



# RCPP Partner Proposal Guide for Alternative Funding Arrangements

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**VERSION 1.0**  
**ISSUED MARCH 12, 2020**

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**Natural Resource Conservation Service**



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

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**NOTE:** Partners should use this guide alongside the FY 2021 RCPP AFA funding announcement, which includes critical information about the program.

### Version History

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Changes</b>
1.0	3/12/20	

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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.

The FY 2018 Farm Bill expanded the authority of NRCS to use grant-like Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) with eligible partners that can leverage the additional flexibility to provide innovating conservation benefits. Unlike RCPP Classic, lead partners will directly contract with producers and landowners to provide financial and technical assistance. For more information on Alternative Funding Arrangements, see Appendix C.

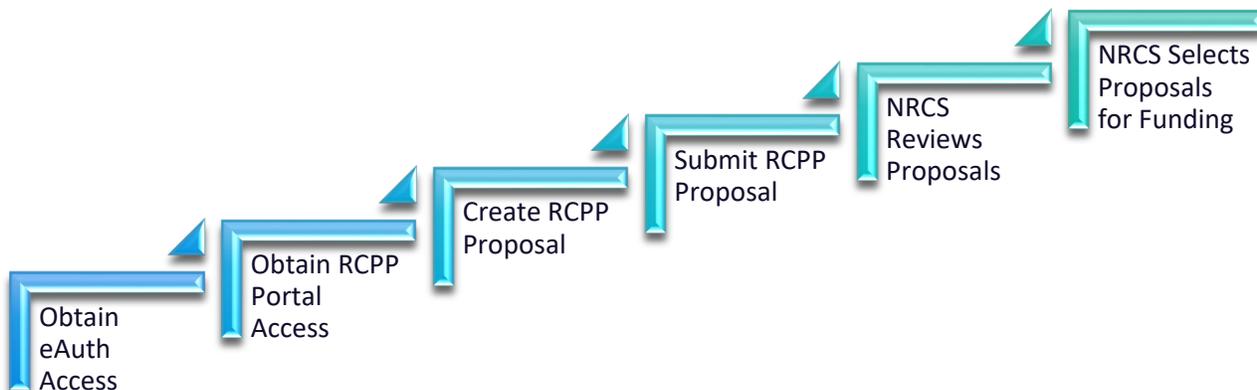
## 2. RCPP Portal Roles and Workflow

### 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 annual reporting questionnaires
- submit inquiries
- submit Project Completion Questionnaire
- identify and place map pin for project location
- view adjusted gross income and adjustment of terms requests

