

## Summary Information

**Federal Awarding Agency Name:** U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Announcement for Program Funding for NRCS's Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2020

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIG-20-GEN0010808

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:** 10.912, Environmental Quality Incentives Program

NRCS is announcing the availability of up to \$15 million in CIG funding to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Applications will be accepted from all U.S.-based non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals, with the sole exception of Federal agencies. Projects may be between 1 and 3 years in duration. The maximum award amount for a single award in FY 2020 is \$2 million.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** Applications must be received through the Grants.gov web portal by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday June 29, 2020.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Applications must be submitted electronically through <https://www.grants.gov>. Submissions must be received by the time and date due. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system-generated date and time receipt documentation for submission made via Grants.gov to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline (see [section IV\(D\)](#), "How to Submit an Application," later in this document).

The Grants.gov electronic submission interface is called Workspace. Workspace is the standard method for organizations or individuals to apply for Federal grants in Grants.gov. Workspace allows an applicant grant team to access and edit different forms within an application simultaneously. In addition, the forms may be completed online or as a PDF. An overview of Workspace can be viewed at Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>).

Allow extra time to register in Workspace because there are several preliminary registration steps before an applicant can submit the application. To register, go to <https://www.grants.gov>, click on "Applicants," then click on "Get Registered." If you have completed a prior Grants.gov application, you may already have completed the registration process.

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

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** A webinar for CIG applicants is scheduled for May 13, 2020 at 3 p.m. Eastern Time to address questions on this funding opportunity. Information on how to

participate in the webinar is available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/>. Applicants are encouraged to visit this site to learn more about the program. Questions about this announcement can be directed to [nrcscig@usda.gov](mailto:nrcscig@usda.gov).

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### **I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

#### **A. Legislative Authority**

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). 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 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 agricultural producers, into NRCS technical manuals and guides, or to the private sector. CIG generally funds pilot projects, field demonstrations, and on-farm conservation research. On-farm conservation research is defined as an investigation conducted to answer a specific applied conservation question using a statistically valid design while employing farm-scale equipment on farms, ranches, or private forest lands.

#### **C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities**

CIG funds the development and field testing, on-farm research and demonstration, evaluation, or implementation of:

- Approaches to incentivizing conservation adoption, including market-based and conservation finance approaches; and
- Conservation technologies, practices, and systems.

Projects or activities under CIG must:

- Comply with all applicable Federal, Tribal, State, and local laws and regulations throughout the duration of the project;
- Use a technology or approach that was studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate, evaluate, and verify the effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of natural resource conservation technologies and approaches in the field;
- Adapt and transfer conservation technologies, management, practices, systems, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption; and
- Introduce proven conservation technologies and approaches to a geographic area or agricultural sector where that technology or approach is not currently in use.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area using an EQIP contract for an established conservation practice standard are ineligible for CIG funding, except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation.

Up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG in FY 2020 is set-aside for proposals from historically underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities (see [section III\(E\)](#), "Historically Underserved Producers and Veteran Farmers or Ranchers," below in this document).

## **D. CIG Priorities for FY 2020:**

### **1. Water Quality**

A clean and plentiful water supply is essential for agricultural producers to supply the public with adequate food and fiber. Producers can also, through increased adoption of conservation practices and systems, contribute to improved water quality for drinking water, ecosystems, and public recreation.

NRCS is seeking proposals that demonstrate innovative approaches that improve water quality while maintaining agricultural productivity. Applicants must address one or more of the following subpriorities:

- Watershed assessment methods that inform county and local level siting of projects to efficiently reduce pollutant loss from farm fields and maximize in-stream load reduction potential.
- Approaches that optimize conservation systems while minimizing dissolved reactive phosphorus and nitrogen that contribute to the formation of algal blooms.
- Cost-effective sensor technologies for edge-of-field monitoring of water quality conservation practices.
- Conservation approaches that reduce the loss of pesticides from the farm or ranch operation through leaching, runoff, and airborne volatilization.
- Advanced agricultural techniques to monitor, identify, and target pests, using GPS, drone, enhanced imagery, robotic, and other emerging technologies.
- Technologies or approaches that reduce the severity and extent of salinity through groundwater recharge management, irrigation water management, and drainage water management.
- Dairy and livestock manure management approaches to protect water quality.
- Approaches to achieve nutrient load reduction targets by increasing effective nutrient assimilation in the streams and wetlands, encouraging floodplain deposition of silt and sediment, reducing stream bank erosion, and reducing overall discharge (volume).

### **2. Water Reuse**

Water reuse represents a major opportunity to assure the quality of and supplement water supplies from source waters. NRCS is seeking proposals that demonstrate innovative approaches that incorporate water reuse and maintain or improve water quality and agricultural productivity. Applicants must address one of the following subpriorities:

- Technologies or approaches to measuring nitrates in tailwater recovery ponds prior to use as irrigation water, with an emphasis on reducing nitrogen applications by some percentage of the nitrates in the water (50–75%) without impacting production and yield.
- Demonstrate innovative methods for reducing potential salinity problems associated with water reuse, which may include reducing the amount of irrigation water applied to crops, and reusing the applied water on subsequent, more salt-tolerant crops.
- Demonstrate innovative ways to incorporate reused water into irrigation schedules to enhance the volume and reliability of irrigation.
- Demonstration of practices that can reduce pathogen transmission during crop irrigation with recycled water.

### 3. Wildlife

Landowners provide many benefits to wildlife on and adjacent to their working lands. To maximize wildlife benefits deriving from Farm Bill programs (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmland/>), habitat improvements on private lands must be assembled across ownerships in a way that accommodates the distribution and movement of wildlife species. To improve and demonstrate the effectiveness of conservation planning and Farm Bill implementation for wildlife benefit, NRCS requests proposals for innovative tools to help plan for and measure the collective contribution of the individual landowners providing and managing wildlife habitat. Such tools can help ensure that many site-level habitat conservation actions connect at broad scales to maintain or increase wildlife populations and demonstrate a sound investment of conservation dollars. New tools developed in this priority area must be free for use by the public.

