



RCPP Partner Proposal Guide

VERSION 1.0
ISSUED 9/3/2019

Natural Resource Conservation Service



NOTE: The RCPP portal is currently being upgraded to enable submission of proposals for the FY 2019 funding announcement. This guide is provided to help partners prepare to submit proposals once the portal is functional. It is anticipated that the final design of the portal will effectively match the contents of this guide. Ultimately, there may be some deviations with how fields are filled or how they appear in the portal. When design of the portal is complete and access to the portal is made available, this guide will be updated.

While the portal is unavailable, partners may and should pursue eAuthentication permissions, which is required for portal access. See page 3 of this guide for information on obtaining eAuthentication permissions.

Partners should use this guide alongside the FY 2019 RCPP funding announcement, which includes critical information about the program.

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1. Overview of RCPP

1.1. RCPP Vision and Goals

RCPP is an innovative program that has as its critical feature a co-investment approach through which NRCS and partners collaborate to implement natural resource conservation activities. Following are four key principles of RCPP:

1. **Impact**—RCPP applications must propose effective and compelling solutions that address one or more natural resource priorities to help solve natural resource challenges. Partners are responsible for evaluating a project’s impact and results.
2. **Partner Contributions**—Partners are responsible for identifying any combination of cash and in-kind value-added contributions to leverage NRCS’s RCPP investments. It is NRCS’s goal that partner contributions at least equal the NRCS investment in an RCPP project. Substantive and sizable partner contributions are given priority consideration as part of the RCPP application evaluation criteria.
3. **Innovation**—NRCS seeks projects that integrate multiple conservation approaches, implement innovative conservation approaches or technologies, build new partnerships, or effectively take advantage of program flexibilities to deliver conservation solutions.
4. **Partnerships and Management**—Partners must have experience, expertise, and capacity to manage the partnership and project, provide outreach to producers, and quantify the environmental (and when possible, economic and social) outcomes of an RCPP project. RCPP ranking criteria give preference to applicants that meaningfully engage historically underserved farmers and ranchers.

Successful RCPP applicants bring an array of financial and technical capabilities to projects, demonstrate experience working effectively and collaboratively with agricultural producers, including land owners eligible for specific types of RCPP assistance including conservation easements, across the landscape, and propose innovative, sustainable, and measurable approaches to achieving compelling conservation goals.

2. RCPP Portal Roles and Workflow

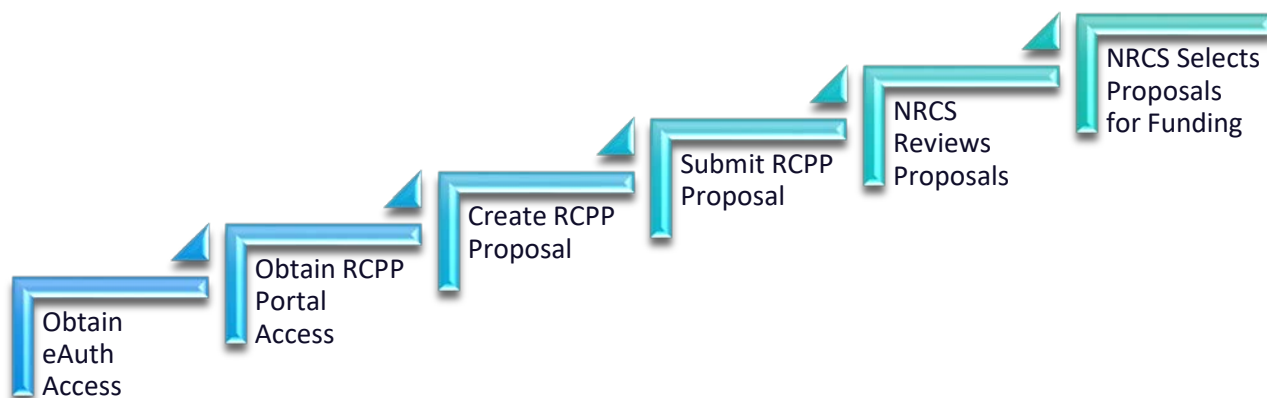
2.1. RCPP Portal Roles

The RCPP Portal provides partners with the ability to perform the following functions, for proposals and/or projects for which they are the lead partner:

- create and submit (or withdraw) proposals
- add and concur on project deliverables
- upload files to satisfy reporting requirements
- submit amendment requests
- concur on amendment requests submitted by state POCs
- edit their partner information as needed
- submit required reports (requirements vary by
- submit inquiries
- submit Project Completion Questionnaire
- view adjusted gross income and adjustment of terms requests (as applicable)

Note: some of the following will not apply to RCPP 2018.