### 2.2. RCPP Proposal Workflow for Partners



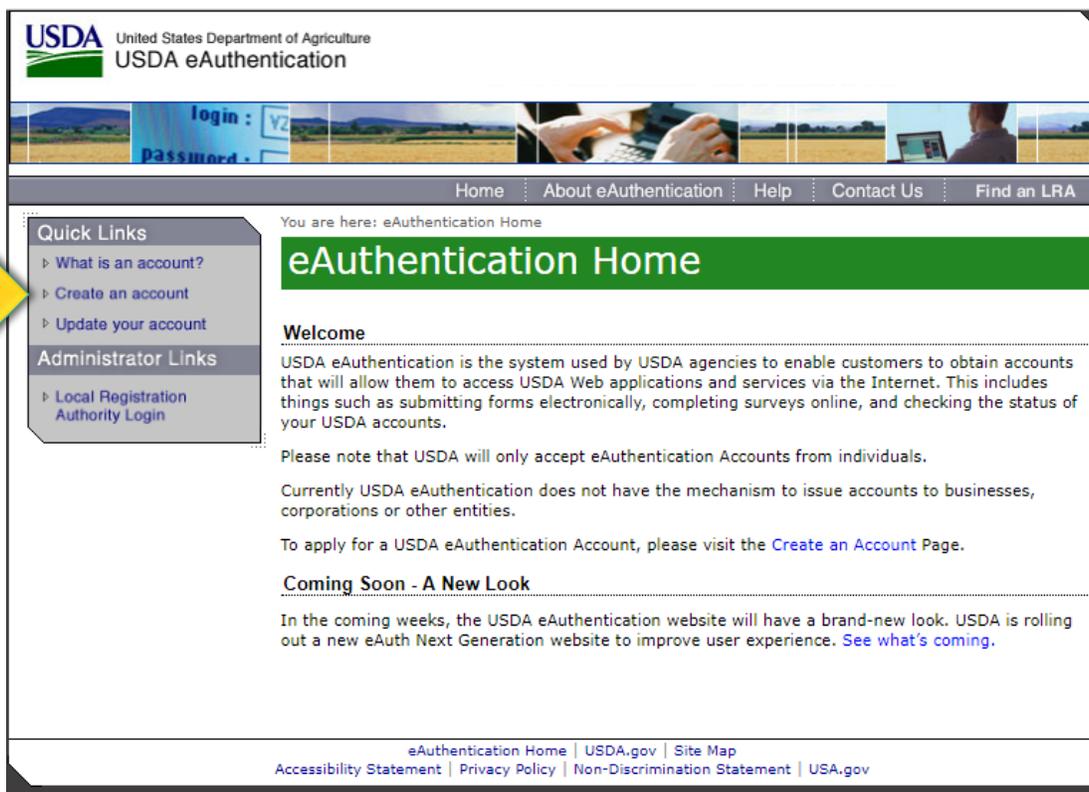
## 3. Accessing the RCPP Portal

### 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 accounts, so individuals with an eAuthentication account will be able to create and submit a RCPP proposal.
- 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.

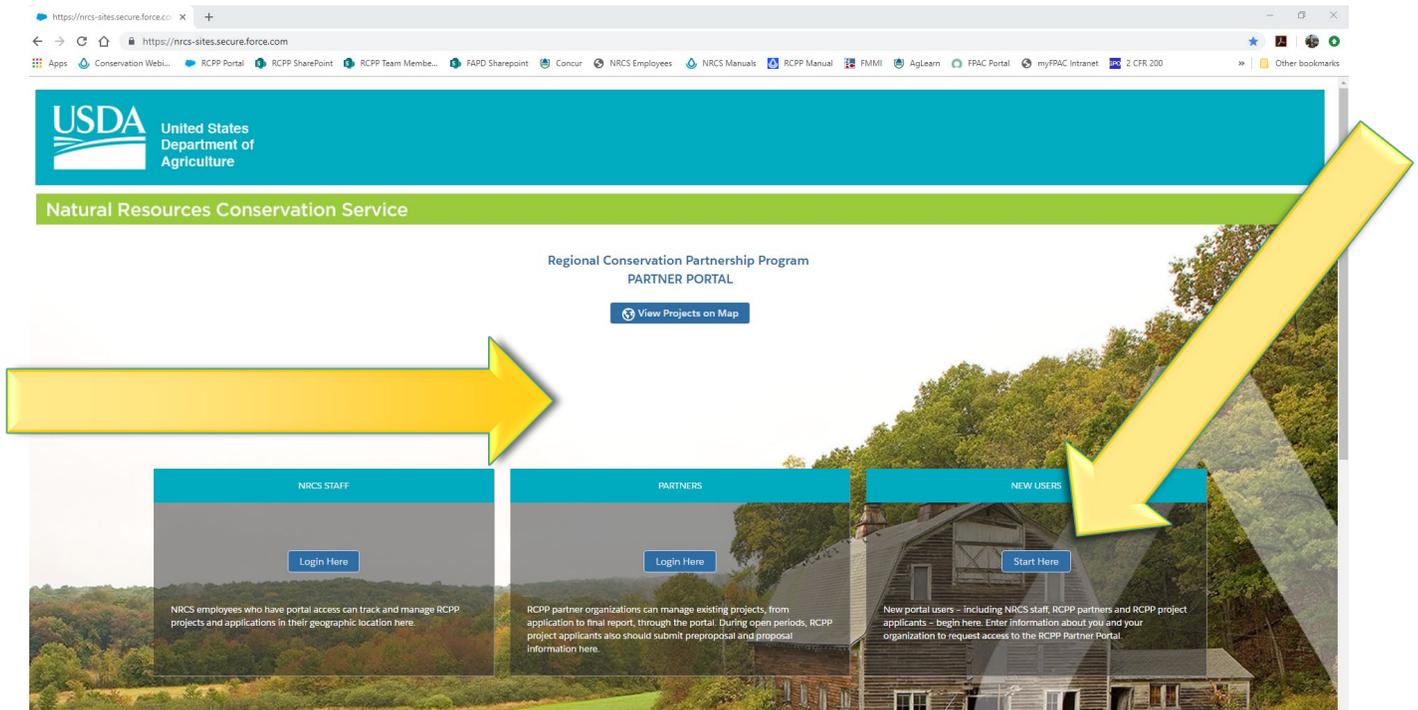
#### Current eAuthentication Homepage



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:" field and a "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". A large green banner reads "eAuthentication Home". A sidebar on the left contains "Quick Links" (What is an account?, Create an account, Update your account) and "Administrator Links" (Local Registration Authority Login). A yellow arrow points to the "Quick Links" section. The main content area includes a "Welcome" message, a note that USDA only accepts individual accounts, and a "Coming Soon - A New Look" announcement. The footer contains links for "eAuthentication Home", "USDA.gov", "Site Map", "Accessibility Statement", "Privacy Policy", "Non-Discrimination Statement", and "USA.gov".