CIG proposals must address one or more of the following three subpriorities:

- a. **Develop a multi-scale assessment tool to identify regional priority areas that informs site-specific conservation planning decisions.**
  - Conservation planners require tools that help them work more efficiently with landowners to identify and tie site-scale conservation investments to landscape scale habitat priorities.
  - Tools should be developed using available datasets (including geospatial data layers) and focus on a single land use (e.g., crop, pasture, range, forest) or have the capability to distinguish opportunities unique to different land uses. Single species or habitat specific assessment tools are discouraged. The tool’s geographic footprint should encompass a large portion of the country (for example the “Northeast,” the “Southwest,” or a flyway) or a taxonomic group (no lower than class) commonly occurring in association with working agricultural lands.
- b. **Develop tools to predict or estimate the response of wildlife populations to implementation of conservation programs, practices and systems.**
  - Organizations and landowners make significant investments in wildlife habitat through implementation of conservation measures. Understanding the conservation benefits and outcomes associated with these investments is becoming increasingly important. Technologies that link land use and land management information with wildlife population trend data/research would help entities and producers understand

whether their investments are likely to help meet wildlife habitat and population objectives.

- Using available datasets (including geospatial data layers), applicants are encouraged to propose tools that can generate outcome measures to reflect wildlife response resulting from implementation of conservation practices and systems.
- Tools should focus on the conservation practices and systems most frequently applied on given land uses to address a wildlife habitat concern. For example, on cropland, conservation cover and cover crops are commonly used to benefit wildlife. On rangeland, prescribed grazing and associated facilitating practices are commonly used.

Single species or habitat-specific assessment tools are discouraged. A tool's geographic footprint should encompass a large portion of the country (for example the "Northeast," the "Southwest," or a flyway) or a taxonomic group (no lower than class) commonly occurring in association with working agricultural lands.

- c. **Develop innovative technologies, practices, and approaches that improve the management of terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates, aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms as well as the associated natural resources upon which they depend while sustaining or improving agricultural productivity.** Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Management and/or restoration of naturally occurring fish and wildlife habitats frequently associated with agricultural landscapes (e.g., riparian corridors, all types of wetlands, grasslands, near shore and offshore resources, such as oyster beds and coral reefs)
- Creating and/or enhancing fish and wildlife habitat within production systems on one or more of the following land uses; rangeland, cropland, pastureland, or forest
- Invasive species management (both aquatic and terrestrial)
- Nonlethal predator control techniques
- Strategies for the management of fish and wildlife habitats on private lands that are at risk from threats occurring offsite (e.g., disease, invasive species, and localized fish and wildlife populations exceeding carrying capacity)
- Landowner collaboration strategies

#### 4. Air Quality

NRCS currently works with agricultural producers to address the following five air quality resource concerns:

- Emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors
- Emissions of ozone precursors
- Emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs)
- Emissions of airborne reactive nitrogen
- Objectionable odors

Agricultural air emissions that contribute to these five air quality resource concerns include:

- Directly emitted PM (e.g., dust, smoke)
- Ammonia
- Oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub> – nitric oxide [NO] and nitrogen dioxide [NO<sub>2</sub>])
- Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
- Odorous sulfur compounds
- Methane
- Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O)
- Carbon dioxide

Applicants applying under the air quality priority must address one of the following sub-priorities:

- Demonstrate and evaluate innovative strategies and/or technologies for mitigating one or more of the agricultural air emissions listed above.
- Develop and demonstrate innovative air quality assessment methodologies and procedures for identifying air quality issues and solutions related to animal and/or crop production systems, forestlands, pasturelands, and rangelands.

## **5. Energy Conservation**

Agricultural producers are subjected to a vast array of factors beyond their control. Energy is critical to most operations and can be a substantial cost. Unlike many inputs, a producer can take steps to conserve energy and control energy costs and still sustain production. More energy-efficient agriculture operations are more resilient. More resilient producers contribute to more resilient communities. And producers are better able to respond to business and consumer needs and simultaneously reduce their environmental footprint.

NRCS began to formally address energy resource concerns in 2010 and has recently embarked on a path to improve methods to more efficiently and effectively help producers implement energy conservation practices across the country. To augment that internal effort, NRCS seeks proposals for innovative ways to increase energy conservation on agricultural operations. Applicants must address one or more of the subpriorities listed below.

- Use energy benchmark or energy use index (EUI) data to assess baseline conditions, initiate appropriate conservation practices, and evaluate results.
- Incorporate a prescriptive list, rebates, or other protocols to streamline adoption of energy conservation practices.
- Incorporate energy efficiency practices common in other sectors but have been infrequently adopted by agricultural producers in one or more enterprises (e.g., use of adjustable speed drives in poultry broiler houses, radio frequency, and dehumidification or other drying devices).
- Use real-time energy data to evaluate possible energy conservation practices and assess performance of implemented projects to refine standard analysis methods.
- Develop methods to assist producers to identify and implement conservation practices based on improved energy efficiency, use of renewable resources to meet onsite energy needs, or combinations thereof.

## **II. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

It is anticipated that a total of up to \$15 million in funding will be available for this announcement. The funding minimum for a single award is \$150,000 and the maximum for a single award is \$2 million. Proposals can be between 1 to 3 years in duration.

Awards made through this announcement will be executed through a grant agreement between NRCS and the awardee.

## **III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Applicant Eligibility**

All U.S.-based non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals, with the exception of Federal agencies, are eligible to apply. Individuals and entities may submit more than one application and may receive more than one award.

U.S. in “U.S.-based” includes 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).

### **B. Project Eligibility**

All CIG projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers that meet EQIP’s eligibility requirements listed in [7 CFR § 1466.6\(b\)\(1\) through \(3\)](#)

- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 CFR Part 12).
- Be a person, legal entity, joint operation, Indian Tribe, or Native corporation who is engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or has an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation as defined in [7 CFR Part 1400](#).
- Have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed contract period.

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

The following provisions apply to CIG funding:

- 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 2019 and FY 2023.
- All agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a CIG project must meet the eligibility requirements of [7 CFR § 1466.6\(b\)\(1\) through \(3\)](#) noted above. In addition, all CIG payments are subject to the adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation. All agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a CIG project must have an AGI that does not exceed \$900,000. If awarded a grant, grantees must self-certify and maintain records showing that participating producers receiving payments

using CIG funding meet the EQIP eligibility and AGI requirements. Section 1704(a)(3) of the 2018 Farm Bill states the Secretary may waive the AGI limit on a case-by-case basis, if the Secretary determines that environmentally sensitive land of special significance would be protected as a result of such waiver. CIG grantees may request waivers once their project commences.

- 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 Stewardship Program). If awarded a grant, grantees must self-certify that payments to producers using CIG funding are not duplicative.

#### **D. Cost Sharing/Matching Requirements**

CIG recipients must provide a non-Federal funding match or cost-share amount at least equal to the amount of Federal funding requested. Applications that do not include cost-sharing will be ineligible for award. Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash, services, materials, equipment, or third-party in-kind contributions. See [section IV\(B\)\(10\)](#) of this announcement for information on cost share/match.