2.2. RCPP Proposal Workflow for Partners



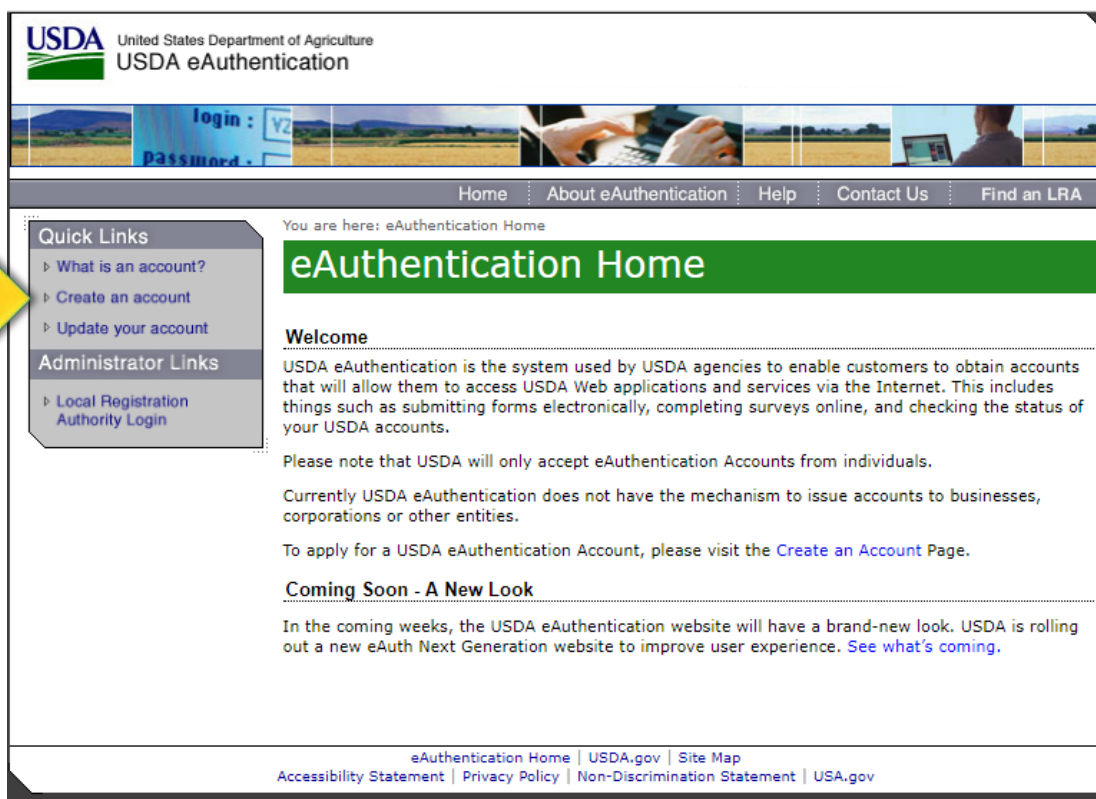
3. Accessing the RCPP Portal

3.1. Obtaining eAuthentication Access

- Partners must identify at least one system user for your organization. The system does not allow for entity-wide eAuthentication (eAuth) accounts, so individuals with an eAuth account will be able to create and submit a RCPP proposal on behalf of the eligible entity for which s/he works; maintaining eAuth for an appropriate individual to represent the entity is the sole responsibility of the entity (applicant/lead partner).
- This user must establish a USDA Level 2 e-Auth Account at this website - <https://www.eauth.usda.gov/mainPages/index.aspx>.

Please note: The USDA e-Auth process is a Department-wide authentication process and NRCS is unable to assist in the creation of an e-Auth Account.

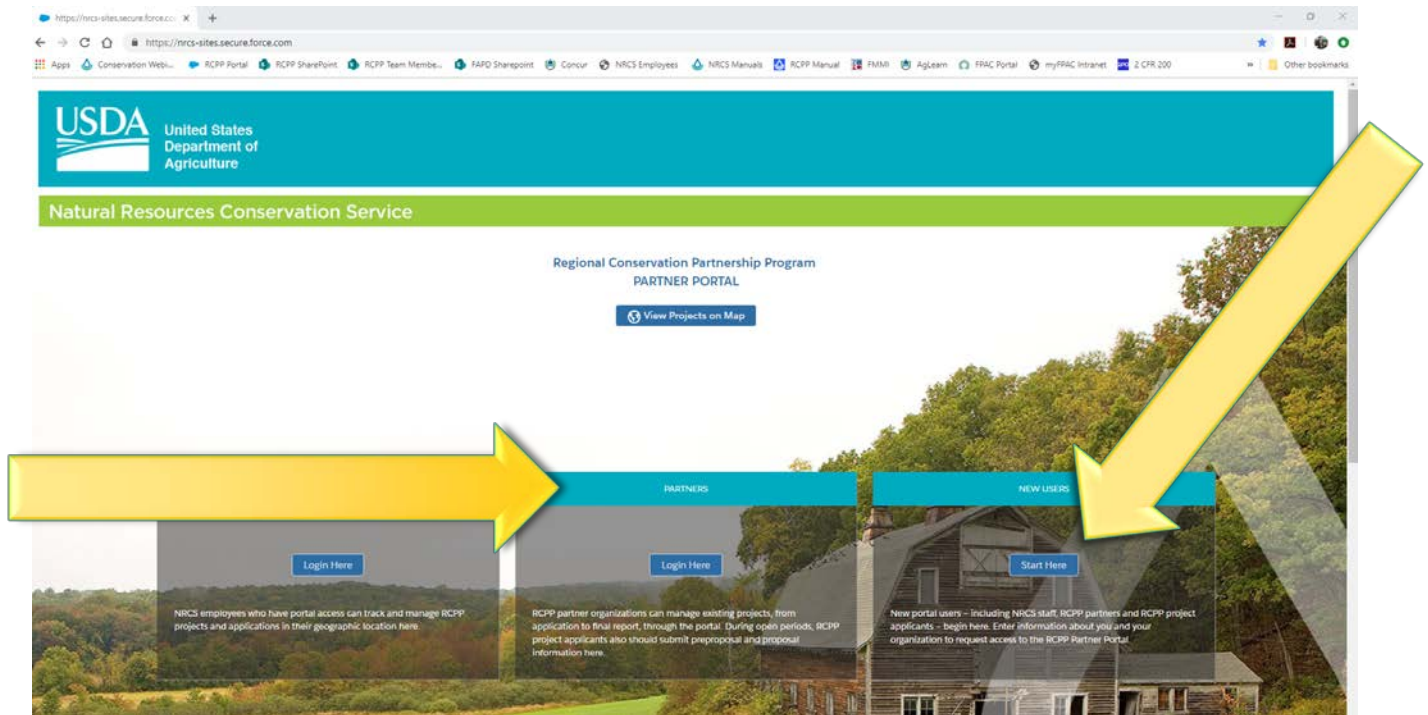
Current eAuthentication Homepage



The screenshot shows the USDA eAuthentication homepage. At the top left is the USDA logo and the text "United States Department of Agriculture" and "USDA eAuthentication". Below this is a banner image with a "login:" and "password:" field. A navigation bar contains links for "Home", "About eAuthentication", "Help", "Contact Us", and "Find an LRA". A breadcrumb trail reads "You are here: eAuthentication Home". The main heading is "eAuthentication Home". Under "Welcome", it states: "USDA eAuthentication is the system used by USDA agencies to enable customers to obtain accounts that will allow them to access USDA Web applications and services via the Internet. This includes things such as submitting forms electronically, completing surveys online, and checking the status of your USDA accounts." It also notes: "Please note that USDA will only accept eAuthentication Accounts from individuals. Currently USDA eAuthentication does not have the mechanism to issue accounts to businesses, corporations or other entities. To apply for a USDA eAuthentication Account, please visit the [Create an Account Page](#)." A section titled "Coming Soon - A New Look" says: "In the coming weeks, the USDA eAuthentication website will have a brand-new look. USDA is rolling out a new eAuth Next Generation website to improve user experience. [See what's coming.](#)" At the bottom, there are links for "eAuthentication Home", "USDA.gov", "Site Map", "Accessibility Statement", "Privacy Policy", "Non-Discrimination Statement", and "USA.gov". A yellow arrow points to the "Quick Links" section on the left, which includes "What is an account?", "Create an account", and "Update your account". Below that is the "Administrator Links" section with "Local Registration Authority Login".

3.2. Creating a User Account within the RCPP Portal

5. Go to the RCPP portal login page - <https://nrms-sites.secure.force.com>
6. Click on the “start here” button for new users as shown below.



7. Under the dropdown below “I am a ?...” select “Partner Organization”.

The screenshot shows the "Request Access Form" for the RCPP Partner Portal. The form includes instructions for users to identify themselves as an employee or partner, provide contact information, and submit the form. A dropdown menu labeled "I am a ?:" is shown with "Partner Organization" selected. Below the dropdown, there are fields for "BUSINESS ADDRESS" (Address 1) and "City".