## 3.2. Creating a User Account within the RCPP Portal

5. Go to the RCPP portal login page - <https://nracs-sites.secure.force.com>
6. New users should click on the “start here” button for under the box labeled new users as shown below. Returning users should click the “login here” button under the partners section. Returning users should skip ahead to section 4.



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

**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/mainPages/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

Partner Organization\*

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.

\*-Required  
I am a ??

Partner Organization

Full Name,\*

Partner Organization,\*

BUSINESS ADDRESS

Address 1,\*

City,\*

Address 2

State,\*

Zip Code,\*

Time Zone,\*

Business Email,\*

Business Phone,\*

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.

Proposals/Projects Requested to Manage (Enter "NA" if none):\*

Do You Have Eauth Level-2 Access?\*

Yes

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/mainPages/index.aspx>. You may request e-Authentication access from this website as well.

Submit

Cancel

## 4. Proposal Process for Partners

### 4.1. Home Screen

After logging in to the RCPP portal with your eAuth level 2 account, you will see the following home screen. Returning users can select the 2014 Farm Bill tab to view any proposals that were previously submitted. To submit a new proposal, select that 2018 Farm Bill tab as shown on the following page.

[RCPP PROPOSALS](#) ▾ [RCPP PROJECTS](#) [HELP](#) ▾

## WELCOME TO THE RCPP PARTNER PORTAL!

**Need Help?**

Please check the "Videos and Guides" and "FAQs" pages under the Help tab to see if your question has already been answered. If you still need help, please use the contact information for the RCPP Support Team below:

Log a Ticket: <https://usdanrcs.service-now.com/ServiceDesk/>  
 Email: [usdanrcs@midatl.service-now.com](mailto:usdanrcs@midatl.service-now.com)  
 NRCS Support Hotline: (970) 372-4200

**Sample Documents**

- [Sample Agreement Template](#)

**NOTE: Please use Chrome or Edge.** There are some compatibility issues between Salesforce and older versions of Internet Explorer. Some functions may not work properly.

**New proposals for FY 2020 are now being accepted!**

1. Navigate to the "RCPP PROPOSALS" tab.
2. Select the "2018 FARM BILL" sub-tab.
3. Click the "New Proposal" button.



Once you select the 2018 Farm Bill tab users can view, create, and submit Proposals before the Proposal deadline set by the RCPP Team.

[RCPP PROPOSALS](#) ▾ [RCPP PROJECTS](#) [HELP](#) ▾

## RCPP PROPOSALS

Click on a Project Number to open the proposal or click the New Proposal button to start a new one. **Note: The New Proposal button is only available before the Proposal Deadline of the current RCPP program cycle.**

[+ New Proposal](#)

 Proposal/Project  
**2018 Farm Bill Partner Proposals**

3 Items • Sorted by Fiscal Year • Filtered by all proposal/project - Record Type • Updated a few seconds ago

⚙️ ↻

	Fiscal Year ↑	Project Number	Project Name	Status
1	2020	0018	Oysters Save the Day for the Chesapeake Bay	Withdrawn
2	2020	0030	Test 3	Full Proposal In Progress
3	2020	0031	Sacramento Sage Grouse	Full Proposal Submitted