#### **E. Historically Underserved Producers and Veteran Farmers or Ranchers**

For the FY 2020 CIG award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG are set aside for proposals from: (1) historically underserved producers; (2) community-based organizations comprised of or representing historically underserved producers; and, (3) entities proposing projects that involve historically underserved producers and for which the benefits of the project flow entirely to historically underserved producers. The regulatory definitions of a historically underserved producer may be found at [7 CFR 1466.3](#).

To compete for set-aside funds, the applicant must signal their intent by following the instructions in [section IV\(B\)\(12\)](#) of this announcement. These applicants must meet all other requirements of this announcement, including addressing at least one CIG priority in [section I\(D\)](#) of this notice.

Funds not awarded through this set-aside will revert to the general funding available for this competition.

#### **F. Technical Assistance for CIG Projects**

CIGs are grant agreements and as such do not provide for substantial involvement between NRCS and the grantee in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award. The technical assistance required to carry out a project is the responsibility of the grantee. NRCS designates an NRCS employee as a “technical contact” for each grant award. Technical contacts provide oversight activities during the project, such as site visits, reviewing performance reports, financial reports, and audits to ensure that standards, objectives, terms, and conditions for the

projects are accomplished, but will not be substantially involved in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award.

#### **G. SAM.gov Exclusions Database**

Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program (2 CFR 200.205(d)).

#### **H. Opportunity Zones**

Opportunity Zones (<https://opportunityzones.hud.gov/>) are economically distressed communities, defined by individual census tract, nominated by America's State Governors, and certified by the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury. Under certain conditions, new investments in Opportunity Zones may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. There are 8,764 Opportunity Zones (<https://opportunityzones.hud.gov/resources/map>) in the United States, many of which have experienced a lack of investment for decades. The Opportunity Zones initiative is an incentive to spur private and public investment in America's underserved communities.

NRCS may consider whether CIG projects are carrying out activities in an Opportunity Zone as part of the award selection process. See [section V\(A\)\(2\)](#), "Innovative Technology or Approach," below for more information.

### **IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

There is no preproposal process for this announcement. All standard forms necessary for CIG application submission are included in the Grants.gov application package.

#### **A. Executive Order (EO) 12372**

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

#### **B. Content and Format**

Applications must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. Submit a separate application for each project if submitting more than one. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Applicants must submit a single copy of the application in the following format:

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

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

## 1. Cover Page (1 page maximum).

On a single page, provide the following information:

- The applicant entity name.
- The project title.
- The project duration in months.
- The amount of Federal funding requested.
- The amount of non-Federal contributions committed.
- The applicant's technical contact (usually project director). (Provide name, phone, email.)
- The applicant's administrative contact (provide name, phone, email) (usually an individual in a grants office or project manager working under a project director. The administrative contact often handles the budgetary and reporting requirements for a CIG project. NRCS will use the applicant's technical and administrative contacts identified as the primary applicant contacts throughout the life of the project, unless notified of personnel changes).
- The geographic location of the project. Be sure to list all States involved.
- The national priority that is addressed by the project. List only one priority from [section I\(D\)](#). If the proposal addresses more than one priority, **you must select a primary priority** for your application to be considered under. The priority that you select will determine the panel that will review your application. For each priority area, a review panel will be established with expertise in subject matter relevant to the priority.
- Include a declaration if the project is competing for historically underserved set aside (see [section IV\(B\)\(12\)](#) for further instructions and qualifications).
- A brief description (1–3 sentences) of the innovative conservation approach or approaches that is the focus of the project—please be concise!

## 2. Project Abstract (1 page maximum)

Describe in nontechnical 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), the project deliverables, the anticipated project results, how the results will be quantified, and the predicted benefits to conservation more broadly.

## 3. Application Standard Form (SF) 424.

Standard Form (SF) 424, "Application for Federal Assistance," and instructions to complete it are included in the application package posted on Grants.gov.

## 4. Project Narrative (15-page maximum)

The project narrative must cover all activities proposed to be carried out with both the Federal and non-Federal matching funds. Activities related but beyond the scope of the CIG project budget should be described in the background section only. A sample project description is posted to the CIG website at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=stelprdb1046235>.

**The project description must include the following information, in this order:**

- a. Project background: Describe the issue or problem driving the need for the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success.
- b. Project goal/objectives: State the main goal of the project and then outline the supporting objectives to reach this goal. Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART<sup>1</sup>). Provide supporting information that describes the innovative nature of the project and how this innovation could advance the field of conservation. If the project is addressing innovation of an NRCS conservation practice standard, or proposing a new standard, state this explicitly and identify the standard.
- c. Project design and methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project. (We encourage new grant writers to consider using a logic model approach to improve clarity of this section.) For more on the logic model, see <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/logic-models/>.
- d. Project outcomes and benefits: Identify the expected results and outcomes of the project and the anticipated impact on conservation and society and any other benefits derived from the project. Forecast the lasting impact of project results. Identify project beneficiaries, (i.e., agricultural producers) by type, region, or sector; historically underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and/or municipalities.
- e. Geographic location and size of project or project area: Identify the geographic location and the estimated size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics) of the project area. Maps are recommended. If the project is multistate, describe which project elements will take place in each State.
- f. EQIP-eligible producer participation: Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers involved in the project and describe the extent of their involvement. Describe whether these producers have been identified, and if not yet identified clearly articulate the process that will be carried out to identify and attract producer participation. If competing in the set aside for historically underserved projects, include an estimate on the number of historically underserved producers scheduled to participate in the project.
- g. Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that directly relate to the project objectives, outcomes, and benefits that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and approve payments. The proposal must include a set of technical deliverables that reflect the performance and broader applicability of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> SMART objectives are described by several organizations. Here is an example from the Centers for Disease Control: [https://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/resourcekit/evaluate/smart\\_objectives.html](https://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/resourcekit/evaluate/smart_objectives.html)

In addition to project-specific deliverables, CIG grantees are responsible for:

- Participating in at least one event (e.g., conference or workshop) during the grant period where the grantee presents on the activities of the project.
  - A final fact sheet.
  - Closing event—this could be a webinar, field day, training event, etc., used to disseminate project results.
- h. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a bulleted list of project actions and deliverables relative to timeframes and associated project milestones through to project completion. Applicants should develop their timelines based on a project start date of February 1, 2021.
- i. Project management: Give a description of how the project will be organized and managed, including a list/description of project partners. Include a description of how communication will be structured within the project team to ensure effective project management.
- j. Technology transfer: Describe how the results will be transferred to producers and stakeholders through communications and outreach activities.
- k. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology used to evaluate the project and describe how results will be quantified. It should be clear to the reviewers how project objectives relate to the evaluation.
- l. Graphics, including pictures, charts, graphs, and similar items count towards the 15-page maximum.
- m. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, do not count towards the 15-page maximum.