Request Access Form

Both NRCS employees and partners now can submit, edit and review RCPP pre-proposal and proposal information through the new RCPP Partner Portal.

- In the first drop down field below, please identify yourself as an employee or partner.
- Then in the given fields, provide your contact information, including organization name, your first and last name, email address and physical address.
- Finally, you will be asked if you have a Level 2 e-Authentication account - with a yes or no drop down option. Although you can submit this form at any time, we recommend that you wait to submit this form until you can answer "yes" to this question.

Before we can grant you access, you will need a Level 2 e-Authentication account through USDA to access the RCPP Partner Portal. Visit the USDA website to learn more about e-Authentication and Level 2 access specifically: <https://www.eauth.usda.gov/main/Pages/index.aspx>. You may request e-Authentication access from this website as well.

Once you complete and submit the form, please allow three full business days for access to the system. NRCS or its technical providers may contact you if there are questions about your answers or RCPP project.

Thank you for submitting your RCPP Partner Portal access request.

***Required**
I am a ?:

Partner Organization
None
Partner Organization
NRCS Staff Member

BUSINESS ADDRESS
Address 1:
City:

8. Enter the full name of the designated user.
9. Enter the partner organization name, business address, city, state, zipcode, timezone, business email, and business phone.

The screenshot shows a registration form with the following fields:

- Partner Organization:** A dropdown menu with a downward arrow.
- Full Name:** A text input field.
- Partner Organization:** A text input field.
- BUSINESS ADDRESS:** A section header.
- Address 1:** A text input field.
- City:** A text input field.
- Address 2:** A text input field.
- State:** A dropdown menu with a downward arrow.
- Zip Code:** A text input field.
- Time Zone:** A dropdown menu with a downward arrow.
- Business Email:** A text input field.
- Business Phone:** A text input field.

10. If the designated user is taking over management of previously created proposals/projects, enter them in to the correct field.
11. Verify whether the designated user has e-Auth Level 2 Access.
12. Click the blue “submit” button at the bottom of the page.

The screenshot shows a form with the following elements:

- Proposals/Projects Requested to Manage (Enter "NA" if none):** A large text input field.
- Do You Have Eauth Level-2 Access?:** A dropdown menu with a downward arrow.
- Yes:** A text input field.
- Submit:** A blue button.
- Cancel:** A blue button.

Below the dropdown menu, there is a note: "You will need a Level 2 e-Authentication account through USDA to access the DCPD Partner Portal. Visit the USDA website to learn more about e-Authentication and Level 2 access specifically: <https://www.eauth.usda.gov/mainPages/index.aspx>. You may request e-Authentication access from this website as well."

4. Proposal Process for Partners

4.1. Overview

The RCPP Proposals tab is where Partners can view, create, and submit Proposals before the Proposal deadline set by the RCPP Team.

The screenshot shows a web interface for RCPP Proposals. At the top, there is a navigation bar with three tabs: 'RCPP PROPOSALS' (active), 'RCPP PROJECTS', and 'HELP'. Below the navigation bar is a blue button labeled 'New Proposal'. Underneath the button is a section titled 'PARTNER PROPOSALS' containing a table with the following data:

FISCAL YEAR	PROJECT NUMBER	PROJECT NAME	STATUS
2018	1679	KELLY 2	Selected
2018	1681	KELLY 3	Selected
2018	1683	KELLY 1	Selected

4.2. Creating a Proposal

4.2.1. Starting a New Proposal

1. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab.
2. Click the **New Proposal** button. A new window is opened.

Please note: If the Proposal deadline has passed, the **New Proposal** button will not be available. The status and the Proposal deadline will be displayed on the left side panel.

3. The **Project Details** screen is displayed by default, also indicated by the **Project Details** section on the left side panel.

4.2.2. Basic Project Information

4. Fill out the *Project Details – Basic Project Information*.

Project Details	
Basic Project Information	
Project Title:	Lead State:
Funding Pool: Please Select	CCA (if applicable): Please Select
DUNS:	SAM:
SCIMS:	

- a. *Project Title* - Enter a concise title for your proposed RCPP project. Please avoid acronyms that are not widely known.
- b. *Lead State*- Enter the two-letter abbreviation for the state where the largest portion, or all, of the project’s work will be carried out.
- c. *Funding Pool* - Select either the State/Multi-state or CCA funding pool.
- d. *Critical Conservation Areas (CCA)* - Select the CCA you wish to apply for. More information on CCAs, including boundary maps, is available on the [RCPP website](#). Please note all proposed counties for the project must at least partially fall within the boundaries of the CCA.
- e. *DUNS* - Please enter the Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number assigned to your organization. See the yellow help box below for help finding your organization’s number or registering for one.
- f. *SAM* - Please enter the System for Award Management (SAM) number assigned to your organization. See the yellow help box below for help finding your organization’s number or registering for one. If your organization needs to register for a SAM number, please begin this process as soon as possible. It can be a lengthy process.
- g. *SCIMS* – Partners interested in receiving an RCPP technical assistance award (including enhancement and or implementation TA) will need to establish a SCIMS registration as well. RCPP Coordinators can provide partners local contacts for SCIMS record establishment

Finding or registering a DUNS number –

<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

Finding or registering a SAM number –

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

Finding or registering for a SCRIMS – Please see your local service center, which can be found using this search tool - <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrsc>

4.2.3. Applicant Contact Information

5. Fill out the *Project Details – Applicant Contact Information*.

Project Details (cont.)	
Applicant Contact Information	
Lead Partner Organization:	
Project Director Name:	Alternative Contact Name:
Project Director Email:	Alternative Contact Email:
Project Director Phone Number:	Alternative Contact Phone Number:

- a. *Project Director Name and contact information* – Please enter the name, email, and phone number of the individual who will be responsible for managing the project should it be selected.
- b. *Alternative Contact Name and contract information* – Please enter the name, email, and phone number of an individual from the lead partner organization who can be contacted should the Project Director be unavailable, or change.

