

**Frequently Asked Questions
Conservation Innovation Grants (National Component)
Federal Fiscal Year 2019**

1. What is the email, phone and address we should use for ongoing questions?

nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov

2. If we received a CIG award in the past, do we need to register for new DUNS and SAMS numbers?

All CIG applicants are required to be registered in the System for Award Management, and provide a valid unique entity identifier (Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number before submitting an application. A CIG applicant who received an award in the past need not request a new DUNS number or SAMS registration before applying for another CIG award, but all applicants are obligated to ensure their DUNS number and SAMS registration is current. For further Information on SAM registration and applying for a DUNS number, please refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) -- Section IV(B).

3. Do DUNS and Sam numbers follow the farm or the person?

The primary applicant can be either an individual or an entity. Each group submitting a proposal will need to decide who they want the primary applicant to be and use the corresponding DUNS and Sam number to apply.

4. Could you please distinguish between the three CIG competitions currently available (State CIG, National CIG, and On-Farm Trials)?

The CIG program has three components, each of which has a separate competition:

1. State CIG competitions (each participating state holds their own competition),
2. National CIG competition, and
3. On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials.

The State and National CIG competitions are similar, but the State competitions offer smaller awards and their own set of funding priorities.

On-Farm Trials is a new CIG component that is focused on more widespread adoption of conservation innovations that are known to have a positive conservation impact. On-Farm Trials explicitly requires that incentive payments be paid to ag producers who participate by implementing innovations on their land. The CIG State and National competitions target technologies not necessarily fully developed whereas On-Farm Trials target projects that have been proven effective and are poised for widescale adoption.

5. Are there NRCS staff who can offer advice on proposal writing?

NRCS does not provide assistance with proposal writing. CIG staff are available to answer questions related to the contents of the CIG Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO).

6. Can a CIG grant be awarded to work with a producer who has previously worked with another successful CIG awardee?

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Yes.

7. What is the historical percentage of applications that receive CIG funds?

The percentage varies from year to year on the basis of demand (total applications received) and total funding availability. In 2018, \$10 million in funding was made available, 144 applications were received, and 22 grants were awarded.

8. CIG also has state specific programs. Where can I find out if there will be state-level funding available in my state?

See your state's NRCS website ([accessible here](#)) for information on state-level funding availability for CIG.

9. Are there any reasons an applicant would apply to a state CIG competition versus the national competition, other than financial limits?

There is often less competition in the state competition, with many fewer applications submitted. In addition, States may use different funding priorities than the national competition, so in some cases an entity may not be able to apply for the national competition but could apply to a state that is using relevant funding priorities.

10. Can a single organization be awarded funds for more than one project in a single year?

There is no prohibition on a single entity being awarded more than one grant in a single year.

11. Can one applicant apply to multiple CIG competitions (including the National CIG Classic competition, a State-based CIG competition and On-Farm trials) in the same year?

Yes, one applicant can apply to more than one CIG competition if the applications they are submitting are for different projects.

12. Could a project that involves research on one farm be competitive? Is there a minimum acreage amount required to be selected?

On-farm research is allowable in CIG. See the NFO for a definition of "on-farm research." There is no minimum acreage amount required.

13. If you get multiple applications from the same geographic area, are you likely to only choose one of them?

Multiple applications may be selected from the same geographical area. Geographic diversity is one criterion NRCS may consider in making final award selections.

14. Is there any limit or preference on geographic scope? Are multi-state projects desirable?

There is no set limit on geographic scope. As stated in evaluation criteria in the Notice of Funding Announcement, projects that have the potential to transfer their approach or technology to a broader audience or to other geographic areas or agricultural sectors will receive a higher point ranking and therefore be more competitive.

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15. If a proposal addresses more than one CIG priority, does that make it more competitive?

Addressing more than one priority neither increases nor lessens the competitiveness of a proposal. All proposals must identify a primary priority that will be used in assigning applications to peer review panels.

16. What would meet the requirement for inclusion of EQIP eligible producers?

The CIG statute states that all CIG projects must involve EQIP eligible producers. The extent to which projects involve EQIP eligible producers is taken into consideration as part of the application evaluation criteria.

17. Must the EQIP-eligible producers who are part of the project be recruited and identified at the time of application?

It is not necessary to recruit and identify all of the intended EQIP eligible producers that will be participating in a project at the time of application. Applications must, however, describe the extent of involvement of EQIP-eligible producers in the project. In addition, if matching funds are to be provided by producers, those producers and matching fund amounts must be identified at the time of application.

18. Can a proposal include some producers that are EQIP-eligible, and some that are NOT

EQIP-eligible? If YES, then will there be any limitations on activities we can conduct on non-EQIP eligible farms?

The NFO provides detailed information related to this question. While EQIP-eligible producers must be involved in all CIG projects, not all producers involved in project must be EQIP-eligible. Any CIG payments made to producers as part of a project must go to EQIP-eligible producers.

19. Is there a limit on the number of letters of support that can be included within the applications?

No. Letters of support for the project from individuals or entities that are not project partners may be submitted and should be placed at the very end of the application package.

20. Can an entity be awarded both a national and state-level CIG?

Yes, if they are for different projects.