## **5. Team Qualifications**

Provide brief descriptions of key technical and administrative personnel qualifications, their experience managing Federal awards, and their anticipated contributions to the project. This does not count towards the 15-page maximum. Do not include resumes or CVs.

## **6. Assessment of Environmental Impacts.**

If implementation of the proposal is anticipated to have physical, chemical, or biological impacts on the environment, describe the impacts and their extent. The description of the potential environmental impacts must address both 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.

Every funded CIG project that involves ground-disturbance activities is subject to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). NRCS must complete an environmental review of each awarded project before project commencement. Applicants may be required to prepare and pay for preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), should the environmental review find that an EA or EIS is required.

In addition, a 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 and federally recognized Indian Tribes) may be required prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact cultural resources. 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 applicants may be required to pay for any cultural resource surveys needed for NRCS to assess CIG project effects. More information on the applicants role in NHPA Section 106 process can be found on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation website at <https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/section-106-applicant-toolkit>.

## 7. 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. Section B, item 6, column 1 should reflect the agency funds, and column 2 should reflect the applicant’s matching funds. This form is the summary budget for the project. See “Instructions for Completing SF 424A” located in the “Related Documents” tab of this announcement on Grants.gov.
- b. Detailed Budget Narrative.—Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project broken down by each project year. Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. Statement(s) of work for any subcontractors and consultants must be included as part of the application. The budget narrative should include both the Federal funds requested and the applicant’s matching funds.

The budget narrative must be in text format as well as contain a table. It should be readable on letter-size, printable pages. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the reviewers can readily understand what expenses are incurred to support the project each year. An example budget narrative can be found in Appendix B of this announcement.

**Note:** Include \$3,000 in the budget for project travel required by NRCS. These funds are required and can be part of the Federal portion, the applicant’s matching funds, or a

combination of both. Any additional travel required for completion of the project must be considered additional to this \$3,000.

## **8. Funding Information**

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:

- Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant (pre-award costs);
- Costs which lay outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
- Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- Compensation for injuries to persons or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- 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
- 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. For more details, refer to [2 CFR 200](#).

Profit is not an eligible project cost. Therefore, any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related direct and indirect costs only.

Any individual applying for a CIG award may not include indirect costs in his or her proposed budget.

## **9. Indirect (F&A) Costs**

To be eligible to recover any indirect costs under a Federal award, an applicant must either: (1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with its cognizant Federal agency that has not expired (see item 11 of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum [M-20-17](#)) or, (2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate of 10 percent of the modified total direct costs (MTDC) as authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). In order to qualify for the de minimis rate, the applicant must not have, or have previously held, a NICRA. A State, local, or Tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the de minimis rate.

Applicants with a NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. The total amount of indirect costs is entered in section B, row J, of the SF-424A. A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. If the applicant does not have a current NICRA, indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA (see item 11 of OMB Memorandum [M-20-17](#)), and applicants should be prepared to provide the most recent NICRA. A new NICRA can be negotiated with its cognizant Federal agency, which is the agency that provides the applicant entity its largest amount of Federal funding.

Entities that are eligible for the de minimis rate who already have a de minimis rate agreement must use the rate and base specified in the agreement, which is modified total direct costs (MTDC) as defined by 2 CFR 200.68 and also excluding the amount of each subcontract exceeding \$25,000. Note that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base to which the rate is applied. A copy of the applicant's de minimis rate agreement must be provided with the application. If a recipient is eligible to use the de minimis rate, but does not have a de minimis rate agreement, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10 percent of MTDC when preparing the budget, and state in the budget narrative that a de minimis rate agreement is requested. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award.

An applicant may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at their sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the NRCS. If voluntarily reduced or waived, the applicant may choose to apply any unrecovered indirect costs as part of their cost share or match. Unrecovered indirect costs are the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount which could have been charged to the Federal award under the applicant's approved negotiated indirect cost rate (2 CFR 200.306(c)).

#### **10. Cost Share or Matching Funds.**

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost. CIG recipients must provide a non-Federal funding match or cost-share amount at least equal to the amount of Federal funding requested. For example, if an applicant requests \$50,000 in CIG funding, at least \$50,000 in non-Federal cost-share or matching funds must be committed by the applicant.

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. In-kind contributions identified in the project budget must be quantifiable, verifiable, and necessary to accomplish program activities.

Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. Cost sharing or matching funds must meet the criteria stated at 2 CFR 200.306 and be valued in accordance with 2 CFR 200.306(d). Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions is located at 2 CFR 200.306.

All matching funds must be identified in both the SF-424A and budget narrative components of the application. Project partners (other than the applicant) must provide commitment letters for all cash and in-kind matching contributions. A separate commitment letter is required for each cash and/or in-kind match contribution. Commitment letters must be signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization and must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the project partner; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar value of the contribution; and (5) a statement that the contributor commits to furnish the contribution during the grant period. A sample commitment letter is included as part of the application package on Grants.gov.

Applications without signed written commitments covering the full value of the matching contribution are deemed incomplete.

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.

### **11. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement and Past Performance**

If the applicant has previously received and managed a CIG award (either at the National or State levels), list the following for each award and give a short summary of the completed project's results and impact. If the project is ongoing, provide the anticipated results. Each description should be no more than a half page:

- Project title
- CIG agreement number
- Award funding amount
- Year of award expiration

### **12. Declaration of Historically Underserved and Veteran Farmers or Ranchers**

An applicant seeking to qualify for the historically underserved set-aside must provide a self-certification statement on the application cover page. An example of a self-certification statement is: "I/(entity name) qualify to compete in the historically underserved set aside as a (choose one): 1) historically underserved producer; 2) community-based organization composed of or representing historically underserved producers; or, 3) an organization whose project is focused entirely on the conservation objectives of historically underserved producers."

### **13. Certification**

All proposals must include the following signed certification form, which is available at [Grants.gov](#):

Certification Regarding Lobbying.—Must be completed by all applicants.

### **14. Letters of Support**

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. Support letters from NRCS staff should not be submitted.