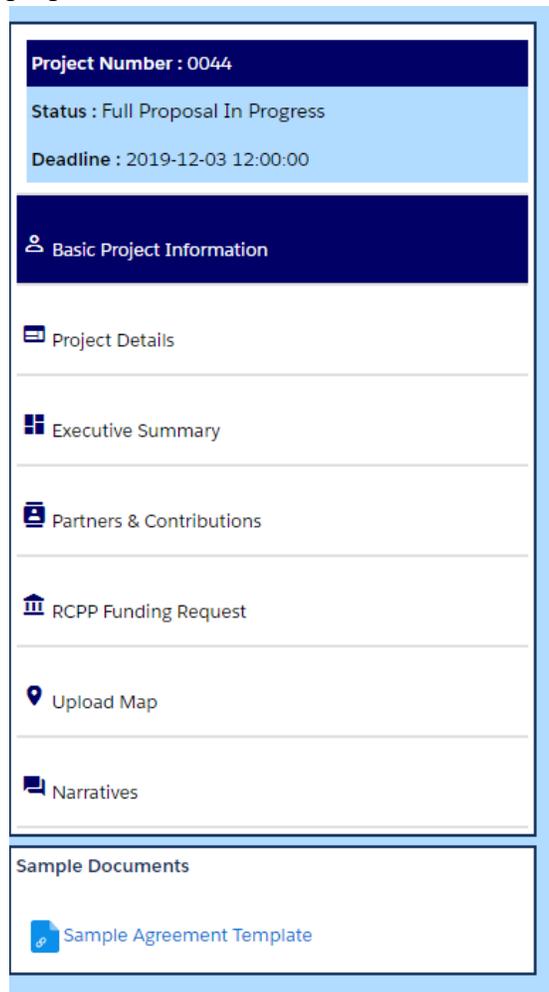
## 4.2. Creating a Proposal

### 4.2.1. Starting a New Proposal

1. Click the  button.

**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.

2. The **Basic Project Information** screen is displayed. On the left side of the screen is a menu that allows users to navigate between the various sections of an RCPP proposal. This will also display the status of the proposal as well as the deadline for submitting proposals.



## 4.2.2. Navigating the Proposal Submission Page

### Left Menu

The screenshot displays the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service proposal submission interface. At the top left, the USDA logo and 'United States Department of Agriculture' are visible. Below this, the 'Natural Resources Conservation Service' header is present. A navigation bar contains buttons for 'Submit', 'Un-Submit', 'Withdraw', 'Print', 'Back to Proposals', and 'Why can't I submit?'. The left sidebar menu, highlighted with a yellow box, includes: 'Project Number : 1674', 'Status : Full Proposal In Progress', 'Deadline : 2020-03-24 10:00:00 America/Denver', 'Basic Project Information' (with a green checkmark icon), 'Project Details', 'Executive Summary', 'Partners & Contributions', 'RCPP Funding Request', 'Upload Map', 'Narratives', and 'Related Documents'. The main content area is titled 'Basic Project Information' and includes a red warning: '\*Information is specific to proposal, not to partner profile.\*' The form fields are: Project Name\*, Lead Partner Organization\* (RCPP FarmBill18 Test Account), Funding pool\* (--None--), CCA Applicable List\* (--None--), Project Type\* (AFA), AFA Type\* (--None--), Organizational Authorized Signatory\* (with an info icon), Organizational Signatory Email\*, Organizational Signatory Phone\*, Organizational Signatory Secondary Email, Does Lead Partner have an active SAM.gov Registration?\* (--None--), and DUNS\*.

This left menu will allow you to navigate between sections of the proposal. If a section is complete a little green icon will appear to the right of the section header text as shown below. If a section is not complete there will be no icon in that header.

This close-up shows two menu items: 'Upload Map' with a location pin icon and 'Narratives' with a document icon and a green checkmark, indicating that the Narratives section is complete.

## Top Menu



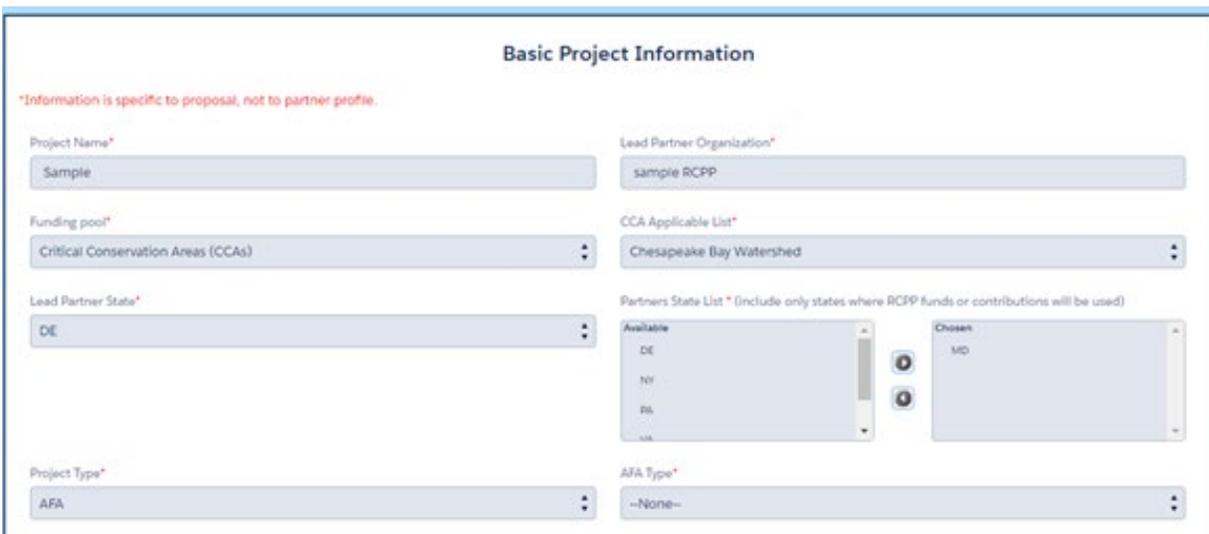
1. Submit – This button allows you to submit the proposal once all required fields have been submitted. Once a proposal is submitted it can no longer be edited by the lead partner.
2. Un-Submit – When a proposal is un-submitted, the lead partner will be able to edit the proposal. The project must be re-submitted before the NFO deadline in order to be considered.
3. Withdraw – A proposal can be withdrawn before or after the proposal is submitted. Withdrawing a project is final, and the proposal cannot be returned to “Proposal in Progress” or “Proposal Submitted” status.
4. Print – This button allows the lead partner to create a PDF of all proposal fields.
5. Why can't I Submit – This button creates a popup that shows the lead partner which fields need to be filled or corrected in order to submit the proposal, as shown below.

