarations in writing of their status as such:

"I qualify as a (historically underserved producer) (veteran farmer) (veteran rancher) and wish to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool."

"(Entity Name) represents historically underserved producers or veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations. (Entity Name) wishes to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool."

Refer to part III, section E that describes the provision of the funding pool set aside for historically underserved producers and veteran farmers or ranchers.

11. Documentation of Submission to State Conservationist

Applicants must submit a copy of their complete proposal to the appropriate State Conservationist(s) by email or mail by the submission deadline. Include documentation showing that the application was sent to the appropriate State Conservationist(s) or delegate(s) for review by January 9, 2017. Acceptable documentation can be a copy of a transmittal letter if sent via mail or a copy of an email transmitting the proposal if sent via email. If a project is multi-State in scope, all State Conservationists or delegates in the project area must be sent the proposal for review. A list of State office addresses and phone numbers is included at the end of this notice. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the appropriate State Conservationist(s) or delegate(s) during proposal development

12. Certifications.

All proposals must include a SF 424B, which is included in the Grants.gov package. In addition, applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following Federal regulations:

A. 2 CFR Part 417, Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement);
B. 2 CFR Part 418, New Restrictions on Lobbying; and
C. 2 CFR Part 421, Government-wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

13. Grants.gov submissions.

When submitting applications to Grants.gov, applicants should:

A. Combine elements 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 (if applicable), and 11 into one document and upload it to Grants.gov on the Project Narrative File utilizing the "Add Mandatory Project Narrative File" feature; and
B. Combine elements 5b, 6, and 7 into one document and upload it to Grants.gov on the Budget Narrative File utilizing the "Add Mandatory Budget Narrative File" feature.

B. Additional Requirements

The following items must be obtained prior to entering into an agreement with the Federal government and must be obtained prior to registering with Grants.gov:

1. **Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet 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 by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
2. **System for Award Management (SAM) Registration:** SAM is the official Federal system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registry, Federal Agency Registration, Online Representations and Certifications Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/. Please allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration.

Applicants are encouraged to apply early for their Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM) numbers.

C. How to Submit an Application

Applicants must submit proposals electronically through Grants.gov with a .pdf copy emailed to nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov. The emailed application must be assembled into one document in the order specified in section IV, part A. All proposals must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Grants.gov provides date and time stamps on proposals submitted through its website. All proposals must be received by January 9, 2017. Emailed proposals must be in .pdf format and received by NRCS before the submission deadline. Proposals added to cloud services or drop boxes are not acceptable.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or Web site problems related to Grants.gov or emailed submissions. If you encounter issues with Grants.gov, please contact their helpdesk at (800) 518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process well in advance of the submission deadline and send their email in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems. Hard copies will not be accepted.

D. Due Date

Proposals must be received by January 9, 2017. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed proposals early to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

E. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of proposals received by the submission deadline via email. An applicant who does not receive such an email acknowledgement within 15 days of their submission, but believes the proposal was submitted in advance of the submission deadline must contact the NRCS program contact below within 30 days of the submission deadline. Failure to do so may result in the proposal not being considered.

CIG Program Contact:

Melleny Cotton
USDA-NRCS
1400 Independence Avenue, Southwest, Room 6141-S
Washington, D.C. 20250
Phone: (202) 720-7412
Email: melleny.cotton@wdc.usda.gov

F. Withdrawal

Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made by the applicant or an authorized representative.

G. 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:

1. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
2. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
3. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
4. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
5. Compensation for injuries to persons or damage to property arising out of project activities;

6. 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
7. 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 on part VII, section B.

H. Patents, Inventions, and Copyrights

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal 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.

All tools produced must meet the accessibility of Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) requirements as specified in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d) as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220). Specifically, subsection 508(a)(1) requires that when the Federal government procures EIT, it must allow Federal employees and individuals of the public with disabilities comparable access to and use of information and data that is provided to Federal employees and individuals of the public without disabilities. All EIT that is subject to the 36 CFR 1194 standards will have a Section 508 acceptance test and will be validated upon acceptance. All maintenance for EIT that requires upgrades, modifications, installations, and purchases will adhere to the Section 508 standards and 36 CFR 1194. Contact the CIG program contact with specific questions with regard to the applicability of this section.

Allocation of rights to patents, inventions, and copyrights shall be in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal 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. With regard to copyright, the grant recipient may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed, or for which ownership was acquired, under an award. USDA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for Federal purposes and to authorize others to do so.

I. Natural Resources and Historic Property Review Requirements

1. 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 require that an environmental review be prepared for Federal actions that may have environmental effects. NRCS financial assistance under CIG requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application packet, applicants are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project if there will be actions with the potential to affect the environment 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, technical contact, and environmental liaison will coordinate with the selected applicant concerning documentation for compliance with NEPA. The selected applicant will be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment 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.
2. NHPA Section 106, its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800), and other related authorities, require Federal agencies to determine if a project has the potential to cause an effect to historic properties and, if so, if they are adverse and how the effects may be addressed. The NHPA review and compliance in accordance with Section 106 of NHPA and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 must be completed by NRCS and may not be delegated. This compliance process includes consultation with SHPOs, Tribes, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and the appropriate preservation community regarding identification, evaluation of National Register of Historic Places eligibility, evaluation of effects, and potentially, resolving these effects. This treatment may include avoidance or other forms of mitigation. This mitigation will occur after the grant is awarded, but before the project is implemented.