### **15. Risk Review Documentation**

NRCS may request additional documentation from selected applicants in order to evaluate the financial, management, and performance risk posed by awardees as required by 2 CFR 200.205. Based on this risk review, NRCS may apply special conditions to a CIG award that correspond to the degree of risk assessed.

### C. DUNS Number and SAM Registration

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR Section 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR Section 25.110(d)) is required to: (i) be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award, application, or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NRCS may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant complies with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant does not fully comply with the requirements when the NRCS is ready to make a Federal award, NRCS may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

NFEs must obtain a DUNS and register in SAM prior to registering with Grants.gov. NFEs are strongly encouraged to apply early for their DUNS number and SAM registration.

- **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.
- **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/SAM/>. The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance and can be contacted through the Help tab at the website listed above.

### D. How to Submit an Application

Applications must be submitted through the Grants.gov web portal by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 29, 2020.

Submitting a CIG application through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) requires a number of tasks. There are several preliminary registration steps before an applicant can submit the application. To register in the Grants.gov system, go to <https://www.grants.gov>, click on “Applicants,” and then click on “Get Registered.”

If you have completed a prior Grants.gov application, you may already have completed the registration process.

Allow sufficient time to register in Grants.gov, and for possible system delays. An overview of Workspace can be viewed through Grants.gov Webinar “Getting Started with Workspace: Become a Workspace Wizard at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>.

Below are instructions for accessing the forms necessary to complete an application in Grants.gov:

- Go to <https://www.grants.gov>.
- Select the “Applicants” tab.
- Select the “Apply for Grants” heading.
- Click on “Get Application Package.” Follow all steps.
- All necessary forms are included within the Grants.gov “Application Package.”
- Provide the “Funding Opportunity Number” listed on page 1 of this announcement or go to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>.

Applications not received by the submission due date and time will not be accepted. All applications must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described in this announcement. Grants.gov provides instructions for submitting the required application items through the portal. An application’s receipt date and time will be determined by the respective system-generated documentation of receipt date and time (Grants.gov provides date and time stamps for all proposals submitted through the portal).

NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grant.gov. If you encounter issues with Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov help desk at (800) 518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application submission through Grant.gov and therefore is encouraged to submit your application early to ensure there is time to work out unforeseen issues.

#### **E. Due Date**

Proposals must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 29, 2020. Grants.gov provides date and time stamps for all submitted applications. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application receipt.

#### **F. Acknowledgement of Submission**

Grants.gov provides receipt of application submissions. NRCS acknowledges receipt of proposals received by the submission deadline via email. An applicant who does not receive such an email acknowledgement within 15 business days of the submission deadline, but believes the proposal was submitted on time, must contact the CIG program at [nrcsig@usda.gov](mailto:nrcsig@usda.gov) within 30 business days of the submission deadline. Failure to do so may result in the proposal not being considered.

#### **G. Withdrawal**

Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before award execution. A letter on official letterhead must be signed by the applicant or an authorized representative and emailed to [nrcsig@usda.gov](mailto:nrcsig@usda.gov).

## V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this announcement. Incomplete or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition prior to initiation of the peer review process.

### A. Application Evaluation Criteria

#### 1. Risk Criteria Evaluation—In accordance with 2 CFR 200.205, NRCS will review risk posed by applicants. This screening process includes—

- Confirming the NFE does not have an active exclusion in SAM precluding it from eligibility receipt of an award (i.e., suspended or debarred; see 2 CFR Part 180 and 7 CFR Part 417).
- Confirming the NFE does not have adverse information located in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) at <https://www.fapiis.gov/fapiis/index.action>.

#### 2. Merit Criteria Evaluation

The technical peer review panels use the following criteria, using a 100-point scale, to evaluate applications:

- Purpose, Approach, and Goals (25 points)
  - The purpose of the project is clearly explained, the goals and objectives are clearly stated, and the rationale is explicit for why the innovative approach or technology is needed;
  - The design and implementation of the project is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology;
  - The project outcomes are stated, measurable, and likely to be achieved; and
  - Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered, and a high likelihood of project success is justified.
- Innovative Technology or Approach (25 points)
  - The project is innovative (national, regional, and/or local) according to the criteria for innovation (see [section I\(C\)](#)); and
  - The application describes the compelling need for the innovative technology or approach.
- Project Management (25 points)
  - Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable;
  - Project staff has necessary technical and administrative expertise;
  - The budget is adequately explained and justified, and expenses are allowable, allocable, and reasonable; and

- Proposal includes robust partnerships with entities that can substantially assist with delivery of project outcomes with clear project management structure and team communication identified.
- Benefits and Transferability (25 points)
  - An evaluation plan is documented that clearly lays out how project work will be assessed, and the results transferred;
  - There is potential for producers and landowners to use or participate in the innovative technology(s) or approach(s);
  - There is potential for organizations to benefit from the innovative approach or methods, including (if appropriate) the development of materials such as technical standards, technical notes, handbooks, technology tools, etc.;
  - There is potential to transfer the approach or technology to a broader audience or to other geographic areas or agricultural sectors; and
  - There is potential for successful transfer, through planned project activities, to historically underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and/or municipalities.

Partner matching funds are considered an eligibility criterion as described above in [section IV\(B\)\(10\)](#) “Cost Share or Matching Funds,” and will not be considered in the evaluation.

## **B. Review and Selection Process**

Proposals that pass the initial screening are then evaluated using a four-part process:

- Technical peer review panels composed of subject matter experts evaluate proposals. Proposals are evaluated against the CIG Merit Criteria listed in this announcement.
- NRCS State Conservationists evaluate relevant proposals and provide review comments on concerns related to conflict of interest or onerous use of NRCS staff and time, merit relative to the specific State, and potential duplication of effort.
- The CIG Grants Review Board certifies peer panel recommendations are consistent with NRCS State Conservationist evaluations. The Grants Review Board may also consider additional factors such as geographic and partner diversity and Opportunity Zones when making funding recommendations to the NRCS Chief. The CIG Grants Review Board consists of members of NRCS leadership.<sup>2</sup>
- The NRCS Chief makes the final award selections.

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<sup>2</sup> The Grants Review Board consists of the Deputy Chief for Programs (Chair), the Deputy Chief for Soil Science and Resource Assessment, the Deputy Chief for Science and Technology, the Deputy Chief for Strategic Planning and Accountability, one Regional Conservationist, one State Conservationist, and the Director of the Outreach and Partnerships Division.

## **C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

NRCS anticipates announcing CIG selections through a USDA press release no later than October 31, 2020. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of December 31, 2020.