4.2.4. Goals and Objectives

6. Fill out the *Project Details – Goals and Objectives*.

Project Details (cont.)	
Goals and Objectives	
Proposed Start Date: June 2020	Proposed End Date:
Justification for Projects Longer than Five Years:	
Primary Resource Concern: Please Select (If State/Multi-State Pool Selected)	Primary Resource Concern: Please Select (If CCA Selected)
Additional Resource Concerns (State-Multi-State Pool): <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Animals – Livestock <input type="checkbox"/> Animals – Wildlife <input type="checkbox"/> Energy <input type="checkbox"/> Plants <input type="checkbox"/> Soil Erosion <input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Water Quantity	Additional Resource Concerns (CCA): <input type="checkbox"/> Degraded Plant Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Excess Water <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient Water <input type="checkbox"/> Soil Quality Degradation <input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality Degradation
Description of Goals and Objectives:	
Description of Expected Environmental, Economic, and Social Outcomes:	

- a. *Proposed Start Year* – This is automatically set at July 2020.
- b. *Proposed End Year* – Enter the proposed end date. Most projects are expected to end five years after the start date, the default project length, and minimum period over which environmental outcomes can typically be reported. If a project is proposed for a period longer or shorter than five years, a justification is required below.
- c. *Justification for Projects Longer than Five Years* – If the project is proposed for more than five years, please enter a justification for why the extended project length is needed to achieve the goals and objectives of the proposed project.
- d. *Primary Resource Concern* – Select the primary resource concern among the dropdown options for either the state/multi-state projects or CCA projects. This should be the resource concern that will receive the highest priority in consideration of awards of proposed financial assistance, technical assistance, and contributions. For CCA projects,

partners must select one of the priority resource concerns listed for the relevant CCA in the RCPP funding announcement.

- e. *Additional Resource Concerns* – Please select all other resource concerns your project will address through financial assistance, technical assistance, and/or contributions.
 - f. *Executive Summary* – A brief summary of the project (i.e. your elevator pitch) including project goals and objectives.
 - g. *Description of Expected Environmental, Economic, and Social Outcomes* – All RCPP projects are required to develop and report on agreement progress, contributions, and environmental outcomes. Partners may also choose to develop and report on economic and social outcomes. Partners are highly encouraged to review the RCPP outcomes guidance document posted to the RCPP website for more information. In this box, partners should briefly describe the anticipated outcomes of their project and the proposed method for measuring outcomes. After a RCPP project is selected for funding, NRCS will work with partners to ensure that proposed project outcomes are meaningful and that methods for measuring and reporting on outcomes are feasible.
7. Click the **Save as Draft** button to save, or the **Save & Continue** button to complete this section. If all fields have been filled out the *Project Details* section on the left side panel will display a green checkmark, indicating the section is complete.

4.2.5. Funding Request

- 8. The *RCPP Funding Request* screen is displayed, also indicated by the *RCPP Funding Request* section highlighted in dark blue on the left side panel. Fill out the *Financial Assistance* section of the funding request.
- 9. Click **Add Row** to add additional rows as necessary.

RCPP Funding Request						
Activity Type (Drop Down)	Fiscal Year	State	Amount (\$)	Deliverable Type (Auto-populated)	Proposed Activities	Description
Choose an item.				Producer contracts/ supplemental agreements involving...		
<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px 20px; display: inline-block; background-color: #e0e0e0;">Add Row</div>						
			Financial Assistance Subtotal			

- a. *Activity Type* – Select between (1) Land Improvement, (2) Rentals, (3) Easements, U.S.-Held, (4) Easements, Entity-Held, and (5) Public Works/Watersheds. For a definition of these contract types please see Appendix A.

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- b. *Fiscal Year* - Enter the year this work will be performed. A separate row is needed for each fiscal year, even if the same work is being performed in consecutive years.
 - c. *State* – Enter the two-letter acronym of the state where the work will be performed. A separate line is needed for each state for each fiscal year for each contract type.
 - d. *Deliverable Type* – This column will be auto-populated based on the contract type entered in the first column.
 - e. *Proposed Activity* – Enter a description of the proposed project activities under the proposed contract type.

Some sample proposed activities:

- Practices to improve Sage-grouse habitat (e.g. fence marking, prescribed grazing, juniper removal).
- Rental contracts with producers for 3 years to defray landowner costs of fallowing lands during transition to organic production.
- Conservation easements to permanently protect critical riparian habitat for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

- f. *Description* – This field is optional but will be considered in proposal evaluation; partners are encouraged, where applicable, to illustrate the relationship between requested financial assistance and partner contributions that compliment and amplify the impact of the financial assistance.

Some sample descriptions:

- Fence marking and fencing supplies related to prescribed grazing are provided by the lead partner as described in Contributions section.
- State agency providing cash match for easements; easement support services provided as cash contribution by lead partner

10. Fill out the ***Technical Assistance*** section of the funding request. **Partners must closely read Section IV of the RCPP funding announcement for a thorough explanation of how technical assistance (TA) will work for RCPP projects.** Partners may request up to 7% of the total project request for Enhancement TA activities. NRCS will retain at least 5% of the total project request for Implementation TA. NRCS will also retain the remaining Implementation TA (18% of the total project request). Implementation and Enhancement TA awards to partners are not guaranteed based on project selection. TA will be subject to negotiation and based on NRCS technical and financial criteria, including but not limited to partners ability to provide defensible supporting justification that project partners (or third-parties) have the capability and capacity to carry out implementation TA activities at a reasonable cost, and NRCS determination that any obligations of TA shall not adversely affect NRCS ability to implement its own responsibilities in the project.

11. Click **Add Row** to add additional rows as necessary.

RCPP Funding Request (Continued)						
Technical Assistance Type (Drop Down)		State	Amount (\$)	Deliverable Type (Auto-populated)	Proposed Activities	Justification
NRCS TA		VA	=5% of Total Project Request			
NRCS Implementation TA		VA	=18% of Total Project Request			
Choose an item.						
<input type="button" value="Add Row"/>						
			Technical Assistance Subtotal			
			=FA + TA	Total Project Request		

The table will start with two rows pre-populated, an NRCS TA row which will equal 5% of the total project request and an NRCS Implementation TA row which will equal 18% of the total project request. If partners request Implementation TA, this will subtract from the NRCS Implementation TA.

- a. *Technical Assistance Type* – Select from the dropdown list of technical assistance types.
 - b. *State* – Enter the two-letter state abbreviation for where the technical assistance activities will be carried out. A separate line is needed for each participating state (for example, all projects will have NRCS TA and Implementation TA for each participating state; any enhancement or implementation requests would add to the number of requests.
 - c. *Amount* – Enter the dollar amount of technical assistance proposed in whole dollars.
 - d. *Deliverable Type* – This column is automatically populated based on the selected Technical Assistance Type.
 - e. *Proposed Activities* – Briefly describe the types of technical assistance activities that will be performed for each deliverable.
 - f. *Justification* – Briefly justify the need and substantiate the funding request.
12. Click the **Save as Draft** button to save, or the **Save & Continue** button to complete this section. If all fields have been filled out the **RCPP Funding Request** section on the left side panel will display a green checkmark, indicating the section is complete.

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13. The *Supporting Documents for RCPP Funding Request* screen is displayed, also indicated by the *Supporting Documents for RCPP Funding Request* section highlighted in dark blue on the left side panel. Fill section labeled Capability to Perform Technical Assistance.