## Navigating Between Sections

- Clicking  saves the information entered. It does not validate that fields have been entered correctly and does not move the user to the next section.
- Clicking  saves the information entered and validates that all required fields have been entered correctly. If all required fields have been entered the user is moved to the next section of the proposal.

### 4.2.3. Basic Project Information

3. Fill out the Basic Project Information. All fields with a red asterisk are required.

A screenshot of a web form titled "Basic Project Information". At the top, a red asterisk note reads: "\*Information is specific to proposal, not to partner profile." The form contains several fields: "Project Name\*" with the value "Sample"; "Lead Partner Organization\*" with the value "sample RCPP"; "Funding pool\*" with a dropdown menu showing "Critical Conservation Areas (CCAs)"; "CCA Applicable List\*" with a dropdown menu showing "Chesapeake Bay Watershed"; "Lead Partner State\*" with a dropdown menu showing "DE"; "Partners State List\*" (with a sub-note: "(Include only states where RCPP funds or contributions will be used)") featuring two lists: "Available" (with DE, NY, PA, VA) and "Chosen" (with MD); "Project Type\*" with a dropdown menu showing "AFA"; and "AFA Type\*" with a dropdown menu showing "--None--".

- a. *Project Name* - Enter a concise title for your proposed RCPP project. Please avoid acronyms that are not widely known.

- b. *Lead Partner Organization* – This information is auto-populated by the users account information.
- c. *Funding Pool* - Select either the State/Multi-state or CCA funding pool.
- d. *Critical Conservation Areas (CCA) Applicable List* – If the funding pool is set to the CCA funding pool, the *CCA Applicable List* will allow users to select a specific CCA funding pool. 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. *Lead State* – Select the lead state where the largest portion of the work will be performed. If a CCA funding pool is selected this dropdown will only include states within that CCA.
- f. *Partner States* – Select all states where work will be performed. If a CCA funding pool is selected this dropdown will only include states within that CCA. All states listed as partner states must be referenced in the funding request and/or contributions section.
- g. *Project Type* – This is automatically set to RCPP AFA.
- h. *AFA Type* – Select from the AFA drop down. See Appendix C for definitions on each AFA type.

The screenshot shows a web form with the following fields and values:

- Organizational Authorized Signatory\*: [Empty]
- Organizational Signatory Email\*: [Empty]
- Organizational Signatory Phone\*: [Empty]
- Organizational Signatory Secondary Email: [Empty]
- Does Lead Partner have an active SAM.gov Registration?\*: --None--
- DUNS\*: [Empty]
- Address 1\*: 123 Main Street
- Address 2: Suite 100
- City\*: Fairfax
- State\*: VA
- Zip code\*: 22033
- Project POC Contact Name\*: [Empty]
- Project POC Phone\*: [Empty]
- Project POC Email\*: [Empty]

Buttons: Save as Draft, Save & Continue

- i. *Organizational Authorized Signatory* – Enter the name of the individual responsible for managing the project should it be selected.
- j. *Organizational Signatory Email* – Enter an email address for the Organizational Signatory.
- k. *Organizational Signatory Phone*– Enter the telephone number of the Project Director including the area code.
- l. *Organizational Signatory Secondary Email* – Enter a secondary form of email for contacting the Organizational Signatory.

- m. *SAM Registration* – Users must select yes or no for whether they have a SAM.gov registration. If no is selected, users will still be able to submit the proposal, but the user will receive an error message reminding partners that a SAM.gov registration will be necessary to enter in to a partnership agreement with NRCS.
- n. *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.