## **VI. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

### **A. Federal Award Notices**

#### **1. Successful Applicants**

Successful applicants will receive official notification by email. Awardees may not begin their project until a fully executed grant agreement has been signed by both NRCS and the awardee. Form NRCS-ADS-093, “Notice of Grant and Agreement Award,” signed by the authorized agency official is the only authorizing document and will be provided electronically to the applicant’s authorized official. Any pre-award costs incurred by the awardee will not be reimbursed.

#### **2. Unsuccessful Applicants**

Applicants whose proposals are not selected for funding will be notified by email and will receive feedback on their proposal. This evaluation will be emailed to the technical and administrative contacts listed in the proposal within 90 days of the announcement of CIG selections. Please do not contact NRCS requesting an evaluation prior to the end of this 90-day period.

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and NRCS’s *General Terms and Conditions Grants and Cooperative Agreements*. A copy of the *General Terms and Conditions Grants and Cooperative Agreements* document may be obtained by contacting the program contacts at [nrcsig@usda.gov](mailto:nrcsig@usda.gov).

#### **1. Patents, Inventions, and Copyrights**

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.

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 at [nrcscig@usda.gov](mailto:nrcscig@usda.gov), with specific questions with regard to the applicability of this section.

### **C. Reporting**

Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the General Terms and Conditions but will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, quarterly financial status reports, and final reports.

If the Federal share of any agreement awarded under this opportunity notice may include more than \$500,000 over the period of performance, recipients must also comply with the post award reporting requirements reflected in Appendix XII of 2 CFR Part 200 —Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

Applicants that receive awards pursuant to this opportunity and any sub awardees must comply with the reporting requirements described at 2 CFR Part 170, unless an exception applies. Applicants must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with those requirements. A list of exceptions can be found at 2 CFR 170.110(b).

## **VII. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT:**

Potential applicants may contact NRCS by emailing [nrcscig@usda.gov](mailto:nrcscig@usda.gov).

## **VIII. OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act**

CIG proposals are considered confidential information. Proposals are not shared with individuals or entities seeking public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without the consent of the applicant. More specifically, Executive Order 12600 and USDA FOIA regulation 7 CFR Section 1.12 require NRCS to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information and requires NRCS to consult with applicants regarding the releasability of their records.

### **B. State Component**

The traditional CIG program has both national and State competitions. This announcement is for the national competition component. Visit individual NRCS State websites for more information about CIG State competitions.

### **C. Notice to Applicants**

The Federal Government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of this announcement. Only authorized Federal officials can bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds.

### **D. U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Statement**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>, and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

Mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

## APPENDIX A

### APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

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

- \*\*DUNS and SAM Registration – should register at least 3 weeks before the application due date.**

#### **PROPOSAL**

- 1. Cover Page**
  - a. Applicant entity name
  - b. Project title
  - c. Duration of project in months
  - d. Amount of Federal funding requested
  - e. Amount of non-Federal cost-share/match funding committed
  - f. Project contacts: One technical and one administrative
  - g. Geographic location of the project
  - h. National priority being addressed
  - i. Declaration of historically underserved (if applicable)
  - j. Statement of innovation
- 2. Project Abstract: (one page maximum)**
- 3. Standard Form (SF) 424, “Application for Federal Assistance”**
- 4. Project Narrative: (15 pages maximum)**
  - a. Project background
  - b. Project goals/objectives
  - c. Project design and methods

- d. Project outcomes and benefits
  - e. Geographic location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
  - f. EQIP-eligible producer participation
  - g. Project deliverables/products
  - h. Project action plan and timeline
  - i. Project management
  - j. Project transferability
  - k. Project evaluation
- 5. References/citations (if applicable)**
  - 6. Team Qualifications**
  - 7. Declaration of Previous CIG Awards (if applicable)**
  - 8. Declaration of Historically Underserved (if applicable)**
  - 9. Assessment of Environmental Impacts**
- BUDGET INFORMATION**
- 10. Completed SF-424A, “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs”**
  - 11. Detailed Budget Narrative (see template in Appendix B); Maximum 12 pages**
  - 12. Indirect Costs:** Submit documentation of a federally approved indirect cost rate (NICRA), a previous de minimis rate agreement, or a request to establish a de minimis rate agreement ([section IV\(B\)\(9\)](#)).
  - 13. Matching Letters (see template in Appendix C):** (required for projects with matching funds coming from a third party). Submit signed commitment letters of matching support from each non-Federal third party providing matching funds. Include both cash and in-kind commitments.

**OTHER**

- 14. Certifications:** Complete all required certifications ([section IV\(B\)\(13\)](#)).

Certification Regarding Lobbying

- 15. Letters of Support: (optional)**

## APPENDIX B

**NOTE:** This appendix includes tips and a sample budget table and budget narrative. To ensure consistency in proposals and proposal reviews, applicants are required to use the budget table and narrative format in their proposals. An Excel spreadsheet and editable document version of these files are located at

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=stelprdb1046235>.

### Creating a Budget Narrative

#### 1. A CIG budget narrative has two parts:

- A table totaling all major budget line items (the major line items on the SF 424A are: salary, fringe, travel, supplies, equipment, contractual, construction, other, and indirect costs) by year. The table includes subcategories listed below each line item, giving a clear breakdown of project costs. The table should contain both Federal and non-Federal portions of the project budget.
- A written narrative that aligns with the budget table and provides descriptive details on the items listed in the table for both the Federal and non-Federal portion of the table.

#### 2. Level of Detail:

A budget narrative outlines project details enough to allow reviewers to evaluate the integrity of the proposed spending and clarify project intent. The level of detail for each line item may vary, but applicants should consider the following:

- Personnel.—The description should include the general function or major tasks of each major team member and their time commitment to the project. Include a total cost listed for each project team member by year. If a project contributor has not yet been hired, the position title can be provided in lieu of a name. If available, include details on cost such as percent of effort, rate of pay, and estimated hours for each person.
- Fringe Benefits.—Include this separate from personnel in the budget. Provide the fringe benefit rate for each individual receiving benefits and how it was calculated alongside the total amount of funds provided per year to that individual.
- Travel.—Include the reason for the travel, the team members expected to travel, and the major costs (transportation, lodging, meals, or per diem, etc.) associated with each type of travel should be outlined. Provide the derivation of costs estimates should be provided (e.g., Federal General Services Administration per diems, university guidelines).
- Supplies.—List the general supply categories that will be charged. For instance, if the team will be doing soil health monitoring, include items such as soil sampling supplies, or instruments for measuring samples should be included. Smaller supplies (e.g., workshop printouts and markers) need not be broken down by individual units, but for larger supplies include a description with unit cost and intended use.
- Equipment.—This includes only tangible personal property over \$5,000 per unit with a lifetime over 1 year. Within this narrative, explain the reason for purchasing/renting any equipment, a description of the type of equipment and supplier, what it will be used for,

who will be allowed to use it, why it is needed, and how long it will be used. Also identify what will be done with the equipment once the project is over. If rented, the rental cost must be justified. Specific 2 CFR 200 provisions apply to equipment that equals or exceeds \$5,000 in value.