Capability to Perform Technical Assistance

Describe the capability and capacity of each partner organization and/or third party proposed to carry out Implementation TA activities in the RCPP funding request table above (i.e. certifications, educational background, prior experience of individuals assigned to the tasks as well as the time and number of staff allocated to these tasks):

14. Click the **Upload** button and select each file to be submitted as part of the proposal. This may include fee schedules based on proposed technical assistance activities or supporting documents needed to illustrate the capability and capacity of partners to perform the technical assistance activities listed above. For watershed project (e.g., Public Law 83-566-type activities, partners must upload a detailed watershed plan.
15. Click the **Save as Draft** button to save, or the **Save & Continue** button to complete this section. If all fields have been filled out the *Supporting Documents for RCPP Funding Request* section on the left side panel will display a green checkmark, indicating the section is complete.
16. The *Partner Contributions* screen is displayed, also indicated by the *Partner Contributions* section highlighted in dark blue on the left side panel. Click the plus sign labeled **Add Partner** to add a partner. A *Project Partner/Entity* Form will be displayed.

Please note: This must be done for the lead partner, contributing partners, and contributing third-party entities that will be included in the **Contributions Table**.

4.2.6. Partner Contributions

17. Fill out the **Project Partner Form** – Lead partners must enter information for each partner (other than the lead) providing contributions. This includes eligible partners (see list in funding announcement), third-parties (e.g., individuals/entities not considered eligible partners) and Federal agencies providing contributions.

Project Partner Form	
Partner Name:	Partner/Entity Type Please Select.
Partner Contact Name:	Partner Contact Email:
Partner Contact Telephone:	Partner Zip Code:

- a. *Partner Name* – Enter the partner, entity, or Federal agency’s full name.
 - b. *Partner/Entity Type* – Select from the dropdown options of partner and entity types.
 - c. *Partner Contact Name, Email, and Telephone* – Enter the name, email, and telephone number of an individual that can be contacted for questions related to the partner organization, third-party entity, or Federal agency.
 - d. *Partner Zip Code* – Enter the Zip Code of the organization’s headquarters.
18. Click the **Save** button. The Partner/Entity will not be available in the dropdown menu for the **Partner Contributions Table**.
19. Fill out the **Partner Contributions Table**.
20. Click **Add Row** to add additional rows for each partner/entity contribution.

Partner Contributions					
Partner Name (Drop Down)	Cash vs. In- Kind	Amount (\$)	Contribution Category (Drop Down)	Sample Activities (Drop Down)	Description
	Choose an item.		Choose an item.		
<input type="button" value="Add Row"/>					
		Partner Contributions Subtotal			
		Partner Contributions Ratio (=Contributions/Total Project Estimate)			

- a. *Partner Name* – Select the partner, entity, or Federal agency from the dropdown list. This dropdown is populated by the organizations entered using the ***Project Partner Form***.
- b. *Cash vs In-Kind* – Select either cash or in-kind from the dropdown.
 - i. Cash, i.e., a cash contribution, can come from the partner’s own funds (general revenue), cash donations from non-federal third parties (i.e. partner organizations), or from grants.
 - ii. In-Kind contribution is a non-cash contribution of value provided by the partner or by third parties. In-kind contributions are typically the calculated value of personnel, goods, and services, including direct and indirect costs.
- c. *Amount* – Enter the dollar value of the contribution.
- d. *Contribution Category* – Select from the dropdown list of contribution categories. These categories mirror the types of technical assistance (see Appendix B) or fall under a category covering all types of financial assistance.
- e. *Sample Activities* – Select from the dropdown list of sample activities. The options within the dropdown list are determined by the Contribution Category selected.

-
- f. *Description* – Enter a brief description of the contributions, how they were calculated, or what specific materials/staff/etc will be used for the contribution.

Some sample descriptions:

- Staff salaries based on attached fee schedule to support project management
- Staff salaries based on attached fee schedule to support outreach
- 10% of overall project cost, de minimis rate for unrecovered indirect costs
- Fencing and other materials to be provided by partner at actual cost
- 25% cash match for conservation easement

21. Click the **Save as Draft** button to save, or the **Save & Continue** button to complete this section. If all fields have been filled out the *Partner Contributions* section on the left side panel will display a green checkmark, indicating the section is complete.
22. The *Supporting Documents for Partner Contributions* screen is displayed, also indicated by *Supporting Documents for Partner Contributions* section highlighted in dark blue on the left side panel. Click the **Upload** button to upload contribution commitment letters. Contribution commitment letters are required from each partner, third-party and Federal agency included in the contributions table (other than the lead partner).
23. Once all contribution commitment letters have been uploaded, click the **Save as Draft** button to save, or the **Save & Continue** button to complete this section. If all fields have been filled out the *Supporting Documents for Partner Contributions* section on the left side panel will display a green checkmark, indicating the section is complete.
24. The *RCPP Project Map* screen is displayed, also indicated by *RCPP Project Map* section highlighted in dark blue on the left side panel. Click the **Upload** button to upload a map of the proposed RCPP project area (any format).
25. Click the **Save as Draft** button to save, or the **Save & Continue** button to complete this section. On the left side panel will display a green checkmark, indicating the section is complete.

4.2.7. Proposal Narrative Questions

26. The *Proposal Narrative Questions* screen is displayed, also indicated by *Proposal Narrative Questions* section highlighted in dark blue on the left side panel. Answer all questions within this section.

Proposal Narrative Questions

Impact

Describe the compelling need for the project and an overview of how the project will generate targeted conservation benefits.

Describe rationale for inclusion of each RCPP activity type (e.g., rental contracts, entity-held easements) in project proposal, and how each activity relates to the generation of conservation benefits.

Describe the rationale for the proposed geographic scope of the project.

Describe proposed approach for evaluating the success of the project, including outcomes.

Will this project help producers meet or avoid natural resource regulatory requirements? If so, describe how.

Partner Contributions

Describe how partner contributions add value to the proposed project by leveraging and amplifying the benefits of the requested RCPP funding.

Innovation

Provide a justification for why this project could not be carried out through other NRCS Farm Bill programs--what RCPP flexibilities does the project take advantage of?

Does the partner plan to target project funding to particular locations or producers based on a scientific assessment or research-based plan? If so, please describe the approach.

Describe any proposed innovative methods or approaches for conservation planning, implementation, or assessment, and/or the proposed use of promising new technologies that have a demonstrated likelihood of success.

Proposal Narrative Questions

Partnerships and Management

Is this a brand-new project or is this part of an existing effort? Describe the extent of project activities completed to date, and how the proposed activities relate to any existing efforts. Include a brief description of any historical coordination with NRCS staff or programs.