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>

- o. Address 1 – Enter the number and street address for the lead partner.
  - p. Address 2 – Enter the office or suite number, if applicable, for the lead partner.
  - q. City – Enter the city of the lead partner.
  - r. State – Enter the state for the lead partner.
  - s. Zip code – Enter the zip code for the lead partner.
  - t. *Project POC Contact Name* – Enter the name of an individual from the lead partner organization who can be contacted should the Project Director be unavailable, or change.
  - u. *Project POC Contact Phone* – Enter a telephone number for the alternative contact.
  - v. *Project POC Contact Email* - Enter an email address for the alternative contact.
4. Click  to save the information and proceed to the next section without validating the data in this section. Users will progress to the *Project Details* section.
5. Click  to validate the information in this section. Error messages will appear below required fields that are blank, or required fields that were not entered correctly. If there are no errors users will progress to the *Project Details* section and a green check mark will appear to the right of the  Basic Project Information  label on the left menu.

#### 4.2.4. Project Details

6. Fill out the *Project Details Section*.

### Project Details

Is this a 5 Year Project? \*

First Fiscal Year \*

Final Fiscal Year \*

Primary Resource Concern Category\*

Additional Resource Concern Categories

Available

- Aquatic habitat
- Field pesticide loss
- Field sediment, nutrient
- Livestock production limi
- Long term protection of

Chosen

Explain why the length of your project is not 5 years\*

- a. *Is this a 5 Year Project?* – By default this is set to Yes, which locks the *First Fiscal Year* and *Final Fiscal Year* at 2020 and 2025. If No is selected the *First Fiscal Year* remains locked at 2020 but the user can select between 2021-2029 for the *Final Fiscal Year*. Selecting no will also add a required field to justify the proposed project length.
- b. *First Fiscal Year* – This is automatically set at 2020.
- c. *Final Fiscal Year* – Enter the proposed end date. Most projects are expected to end no more than five years after the start date. If a project is proposed for a period other than five years, a justification is required below.
- d. *Primary Resource Concern Category*– Select the primary resource concern among the dropdown options. This should be the resource concern that will receive the largest portion 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 Category*– Please select all other resource concerns your project will address through financial assistance, technical assistance, and/or contributions.
- f. *Explain why the length of your project is not 5 years.* –Enter a justification for why a project length other than five years is needed to achieve the goals and objectives of the proposed project. This field is only visible if the use selects No for the prompt *Is this a 5 year project?*

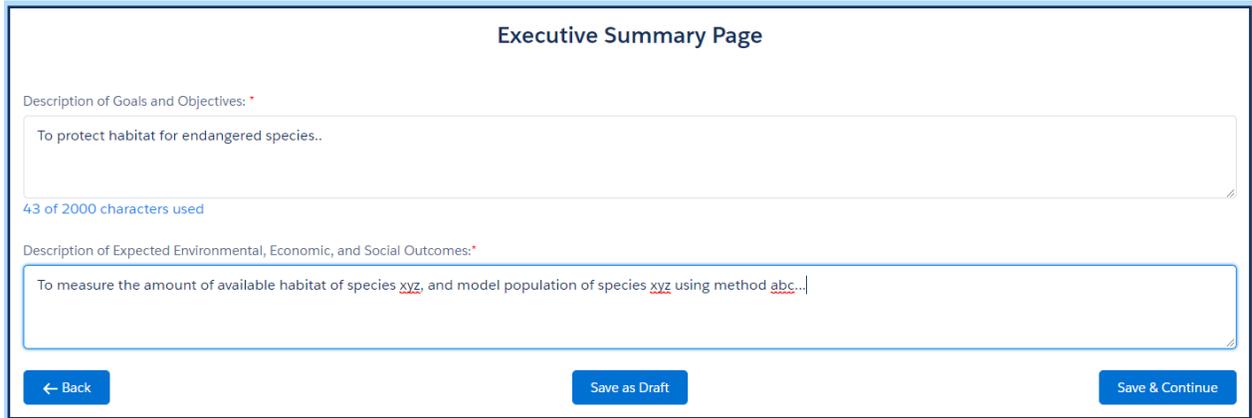
7. Click  to save the information and proceed to the next section without validating the data in this section. Users will progress to the *Executive Summary* section.

8. Click  to validate the information in this section. Error messages will appear below required fields that are blank, or required fields that were not entered correctly. If there

are no errors users will progress to the *Executive Summary* section and a green check mark will appear to the right of the  Project Details  label on the left menu.

## 4.2.5. Executive Summary

9. Fill out the **Executive Summary** section.



- a. *Description of Goals and Objectives* – A brief summary of the project (i.e. your elevator pitch) including project goals and objectives. This should include a discussion of how the project’s goals and objectives can more effectively be met through an AFA rather than RCPP Classic.
- b. *Description of Expected Environmental, Economic, and Social Outcomes* – All RCPP projects are required to develop and report on 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.

10. Click  to save the information and proceed to the next section without validating the data in this section. Users will progress to the *Partners & Contributions* section.
11. Click  to validate the information in this section. Error messages will appear below required fields that are blank, or required fields that were not entered correctly. If there are no errors users will progress to the *Partners & Contributions* section and a green check mark will appear to the right of the  Executive Summary  label on the left menu.