- **Contractual.**—If contractors will be doing multiple tasks for the award, use separate line items. If a contractor will just be serving one project function, is not considered part of the project team, and will not require a subcontract, a simple description of the contracted work is sufficient. Be sure to identify the name of the contractor, the method of procurement, and the scope of work for the services if not in the proposal narrative.
- **Other.**—This is a general line item that covers expenditures that do not fit in other categories. This is where subawards are to be included. This category often includes fees like laboratory analysis/rental costs. Be sure to identify the individual costs and provide sufficient description to justify the costs.
- **Indirect.**—Identify the NICRA or *de minimis* rate as applicable.
- **Program Income.**—If the awardee plans to accrue income from grant-supported activities (e.g., workshop registration fees), this program income must be estimated and added to the budget. Other examples of program income include fees for services performed and the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award.

### **3. Additional Guidance:**

- Sub-budgets are not required for contractors or sub-awardees. Give details on the contractor or sub-awardee costs in the “Contractor” section or the “Other” section of the budget. Be sure to identify and include separate NICRA paperwork and percentages when a contractor’s rate differs from the awardee’s rate.
- Budget narratives may reference information included in other parts of the proposal; do not repeat the information as part of the budget narrative.
- While drafting the budget, keep in mind that an agreement amendment is not required for post-agreement budget changes of 10 percent or less of the total project budget (Federal and non-Federal portions). However, all budget changes do require notice to NRCS contacts and submittal of updated budget documents as necessary.
- All figures in the budget must be rounded to the nearest dollar.

Sample budget table—a downloadable Excel spreadsheet of this budget table is available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=stelprdb1046235>.

<b>FEDERAL BUDGET</b>					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Total
<b>Personnel</b>	\$86,880	\$86,880	\$86,880		\$260,640
Name of team member	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000		\$135,000
Name of team member	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000		\$45,000
Name of team member	\$26,880	\$26,880	\$26,880		\$80,640
<b>Fringe</b>	\$22,882	\$22,882	\$22,882		\$68,645
Faculty	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000		\$63,000
Students	\$1,882	\$1,882	\$1,882		\$5,645
<b>Travel</b>	\$3,360	\$6,750	\$6,750		\$16,860
Plot prep and data collection	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000		\$9,000
Demo plot overnight trips	\$360	\$360	\$360		\$1,080
Conference trips	\$0	\$3,390	\$3,390		\$6,780
<b>Supplies</b>	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$3,000		\$11,000
Field Supplies	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$2,000		\$8,000
Lab Supplies	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000		\$3,000
<b>Contractual</b>	\$83,000	\$85,500	\$85,500		\$254,000
Contractor Name	\$73,000	\$73,000	\$73,000		\$219,000
Contractor Name	\$10,000	\$12,500	\$12,500		\$35,000
<b>Other</b>	\$6,000	\$7,000	\$7,000		\$20,000
Testing and analysis	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		\$15,000
Publication and copying	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$2,000		\$5,000
<b>Indirect</b>	\$51,243	\$52,400	\$52,204		\$155,847
See NICRA (X%)	\$51,243	\$52,400	\$52,204		\$155,847
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$257,365	\$265,412	\$264,216		<b>\$786,992</b>

<b>NON-FEDERAL BUDGET</b>					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3		Total
Personnel	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000		\$180,000
Name of team member	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000		\$135,000
Name of team member	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000		\$45,000
Fringe	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000		\$63,000
Faculty	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000		\$63,000
Contractual	\$105,000	\$107,000	\$107,000		\$319,000
Contractor Name	\$50,000	\$52,000	\$52,000		\$154,000
Contractor Name	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$55,000		\$165,000
Other	\$46,120	\$46,120	\$46,120		\$138,360
General services	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		\$15,000
Land rental	\$1,120	\$1,120	\$1,120		\$3,360
Legal Fees	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000		\$120,000
Indirect	\$47,500	\$48,000	\$48,000		\$143,500
See NICRA (X%)	\$47,500	\$48,000	\$48,000		\$143,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$279,620</b>	<b>\$282,120</b>	<b>\$282,120</b>		<b>\$843,860</b>

**SAMPLE BUDGET NARRATIVE**

**NAME OF AWARDEE**

**Project Title**

**PROJECT TOTAL: \$XXX**

**Federal Portion: \$XXX**

**Non-Federal Contribution: \$XXX**

**A. FEDERAL BUDGET:**

**1. Personnel**

Tom Smith, Project Director, full time, 50% paid by Federal Funds, will advise the project team, assist with demonstration plot establishment, data collection and analysis, and participate in project field days.

Year 1: \$45,000      Year 2: \$45,000      Year 3: \$45,000

Mary Johnson, research technician, 50% time (6 calendar months) for 3 years, 50% paid by Federal funds. Establish the field and demonstration plots, function as the project manager, coordinate sub-award work, draft reports and publications, and participate in all project field days.

Year 1: \$15,000      Year 2: \$15,000      Year 3: \$15,000

Undergraduate students, paid hourly. Support is requested for three undergraduate students to assist with fieldwork (emergence counting, soil sample collection, planting, harvest, etc.) in each year of the project. These students will be employed approximately 4 months during the summer at \$14/hr and 30 hr/week.

Year 1: \$26,880      Year 2: \$26,880      Year 3: \$26,880

*Total Personnel:*

Year 1: \$86,880      Year 2: \$86,880      Year 3: \$86,880

**2. Fringe benefits**

50% fringe benefits paid by Federal funds. Fringe benefits rates are as follows: 35% for faculty and permanent staff; 7% for student hourly employees.

*Total Fringe Benefits:*

Year 1: \$22,882      Year 2: \$22,882      Year 3: \$22,882

**3. Travel**

Funds are requested to support travel for plot preparation and data collection trips, and travel to four field days within the States of New York and Pennsylvania. Estimated 5,000 miles per year at a rate of \$0.60/mi.