Describe the lead partner's experience managing Federal funding awards or similar projects and conservation projects, including the execution of deliverables and engagement with ag producers and private landowners to get conservation on the ground.

Describe proposed producer outreach activities designed to identify, inform, and enroll eligible producers and entities in RCPP contract activities.

Describe any proposed efforts to encourage or include the participation of historically underserved producers, including socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource and veteran farmers and ranchers, or to include as a contributing partner(s) an organization(s) working with or representing those groups of producers.

27. Click the **Save as Draft** button to save, or the **Save & Close** button to complete this section. On the left side panel will display a green checkmark, indicating the section is complete. This will return you to **RCPP Proposals** tab.

4.3. View/Editing a Proposal

1. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab. A list of the Partner's proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.

The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar at the top containing a home icon, 'RCPP PROPOSALS', and 'RCPP PROJECTS'. Below the navigation bar is a grey bar with a blue button labeled '+ New Proposal'. The main content area is titled 'COMMUNITY PROPOSALS' and contains a table with the following data:

FISCAL YEAR	PROJECT NUMBER	PROJECT NAME	STATUS
2018	1800	Northwest Arizona Watershed Conservation Pr...	Pre-Proposal Denied
2018	1801	WV Soil Health Partnership	Awarded
2018	1802	MilwaukeeRiverWatershedConservationPartn...	Full Proposal In Progress
2018	1905	Project ABC	Pre-Proposal In Progress
2019	1849	Test Project 1	Pre-Proposal Submitted
2019	1850	Test Project 2	Pre-Proposal In Review
2019	1851	Test Project 3	Pre-Proposal Submitted

2. Find the proposal in the **Proposal in Progress** status.
3. Click the link to the Proposal. The Proposal opens in the same screen.
4. Use the left side panel to navigate the various Proposal sections to view and/or edit.

Please note: Proposals can only be edited if before the Proposal deadline and not already submitted. See below sections on Submitting and Un-Submitting a Proposal.

4.4. Submitting a Proposal.

1. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab. A list of the Partner's proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.

FISCAL YEAR	PROJECT NUMBER	PROJECT NAME	STATUS
2018	1800	Northwest Arizona Watershed Conservation Pr...	Pre-Proposal Denied
2018	1801	WV Soil Health Partnership	Awarded
2018	1802	MilwaukeeRiverWatershedConservationPartn...	Full Proposal In Progress
2018	1905	Project ABC	Pre-Proposal In Progress
2019	1849	Test Project 1	Pre-Proposal Submitted
2019	1850	Test Project 2	Pre-Proposal In Review
2019	1851	Test Project 3	Pre-Proposal Submitted

2. Find the proposal in the Proposal in Progress status.
3. Click the link to the Proposal. The Proposal opens in the same screen.
4. Click the **Submit** button to submit the Proposal for review.

Please note: Upon submission, (1) the Status of the Proposal changes to Pre-Proposal Submitted, (2) the user receives an email confirmation for their submission, and (3) the pre-proposal is locked for editing.

The Submit button is only available if before the Proposal deadline, all Proposal sections are complete, and the Status is Proposal in Progress.

Upon approval or denial of the Proposal by the RCPP Team, the Partner will receive an email notification.

4.5. Un-Submitting a Proposal

1. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab. A list of the Partner's proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.

The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar at the top containing a home icon, 'RCPP PROPOSALS', and 'RCPP PROJECTS'. Below the navigation bar is a grey bar with a blue button labeled '+ New Proposal'. The main content area is titled 'COMMUNITY PROPOSALS' and contains a table with the following data:

FISCAL YEAR	PROJECT NUMBER	PROJECT NAME	STATUS
2018	1800	Northwest Arizona Watershed Conservation Pr...	Pre-Proposal Denied
2018	1801	WV Soil Health Partnership	Awarded
2018	1802	MilwaukeeRiverWatershedConservationPartn...	Full Proposal In Progress
2018	1905	Project ABC	Pre-Proposal In Progress
2019	1849	Test Project 1	Pre-Proposal Submitted
2019	1850	Test Project 2	Pre-Proposal In Review
2019	1851	Test Project 3	Pre-Proposal Submitted

2. Find the proposal in the Proposal Submitted status.
3. Click the link to the Proposal. The Proposal opens in the same screen.
4. Click the button **Un-Submit** to un-submit the Proposal.
5. A message is displayed: Do you really want to un-submit this Proposal? Click the **Yes** button to continue.

Please note: Upon clicking the Un-Submit button, (1) the Status of the Proposal changes back to Pre-Proposal in Progress, (2) the user receives an email confirmation that their proposal was un-submitted, and (3) the pre-proposal is unlocked for editing.

The Un-Submit button is only available if before the Proposal deadline and the status is Proposal Submitted. User can make appropriate changes and re-submit before the Proposal deadline.

4.6. Withdrawing a Proposal

1. Click the **RCPP Proposals** tab. A list of the Partner's proposals will be displayed and include the Fiscal Year, Project Number (link to the proposal), Project Name, and Status.

The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar at the top containing a home icon, 'RCPP PROPOSALS', and 'RCPP PROJECTS'. Below the navigation bar is a grey bar with a blue button labeled '+ New Proposal'. The main content area is titled 'COMMUNITY PROPOSALS' and contains a table with the following data:

FISCAL YEAR	PROJECT NUMBER	PROJECT NAME	STATUS
2018	1800	Northwest Arizona Watershed Conservation Pr...	Pre-Proposal Denied
2018	1801	WV Soil Health Partnership	Awarded
2018	1802	MilwaukeeRiverWatershedConservationPartn...	Full Proposal In Progress
2018	1905	Project ABC	Pre-Proposal In Progress
2019	1849	Test Project 1	Pre-Proposal Submitted
2019	1850	Test Project 2	Pre-Proposal In Review
2019	1851	Test Project 3	Pre-Proposal Submitted

2. Find the proposal in the Proposal Submitted status.
3. Click the link to the Proposal. The Proposal opens in the same screen.
4. Click the button **Withdraw** to withdraw the Proposal.

Please note: Upon clicking the Withdraw button, (1) the Status of the Proposal changes to Withdrawn, (2) the user receives an email confirmation that their proposal was withdrawn, and (3) the Proposal is locked for editing.

Proposals can be withdrawn at any time. If the Status was Proposal in Review, an email notification is also sent to the RCPP Team.