V. PROPOSAL REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Review and Selection Process

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition. NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on how they demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address at least one of the topics provided in section I.D of this notice.

There are two steps in evaluating CIG proposals. First, a technical peer review panel will review the proposals. The technical peer review panel consists of NRCS national technical specialists, and technical specialists from other appropriately related Federal and non-Federal agencies. Proposals will be reviewed based on the CIG Proposal Evaluation Criteria listed in Part V, part B below.

The technical peer review panel will forward their recommendations and the proposals to the CIG Grants Review Board, which will certify the panel's recommendations and ensure that the proposal evaluations are consistent with program objectives. The CIG Grants Review Board consists of members of NRCS leadership, specifically the Deputy Chief for Science and

Technology (Chair), the Deputy Chief for Soil Science and Resource Assessment, the Deputy Chief for Programs, the Deputy Chief for Strategic Planning and Accountability, one Regional Conservationist, one State Conservationist, and the Director of the Office of Outreach and Advocacy. The CIG Grants Review Board will also consider findings from review by State Conservationists or their delegates before forwarding its recommendations to the NRCS Chief for final review and selection.

B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project must promote environmental protection or natural resources enhancement, and encompass development and pilot field testing, on-farm research and demonstration, and evaluation or implementation of:

- Conservation adoption incentive systems, including market-based systems, or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches.

Projects under CIG must comply with all Federal, State, and local regulations throughout the duration of the project and:

- Make use of a technology or approach that has been proven or studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate, evaluate, or verify environmental (i.e., 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; or
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

The Technical Peer Review Panels will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals:

1. Purpose, Approach, and Goals
   a. The design and implementation of the project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology;
   b. The project promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production;
   c. The project outcome is clearly measurable;
   d. The potential for successful completion; and
   e. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and an acceptably significant level of improvement will be achieved.
2. Innovative Technology or Approach
   a. The project is innovative (national, regionally, and/or local in nature); and
   b. The project conforms to the description of innovative projects in the Announcement for Program Funding.
3. Project Management
   a. Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable;
   b. Project staff has technical expertise needed;
   c. The budget is adequately explained and justified, and expenses allowable;
   d. Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions, and agencies; and

e. Level of NEPA or NHPA consultation.

4. Benefits and Transferability
   a. The potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology(s) or approach(s);
   b. The potential to transfer the approach or technology nationally or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas;
   c. The potential for successful transfer, through planned project activities, to historically underserved producers and communities;
   d. The potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods; and
   e. The project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.).

C. Other Factors

In making final recommendations from among the most highly qualified applicants, NRCS may consider the following factors if, and as, appropriate:

- A balanced distribution of funds among the states and territories;
- A balanced distribution of projects across resource concerns;
- Appropriate participation by historically underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities;
- Whether full participation by historically underserved individuals and groups will be achieved;
- The fair distribution of funds between urban and non-urban areas;
- Past performance; and
- Previously awarded CIGs.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NRCS anticipates announcing CIG selections by April 3, 2017 and awarding all grants by May 1, 2017. However, NRCS will not distribute any funds, and grantees cannot begin work until the parties execute an appropriate CIG agreement.

Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of May 1, 2017.

E. Unsuccessful Proposals

Applicants whose proposals are not selected for funding will be notified of their status by email within 30 days of the announcement of CIG selections.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive an official notification from National Headquarters. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental, cultural, and historic properties and resources review process by the appropriate NRCS State or area office and financial review.

Note Regarding Appropriations Restrictions: Awards made under this solicitation are subject to the provisions contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, (P.L. No. 114-113), Division A, Sections 745 and 746, regarding corporate felony convictions and corporate Federal tax delinquencies.

B. Grant Agreement

Through NRCS, CCC will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in the CIG component of EQIP.

The grant will permit the NRCS National technical contact to be involved in overseeing the work performed by the selected recipients. Although NRCS will negotiate precise terms and conditions as part of the award process, the anticipated Federal involvement for this project may include:

- Close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results;
- Collaborating during performance of the scope of work;
- Reviewing substantive terms of proposed contracts;
- Reviewing qualifications of key personnel (NRCS will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient); or
- Reviewing and commenting on reports prepared under the agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

C. Natural Resources and Historic Property Review Requirements

1. Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the NRCS State Office Environmental Liaison to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation required for the project. The environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to implementing activities with grant funds.