21. Can state-level CIG awards that we have received for the project count as matching funds?

No. Federal funds cannot be used as matching funding for CIG projects.

22. Are Federal collaborators (e.g., a USGS scientist) allowed to be included in applications if the submitting entity is a state university?

Yes. However, CIG funding cannot be used to support salary, benefits, or travel of a

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Federal employee. In addition, Federal salaries cannot be used as in-kind matching funds for the CIG project.

23. How does partnership in the CIG application work? Does only one team member apply? For instance, should the proposal mention that one team is developing a tool and another is doing the dissemination/education/outreach portion?

Each application must be submitted by a single individual or entity. Applications may have multiple components, with different partners leading execution of those components. In these cases, most applicants choose to have the partners serve as sub-contractors.

24. How is funding allocated across the priority areas?

There is no set amount of funding dedicated to each priority area.

25. Will pollinator habitat continue to be a priority in future years?

National CIG priorities are selected by the NRCS Chief each year. It is unlikely that priorities that were selected this year will be chosen again in the following year.

26. If a portion of CIG funds are used for development of a tool that was already in development prior to receiving the grant, does the tool still need to be free for all to use?

NRCS does not prohibit the development of tools that are ultimately commercialized and sold to farmers, ranchers or forest landowners.

27. The mandatory travel amount is \$3,000. Do we budget that per staff included in the project or just the primary project director?

The \$3,000 travel amount should be budgeted per project, not per staff member. This travel funding is designated for each project to send up to two contacts to a CIG orientation meeting and one additional conference or similar event. Any additional travel required for completion of the project must be considered additional to this \$3,000.

28. Is the purchase of new equipment that is not fixed allowed?

Yes, purchase of unfixed equipment is permitted consistent with the definitions and provisions of [2 CFR 200](#). Also, please refer to the NFO Section IV (6) 7 – Funding Restrictions.

29. Can equipment serve as matching funding?

Yes. Matching funds may be committed by the applicant, project partners, or both, and can be a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Examples of in-kind contributions include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. Please refer to the NFO Section 4(8).

30. Can 50% of the matching funds be provided by other grants?

Yes, as long as the matching funds are documented in line with the requirements of the

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NFO, are not federal funds, are committed at the time of application, and are not being used as match on another Federal grant.

31. Are matching funds for a project only relevant if they are spent after the grant agreement is signed, or can an applicant count related expenditures leading up to the agreement being finalized?

Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant (preaward costs) may not be reimbursed, nor may matching funds expended prior to the effective date of the grant be counted as matching funds for the project. Please see the NFO Section IV(6) – Funding Restrictions.

32. Does the match need to be secured at the time of application? How should an applicant address the match requirement if specific producers involved in the project will not be identified until after proposal submission?

All matching funds for CIG projects must be committed at the time of application. If matching funds are to be provided by producers, those producers and matching fund amounts must be identified at the time of application.

33. Can overhead costs be reimbursed or used as match?

Yes. Please refer to section IV.B.7 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity to learn more about indirect costs.

34. Are there guidelines for how to determine the value for in-kind contributions cost?

The value of applicant contributions to the project is established according to federal cost principles. Applicants should refer to [§2 CFR 200.306](#) for additional guidance on matching funds, in-kind contributions, and allowable costs.

35. The Notice of Funding Opportunity states that an applicant can voluntarily reduce or waive indirect cost rate recovery as part of the required match. If an applicant decides to do this, can applicant decide what percent to waive?

Yes. An applicant can claim unrecovered indirect costs as part of their match and they can choose what percentage of their indirect costs that they want to contribute to match instead of claim for reimbursement.

However, applicants cannot decide the rate at which they value their indirect costs. Eligibility to recover indirect cost and the rate at which indirect costs can be claimed is described in section IV.B.7 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

36. Is a list of previous awardees available?

A list of previous National awardees can be found on the [CIG webpage](#) using the project search tool. Multimedia stories on the 2017 and 2018 grantees can also be found on the CIG webpage.

37. How are proposal reviewers chosen? Are they typically from within NRCS or other agencies

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or universities?

Proposal reviewers are usually a mix of NRCS technical experts, staff from other Federal agencies, and even non-Federal technical experts.

38. Do we have to start the project on the date the grant agreement is signed? If our project is designed around growing years, starting in September is difficult.

CIG projects begin on the date of final execution of the grant agreement. No cost extensions have been used in the past when growing year conflicts have made it difficult for an entity to complete their project within the given timeframe.

39. Will NRCS negotiate CIG awards if the amount requested is deemed too high?

NRCS reserves the right to negotiate CIG award amounts. Negotiations are considered on a case-by-case basis.

40. Roughly how long does it take from submission date to receiving grant money?

Applicants should plan their project with a projected start date of January 2, 2020. Once a grant agreement is signed by NRCS and the awardee, grant funding is provided on a reimbursable basis, though advances are allowed. Grantees may begin expending grant funding upon execution of their grant agreement.

41. How do we get feedback on CIG applications previously submitted in 2018?

Peer panel feedback is provided to each CIG applicant not selected for an award. Please email nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov if you have not received feedback from a proposal submitted in 2018.