Year 1: \$3,000      Year 2: \$3,000      Year 3: \$3,000

Funds are requested for overnight hotel stays at demonstration plot locations at the State hotel rate of \$90 per night, 4 times per year (\$360/yr).

Year 1: \$360      Year 2: \$360      Year 3: \$360

Funds are requested in the second and third year for three individual trips each year to scientific conferences based on the following estimates: Lodging - 3 nights × \$150 per night (\$450); Per-diem \$50/day × 4 days (\$200); Transportation: Airline travel to conference location - \$400/flight + ground transportation - \$50 + parking at airport - \$30 (\$480).

Year 2: \$3390      Year 3: \$3390

*Total Travel:*

Year 1: \$3,360      Year 2: \$6,750      Year 3: \$6,750

#### **4. Equipment - none**

#### **5. Supplies**

Field and lab supplies: Funds are requested for the purchase of soil temperature and moisture probes and data logging systems (\$2,000). Funds are also requested to purchase weed suppression technologies, seeds, and irrigation supplies for field plots (\$6,000). Funds are also requested for various lab supplies and sampling equipment (\$3,000).

*Total Supplies:*

Year 1: \$4,000      Year 2: \$4,000      Year 3: \$3,000

#### **6. Contractual**

Three separate contractors:

Contract with Super Nonprofits (\$219,000).

Personnel:

Elizabeth Smith will oversee the outreach to farmers. She will work 80% time all 3 years of the project, 75% covered with Federal funding. She will oversee all elements of this part of the project, including contacting and recruiting farmers, organizing outreach events such as field days, and on farm assistance.

Tom Jones will spend 20% time providing technical assistance to community-based organizations that support producers. 50% will be covered with Federal funding.

Supplies:

Workshop supplies: Includes basic supplies such as poster-boards, tapes, etc., to support the workshop. Year One and include \$2,600 for educational materials / publications,

printing and copying; and \$400 for meeting supplies (paper, pens, pencils, markers, flip charts, easels, etc.) annually.

Contract with Amazing Graphics and Marketing (\$5,000)

Marketing team will use innovative digital marketing tools to reach producers and help gain interest. Team will develop graphics and video production to support program recruitment and teaching tools.

Contract with Innovative Technology (\$30,000)

Contractor will help develop online tools to assist producers with conservation practices.

*Total Contractual:*

Year 1: \$83,000      Year 2: \$85,000      Year 3: \$85,000

**7. Construction** - None requested

**8. Other**

Sample Testing & Analysis: Basic nutrient testing and soil health testing will be done annually for all plots. Roughly 20 samples a year at \$250/sample (\$5,000/year).

Publication Costs: Funds are requested for the development and publication of various materials including extension publications, costs associated with peer reviewed journals, in addition to costs associated with copies of brochures made in house.

Year 1: \$1,000;      Year 2: \$2,000;      Year 3: \$2,000

*Total Other Costs:*

Year 1: \$6,000      Year 2: \$7,000      Year 3: \$7,000

**9. Indirect Costs** – Note if NICRA negotiated or if it is the 10% *De Minimis* rate

*Total Indirect Costs:*

Year 1: \$51,243      Year 2: \$52,400      Year 3: \$52,204

**B. NON-FEDERAL BUDGET:**

**1. Personnel**

Tom Smith, Project Director, full time, 50% paid by non-Federal funds, will advise the project team, assist with demonstration plot establishment, data collection and analysis, and participate in project field days.

Year 1: \$45,000      Year 2: \$45,000      Year 3: \$45,000

Mary Johnson, research technician, 50% time (6 calendar months) for 3 years, 50% paid by non-Federal funds. Establish the field and demonstration plots, function as the project manager,

coordinating sub-award work, drafting reports and publications, and participating in all project field days.

Year 1: \$15,000      Year 2: \$15,000      Year 3: \$15,000

*Total Personnel:*

Year 1: \$60,000      Year 2: \$60,000      Year 3: \$60,000

**2. Fringe benefits**

50% fringe benefits paid by non-Federal funds. Fringe benefits rates are as follows: 35% for faculty and permanent staff.

*Total Fringe Benefits:*

Year 1: \$21,000      Year 2: \$21,000      Year 3: \$21,000

**3. Equipment**

Field equipment rental. This is match donated by the partner community groups (see in-kind letter). Will provide all farming equipment (tools, planters, harvesters) for on-farm demonstrations.

Year 1: \$2,000      Year 2: \$500      Year 3: \$500

*Total Equipment:*

Year 1: \$500      Year 2: \$500      Year 3: \$500

**4. Supplies - none**

**5. Contractual**

Contract with Super Non-Profits (\$91,000)

Personnel:

Elizabeth Smith will oversee the outreach to farmers. She will devote 80% of her time all 3 years of the project. 25% of her time will be non-Federal. She will oversee all elements of this part of the project, including contacting and recruiting farmers, organizing outreach events such as field days, and on-farm assistance.

Tom Jones will spend 20% time providing technical assistance to community-based organizations that support producers. 50% of this time is covered by non-Federal funds.

Half-time admin support to help support program facilitation.

Other:

Workshop rental space will be donated by contractor, with an estimated value of \$100 per day.

Year 2: \$2,000      Year 3: \$2,000.

Soil Conservation District

The local soil and water conservation district will support the project by helping to build partner relationships with local producers.

Year 1: \$10,000      Year 2: \$10,000      Year 3: \$10,000

*Total Contractual:*

Year 1: \$105,000      Year 2: \$107,000      Year 3: \$107,000

**6. Construction** - None requested

**7. Other Costs:**

General services (web development, printing, accounting, administrative, and project management) \$15,000. Roughly \$5,000 will be spent each year.

Land rental – demonstration plots on farmer land will have a rental cost of \$56/acre/year totaling \$1,120 annually.

Legal Fees: Community support groups will pay all legal fees regarding the research of any legal implications on the project. \$40,000 annually.

Subaward with Unknown University

Dr. Mark Gibbs will provide oversight for all the out-of-state work. He will dedicate 10% time commitment to the project. (Salary and fringe \$15,000/year.)

One post-doctoral candidate yet to be determined will give 50% time to the project and will develop all field and lab methodologies for the project. (Salary and fringe 30,000/year.)

*Total Other:*

Year 1: \$46,120      Year 2: \$46,120      Year 3: \$46,120

**8. Indirect Costs** – Note if NICRA negotiated or if it is the 10% *De Minimis* rate

*Total Indirect Costs:*

Year 1: \$47,500      Year 2: \$48,000      Year 3: \$48,000