   Selected applicants may be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document(s) if an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

2. Upon notification of selection, the recipient must contact the NRCS State office to discuss if National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review is needed. The NRCS State Conservationist and appropriate staff, including the State Resources Conservationist, Cultural Resources Specialist (CRS) or Coordinator (CRC) will help and, under the direction of the State Conservationist, are responsible for completing this compliance, consultation, and review. Additionally, in accordance with Section 106 of NHPA, implementing regulations for Section 106 (36 CFR part 800), and with USDA regulations on consultation with Tribes, and related authorities, the NRCS State Conservationist, using appropriate historic preservation staff such as the CRS or CRC, shall consult with concerned Federally recognized Indian Tribes and the SHPO. NRCS may not delegate or assign consultation with Tribes or the SHPO to the recipient or other parties, and must carry out agency historic preservation responsibilities as quickly as possible and prior to implementation of the grant project by the recipient. The State office may have programmatic agreements in place to help facilitate and streamline this

process. State CRSs and CRCs have extensive experience in determining if Section 106 review and compliance is needed. If Section 106 review and compliance is needed, it must be completed prior to expenditure of funds.

D. Reporting Requirements

Selected applicants will be required to submit a SF 425, "Federal Financial Report," to the NRCS administrative contact, no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. In addition, every 6 months the selected applicant must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program, technical, and administrative contacts. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 6-month period and include, at a minimum:

- Project Status:
  - Summary of progress, including the results to date and a comparison of actual accomplishments with proposed goals (milestones) for the period and, where project output can be quantified, a computation of the costs per unit of output;
  - Current problems or unusual developments or delays;
  - Reasons why goals and objectives were not met, if appropriate;
  - Additional pertinent information including, where appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit cost;
  - Any time extensions;
  - Any changes to the project's original objectives, methods, or timeline with a summary of the justification for the changes;
  - Lessons learned that inform future project activities or broader efforts in the project's topic area; and
  - Work to be performed during the next 6-month period.
- Project Results:
  - Any preliminary results that can be used by NRCS for practice-standard revisions, policy changes, program revisions, and training opportunities;
  - Products, software tools, or technologies currently ready for adoption or transfer;
  - Potentially promising products, software tools, or technologies not yet ready for adoption or transfer, and a description of what is needed to reach that maturity;
  - Identification of new data or research needs to inform broader efforts in the project's topic area; and
  - Project activities that have been featured on recipient or partner Web sites and success stories that could be amplified by NRCS.
- EQIP Requirements:
  - Provide the following in accordance with the EQIP and CIG agreement provisions:
    - A listing of EQIP-eligible producers involved in the project; and
    - A self-certification statement indicating that each individual or entity receiving a direct or indirect payment for any structural, vegetative, or management practice through this grant is in compliance with the AGI and highly-erodible lands and wetlands conservation compliance provisions of the Agricultural Act of 2014.

The final report is due to the NRCS program, technical, and administrative contacts 90 days after completion of the project. This report is distinct from the performance progress reports described above. The final report summarizes the project and describe methods, quality control, findings, and recommendations. Additional information, forms, and templates can be found at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=stelprdb1045412

E. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Applicants should be aware that some or all of the information submitted in their application may be subject to public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Applicants are advised to mark confidential information, such as proprietary information, to potentially prevent disclosure.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

A. CIG Program Contact

Melleny Cotton
CIG Program Analyst
USDA-NRCS
1400 Independence Avenue, Southwest, Room 6141-S
Washington, D.C. 20250
Phone: (202) 720-7412
Email: melleny.cotton@wdc.usda.gov

B. CIG Administrative Contact

Frankie Comfort
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Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions, is available on the CIG website at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html.

Signed this 3 day of November in Washington, D.C.

Jason A. Weller
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation

Attachments

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2017 APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECK LIST

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

☐ **1. Application Form:** Complete Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance (from Grants.gov)

☐ **2. Project Abstract Summary**—(from grants.gov) Provide the applicant entity name, duration of project in months, federal funding requested, non-federal funding secured, project title. In the project summary section identify the category of the project, the geographic area/location, and describe in non-technical language the issue/problem, project objectives to address the issue/problem, the innovative approach/methods to be employed (including the role of participating partners, if applicable), how impact will be quantified, and predicted benefits/deliverables of the project if funded. If you wish to compete in the 10 percent set-aside please note this.

☐ **3. Project Description:** (15 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)

a. Project background
b. Project objectives
c. Project methods
d. Geographic location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
e. EQIP eligible producer participation (Note: 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
g. Project management
h. Project deliverables/products
i. Benefits or results expected and transferability
j. Project evaluation

☐ **4. Assessment of Environmental Impacts**

☐ **5. Budget Information:** (12 pages maximum) Submit a completed Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs.

a. Complete SF-424A (from Grants.gov)
b. Detailed budget narrative

☐ **6. Indirect Costs:** Submit documentation of federally approved indirect cost rate or indirect cost rate proposal if claiming indirect costs.

☐ **7. Matching:** Submit written signed verification of commitments of matching support from non-Federal third parties. Include both cash and in-kind commitments.

☐ **8. Letters of Support:** Include entity name, location, and role.

☐ 9. **Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement and Past Performance**

☐ 10. **Declaration of Historically Underserved and Veteran Farmers or Ranchers):** If an applicant wishes to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool, applicants must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Historically Underserved Producer, Veteran Farmer or Rancher, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities.

☐ 11. **Documentation of Submission to State Conservationist:** Include documentation showing that the proposal was sent to the State Conservationist(s) or delegate(s).

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

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STATE CONSERVATIONISTS AND REGIONAL CONSERVATIONISTS

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