## 4.2.6. Partners & Contributions

12. 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.

The screenshot shows two tables. The first table, titled "Project Partners", has columns: Action, Partner/Entity Name, Partner/Entity Type, Contact Name, Contact Phone, Contact Email, and Letter of Contribution. It contains one entry for "Russell Ames (Partner)" with a red pencil icon in the Action column and a red "Upload File" button in the Letter of Contribution column. Below the table is a blue "+ Add Partner" button. The second table, titled "Partner Contributions", has columns: Action, Partner/Entity Name, Fund Year, Contribution Category, Amount, and Cost Basis And Tie To Project Scope. Below this table is a "Totals" row. At the bottom left, there is a "Required Documents:" section with two bullet points: "• Contribution letters for each non-lead partner and third-party that are providing contributions listed above." and "• Must include the amount of cash and in-kind contributions." At the bottom left is a blue "← Back" button, and at the bottom right is a blue "Save & Continue" button.

13. While most fields will be auto-populated for the lead partner, click the  icon to edit the lead partner entry to select a *Partner/Entity Type*. A partner contribution letter will also need to be uploaded.
14. Click  to add a new partner or contributing entry. The *Project Partner Form* will appear. Note: Only add partners that will be participating in the project. This can include providing contributions and/or delivering technical assistance.

The screenshot shows the "Project Partner Form" with the following fields: "Partner/Entity Name\*" (text input with "Russell Ames (Partner)"), "Partner/Entity Type\*" (dropdown menu with "NP-Not-for-profit organization or entity"), "Contact Name\*" (text input with "Russell Ames (Partner)"), "Contact Email\*" (text input with "russell.ames@usda.gov"), and "Contact Phone\*" (text input with "(757) 123-4567"). At the bottom are two blue buttons: "Save" and "Cancel".

15. Fill out the **Project Partner Form**.
  - 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.
16. Click the **Save** button. The Partner/Entity will not be available in the dropdown menu for the **Partner Contributions Table**.
  17. Repeat step 13 for all contributing partners, entities, and Federal Agencies.
  18. Click  to upload a letter of contribution for each non-lead partner.
  19. Click  for each partner and type of contribution.
  20. Fill out **Project Partner Contribution Form**.

**Project Partner Contribution Form**

<p><small>Partner/Entity Name*</small></p> <input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Stark Industries"/>	<p><small>Fiscal Year*</small></p> <input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="2020"/>
<p><small>In-Kind vs Cash*</small></p> <input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="IN-Kind"/>	<p><small>Contribution Category*</small></p> <input apf"="" enhancement"="" expenditures="" per="" style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="TA: "/>
<p><small>Sample Activity*</small></p> <input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="Project management and partnership development to accomplish project goals (C, E)"/>	<p><small>Amount*</small></p> <input style="width: 95%;" type="text" value="200000"/>
<p><small>Relationship to project scope and requested RCPP funding*</small></p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	

- a. *Partner/Entity Name* – Select the partner, entity, or Federal Agency from the drop down. This drop down is populated by partners that have been added on the previous screen.
- b. *Fiscal Year* - Select the Fiscal Year for the specific contribution.
- c. *In-Kind vs Cash* – Select whether the contribution is In-Kind or Cash.
  - 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.
- 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. Note: While the portal expects contributions to align with RCPP Classic Activity Types, this is negotiable in AFAs.
- 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. *Amount* – Enter the value of the contribution in whole dollars.

- 
- g. *Relationship to project scope and requested RCPP funding* – Describe how this contribution relates to requested RCPP funding and/or how the contribution will further the goals and objectives of the project.

Note: Contributions beginning on the date on which the Secretary announces the approval of an application may be counted toward partner contributions based on partner request to the extent they are ultimately included in the final negotiated project deliverables (i.e. NRCS will have input into rates and tasks to ensure contributions are defensible and related to actual development/management).

21. Click  to attach a document to explain the cost basis and tie to project scope. This can provide a summary of how the proposed contributions are expected to be valued (e.g. actual partner expenses paid to contractors vs costs to partner of in-kind services based on attached fee schedule) and elaborate on the relationship of proposed contributions to project scope (e.g. details of specific non-RCPP FA related expenses and how they relate to the proposed project's conservation benefits).
22. Click  to save the contribution and return to the **Partner & Contributions** section.
23. Click  to attach any necessary documents to explain the cost basis of the contribution and to tie to the project scope.
24. Once all contributing partners have been added and all contributions lists, click the  to complete this section and proceed to the **RCPP Funding Request** section.