5. A message is displayed: **Are you sure you want to withdraw this Proposal?** Click the **Yes** button to continue.

Appendix A – RCPP Activity Types

RCPP Activity Type	Associated Covered Program Authorities
Land improvement / management/ restoration	EQIP, CSP, ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) (restoration), HFRP (restoration), Public Law 83-566
Land rental	CRP
Easement (U.S.-held)	ACEP-WRE, HFRP (easement), Public Law 83-566 (floodplain easement); expanded to include land uses other than those traditionally eligible under the covered programs (e.g. grasslands, agricultural lands, riparian areas)
Easement (entity-held)	ACEP-ALE (currently); expanded to include easements on land uses other than those traditionally eligible under the covered programs (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, forest lands)
Public works/watersheds	Public Law 83-566

Land Improvement/Land Management/Restoration Activities

Land improvement/land management/restoration contracts will be offered based on an EQIP/CSP-like contracting model between NRCS and an eligible producer, including private landowners, committed to addressing RCPP project resource concerns on eligible lands. The conservation activities included under this category also include restoration and land management practices authorized under ACEP-WRE, HFRP, and Public Law 83-566 (land treatment).

Funds awarded for these purposes will utilize proven aspects of NRCS planning, implementation, and contracting methodology, and are expected to be based principally on NRCS conservation practice standards, existing CSP enhancements, stewardship activities, and existing payment schedules.

Application, ranking, and contracting will emulate similar aspects of EQIP and CSP program implementation. Producer and land eligibility restrictions tied to specific EQIP and CSP regulatory requirements, such as CSP “whole operation” requirements or EQIP irrigation history requirements do not apply to RCPP land management contracts.

Processes will be provided for consideration of adjustments to payment percentages, payment scenarios and/or the development and use of interim practice standards, subject to NRCS consideration and approval in accordance with Agency policy. Additional flexibilities that may be afforded to RCPP partners include project/partner-driven ranking pools, the potential for blending of previously distinct program activities in a single contract, and the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation benefits.

Land Rental Activities

Land rental activities will be offered based on a combination of the EQIP and CRP contracting model between NRCS and an eligible producer committed to addressing RCPP project resource concerns on eligible lands. Application, ranking, and contracting will emulate applicable aspects of NRCS ranking processes.

However, unlike the traditional CRP program, RCPP land rental authority is not generally expected to be used for landscape-scale soil erosion protection. Rather, NRCS will consider funding rental components of RCPP applications in which the lead partner is proposing that RCPP land rental activities focus on short-term, targeted rental needs in the context of a larger RCPP project. Examples include paying 1–3 years of foregone income to incentivize adoption of an innovative cropping system or to transition to an organic production system.

These awards will incorporate proven aspects of NRCS planning, implementation, and contracting methodology, and are expected to be based principally on an estimate of foregone income. Processes will be provided for consideration of partner-driven development of payment levels and payment standards. Anticipated flexibility and benefits of these awards, relative to existing covered program awards, will be in the possibility of project/partner driven ranking pools, potential for partner innovation in proposed conservation purposes warranting short-term rental payments, and in the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation benefits.

RCPP Conservation Easements

RCPP easements will retain some elements of ACEP and HFRP easements while differing in substantial ways. Both U.S.-held and entity-held easements are offered. Below is a table summarizing RCPP easements, with explanatory narratives below the table.

Easement Type	Potential Land Use	Basis for RCPP Compensation Cap	Valuation Methodology	Partner Match
U.S.-held	Agricultural land (including incidental lands), grasslands, forest land, wetland, other lands with demonstrated ties to RCPP project purposes (e.g. floodplains or riparian areas).	Landowner is paid a percentage of the value of the easement. - Up to 100% of easement value for a high level of landowner restriction (e.g., current ACEP-WRE)	Easement value determined via appraisal of before-and-after fair market value of the offered acres.	Expanded ACEP-WRE model--cash match not required but contributions encouraged to further RCPP project objectives. Partner innovations/support for U.S.-held easements (e.g.,

Easement Type	Potential Land Use	Basis for RCPP Compensation Cap	Valuation Methodology	Partner Match
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up to 75% of easement value for a moderate level of landowner restriction (e.g., current ACEP-WRE with reservation of grazing rights, HFRP-like) - Up to 50% of easement value for a low level of landowner restriction (e.g., current ACEP-ALE) 		preparedness to accept third-party monitoring and/or enforcement responsibilities) also considered.
Entity-held		<p>Cost-share provided to the entity for their purchase of an easement based on a percentage of the value of the easement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up to 50%—with U.S. right-of-enforcement - Up to 25%—without U.S right-of-enforcement 		Simplified ALE general model: Federal contribution limited to 50% of easement value, with limits on landowner donation (25% or less) and minimum entity cash/in-kind (25% or more of purchase price, at parcel [vs. RCPP project] level.)

U.S.-Held Conservation Easements

RCPP conservation easement awards will be offered to eligible landowners to execute conservation easements on a diversity of land uses. U.S.-held easements are in general permanent easements with exceptions for Tribes (i.e., 30-year contracts) or States where State law prohibits permanent easements (duration set at the longest duration allowable under State law).

Under current NRCS covered programs, U.S.-held easements are only available for wetlands (ACEP-WRE) and forestland (HFRP). For RCPP, U.S.-held easements will be available for any agriculturally linked land use, such as cropland, grasslands, natural wetlands or riparian areas buffering agricultural lands. RCPP easements are driven by ties to RCPP project resource concerns and conservation benefits, not land use or other covered program eligibility factors.

Application, ranking, easement acquisition processes, and contracting will emulate applicable aspects of ACEP and HFRP. RCPP easements will use new template deeds based on the level of restriction warranted by the easement in the specific context of a RCPP project, which will be a foundational component of landowner application, evaluation, and ranking. The more restrictive the terms of the easement, the higher the percentage of the easement value that may be provided under RCPP.

For example, an RCPP wetland easement with restrictions and requirements similar to an ACEP-WRE easement (through which the landowner sells most of the property rights) will be eligible to receive a higher percentage of the easement value than a less restrictive wetland easement wherein the landowner sells fewer of those property rights in exchange for greater certainty regarding the ability to conduct future land management activities compatible with the easement (e.g., future timber harvest). RCPP financial assistance that may be provided for the easement itself is based on the value of the easement as determined by a before-and-after appraisal via a methodology to be determined by NRCS. Partner contributions will be allowed to complement NRCS funding. NRCS may use supplemental agreements to procure easement related surveys, appraisals, closing services or other realty-related services consistent with applicable DOJ acquisition processes and requirements. Additional flexibilities of RCPP U.S.-held easements may include partner-driven ranking pools, potential for partner innovation in providing outreach and project development with interested landowners to develop robust easement applications, and the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation and/or participant benefit.

Entity-Held RCPP Conservation Easements

Currently, NRCS only allows entities to hold ACEP-ALE agricultural land easements. For RCPP, entity-held easements are eligible for any land use and driven by conservation benefits and resource concerns identified in the RCPP project. For example, entity-held easements may be enrolled on forest land, wetlands, riparian areas, in addition to on agricultural lands and grasslands.

RCPP awards for entity-held easement require collaboration between NRCS, a qualified entity, and an eligible landowner. RCPP financial assistance that may be provided for the easement itself is based on the value of the easement as determined by a before-and-after appraisal via a methodology to be determined by NRCS. Acquisition and easement management costs are the responsibility of RCPP partners (i.e., they cannot be not reimbursed by NRCS). These costs may be counted as partner contributions based on final agreement terms and negotiated project deliverables.

Partners and landowners will be expected to follow easement acquisition and closing processes similar to ACEP-ALE and include or address NRCS-provided minimum deed terms in their conservation easement deeds. Either a qualified lead partner or a qualified third-party entity that meets the requirements of 7 CFR Section 1468.3 may apply to be the holder of an RCPP entity-held easement.

Application, ranking, easement acquisition processes, and contracting will emulate applicable aspects of existing NRCS easement programs. Lead partners may help inform NRCS funding decisions through project ranking criteria and/or bundled applications.

Partner matching funds for RCPP easements are required, mirroring ACEP-ALE policy. Easement matching funds may be counted as RCPP partner contributions for the project.

RCPP applicants may propose projects that incorporate buy-protect-sell transactions for acquisition of entity-held conservation easements. The applicant should identify in the proposal how buy-protect-sell transactions further the applicant's project goals. Any buy-protect-sell transactions, if funded, must satisfy NRCS requirements for such transactions. At a minimum, an eligible entity cannot hold simultaneously both the fee simple title and the conservation easement under an RCPP buy-protect-sell transaction.

Additional flexibilities of entity-held RCPP easements include the possibility of partner-driven ranking pools, potential for partner innovation in providing outreach and project development with interested landowners to build robust easement applications, and the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation and/or participants benefit.

Public Works/Watersheds

Through the public works/watersheds component of RCPP, eligible partners may receive financial assistance awards to support implementation of structural works of improvement to address watershed-scale issues on eligible land, similar to projects currently carried out under Public Law 83-566. Unlike other RCPP contract types, RCPP project proposals must detail proposed public works/watershed activities (i.e., detailed plan of work) to provide project reviewers information needed to assess project viability. While RCPP projects could include planning, design, and installation of proposed public works/watershed projects, timing is critical to fully complete a project from start to finish in the 5 (or potentially longer) years of an RCPP project, so details of both TA and FA requests associated with public works projects must be included in the questionnaire section of application in the RCPP portal. Projects requesting lump-sum planning, design or public works installation funding that do not include proposals for defensible and trackable documentation of specific tasks and schedules may be penalized in the ranking process

Partner proposals for public works/watershed projects must include sufficient detail for reviewers to evaluate the project need and the ability of the partner to complete the project on time. Unlike for other types of RCPP activities, partners lead the planning, design, and installation public works/watershed. However, NRCS retains watershed plan and design approval authority consistent with Federal infrastructure projects and informed by NRCS watershed and engineering directives and related Public Law 83-566 policy. NRCS may discontinue assistance if the planning or design phases of a project indicate that timely project completion is unlikely. It is NRCS's intent that only those applications with robust work plans, detailed cost proposals, and proven partner capacities advance for funding consideration.

Applicants are reminded that all RCPP public works/watershed project must have demonstrable ties to proposed RCPP project conservation benefits and eligible agricultural lands.

When RCPP public works/watershed financial assistance funds are provided for a project, partner cash match is required for project purposes except flood damage prevention related to excess water control. Flood control projects may request up to 100 percent RCPP financial assistance, though ranking may preclude their selection without substantial contributions (given these projects inclusion in RCPP). Watershed/public works improvements targeting non-flood control purposes will have a minimum 35 percent cash-match requirement. Cash-match requirements may be reduced or waived if funding is awarded to a project in which the benefits will principally accrue to communities or regions where most residents meet limited resource or socially disadvantaged criteria as included in the 2018 Farm Bill. Public works/watershed project cash match may be counted as RCPP project contributions, but neither cash nor in-kind RCPP partner contributions not directly associated with the RCPP public works/watershed funding can be counted toward public works/watershed match requirements. Additional flexibilities associated with these awards include the potential for innovative contracting for experienced partners with demonstrated design, contracting, and implementation skills, and the potential for leveraging partner contributions for greater conservation and/or participants benefit. As a reminder, Public Law 83-566-like land treatment activities will be funded under land improvement/ management/restoration contracts with the producer rather than public works supplemental agreements.

Appendix B – Technical Assistance and Contribution Types

NRCS TA Responsibilities	Potential Partner Contributions (C), Implementation TA (I), Enhancement TA (E)
Develop and manage RCPP agreements with partners (<i>required</i>)	Develop and manage RCPP agreements with NRCS (C, E)
Agency RCPP outreach and education (<i>required</i>)	Other RCPP project-related outreach and education, including inventories, analyses, and tools needed to inform outreach (C,E)
Environmental evaluations (<i>required</i>)	Inventories and data to support environmental evaluations (C, I)
Eligibility determinations, evaluation, and ranking of RCPP individual applications submitted under an RCPP project (e.g. producer contract applications) (<i>required</i>)	Providing information or tools needed by NRCS to support Agency eligibility determinations, evaluation, and ranking (C, I)
Execution and management of individual contracts or supplemental agreements under the RCPP project (<i>required</i>)	Develop and enter into financial assistance (FA) contracts or agreements to implement RCPP eligible activities with non-NRCS funds (C)
TA to producers or landowners for planning directly related to installation (or management) of eligible activities	TA to producers or landowners for planning directly related to installation or management of eligible conservation activities (C, I)
Other FA contract support services (e.g., securing and managing contracts for third-party services like engineering studies, surveys, appraisals etc.) (<i>some required</i>)	Other non-inherently governmental FA contract support services (e.g., securing and managing contracts for third-party services like engineering studies, surveys, appraisals to satisfy NRCS requirements) (C, I)
Project related communications and coordination activities	Project related communications and coordination activities (C, E)
HEL/WC compliance, AGI compliance, and RCPP eligibility determinations (<i>required</i>)	Environmental monitoring to support partner responsibility to track and report on project outcomes (C, I)
	Development and calculation of quantifiable project outcomes (C, E)
	Manage leveraging of other funds related to the RCPP project goals and objectives (C)
	Development of innovative conservation approaches (C, E)
	Project management and partnership development to accomplish project goals (C, E)

	Staff development/training/capacity building (C)
	Developing/maintaining connections to related conservation efforts (C)
	Any other project-related administrative (indirect) costs** (C)

Guide

C = Contribution funded by a partner organization, third-party entity, or federal agency other than USDA

I = Technical Assistance (Implementation), funded by NRCS

E = Technical Assistance (Enhancement), funded by NRCS