#### 4.2.7. RCPP Funding Request

25. The **RCPP Funding Request** screen is displayed. At the top of the page is a summary of the requested funds as well as the maximum amount for each type of funds. If any category is out of alignment (i.e. requested more than 18% in implementation TA or contributions less than the desired 1:1 ratio, an error message will appear below the category in red). With the exception of the partner contribution ratio, the section will not be marked complete unless all rules have been followed.

Partner Contribution Ratio : 0.00 Contribution ratio does not satisfy goal of contributions greater than or equal to RCPP funding	Minimum Amount that can be requested : \$250,000.00
Total Project Cost : \$1,428,571.43	Maximum Amount that can be requested : \$10,000,000.00
Total Financial Assistance Requested : \$1,000,000.00	Maximum Financial Assistance allowed : \$7,000,000.00
Total Technical Assistance Requested : \$428,571.43	
Total Partner Enhancement TA Requested : \$100,000.00	Maximum Partner Enhancement TA allowed : \$100,000.00
Total NRCS Implementation TA : \$128,571.43	Minimum NRCS Implementation TA allocated : \$71,428.57
Total Partner Implementation TA Requested : \$200,000.00	Maximum Partner Implementation TA allowed : \$257,142.86

Below the summary chart is the **RCPP Financial Assistance Funding Request**. At the top is a summary of the total FA request by activity type.

RCPP Financial Assistance Funding Request					
Type of Assistance	Request Type	Total Funding Requested			
Financial Assistance (FA)	Land Management	\$350,000.00			
Financial Assistance (FA)	Watershed	\$350,000.00			
Financial Assistance (FA)	Rentals	\$300,000.00			

Action	Activity Type	Fiscal Year	State	Amount	Proposed Activity
 	Land Management	2020	VA	\$250,000.00	Great activity here
 	Land Management	2021	MD	\$100,000.00	Amazing work...
 	Watershed	2022	VA	\$350,000.00	Great watershed plans...
 	Rentals	2020	MD	\$300,000.00	Great activities...

[+ Add Financial Assistance Request](#)

26. Click [+ Add Financial Assistance Request](#) to open the **Financial Assistance Funding Request Form**.
27. Fill out all fields in the **Financial Assistance Request Form**.

**Financial Assistance Funding Request Form**

Activity Type*	Fund Year*
<input type="text" value="--None--"/>	<input type="text" value="2020"/>
State*	Amount(S)*
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Deliverable Type*	Proposed Practice*
<input type="text" value="--None--"/>	<input type="text" value="--None--"/>
Description*	
<input style="height: 40px;" type="text"/>	
<input type="button" value="Save"/>	<input type="button" value="Cancel"/>

- a. *Activity Type* – Select between (1) Land Improvement, (2) Rentals, (3) Easements, Entity-Held, and (4) Public Works/Watersheds. For a definition of these contract types please see Appendix A.
- 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* – Select the state from the dropdown 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 have one option based on the activity type entered.
- e. *Proposed Practice* – This field is auto-populated based on the deliverable type.
- f. *Description* – This field is optional but 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.

28. Click  to save the financial assistance funding request.
29. Repeat steps 26-28 as necessary for all other financial assistance contribution requests.
30. Once all financial assistance funding requests have been entered, scroll down to the **RCPP Technical Assistance Funding Request** table. The top section is a summary of technical assistance requests by category.

RCPP Technical Assistance Funding Request				
Type of Assistance	Request Type	Total Funding Requested		
Technical Assistance (TA)	Enhancement TA	\$100,000.00		
Technical Assistance (TA)	Partner Implementation TA	\$200,000.00		
	Partner Requested TA	\$300,000.00		
Action	Technical Assistance Request Type	State of proposed TA activity	Amount	Proposed Activity
 	Enhancement TA	VA	\$100,000.00	Develop and manage RCPP agreements with NRCS (C, E)
 	Partner Implementation TA	VA	\$200,000.00	Technical assistance to producers for planning directly related to installation or manager



31. Click  to open the **Technical Assistance Funding Request Form**.
32. Fill out all fields in the **Technical Assistance Request Form**.

### Technical Assistance Funding Request Form

Technical Assistance Request Type\*

State of Proposed TA Practice \*

Amount(S)\*

Deliverable Type

Eligible Enhancement Activities As Described in APF (Subject to post-project selection negotiations)

Proposed Practice\*

Relationship to project objectives and contributions.

Save

Cancel

- a. *Technical Assistance Request Type* – Select between Enhancement Technical Assistance and Partner Implementation Technical Assistance. For a definition of these assistance types please see Appendix B.
- b. *State of Proposed TA Practice*– Select the state from the dropdown where the technical assistance will be performed.
- c. *Amount* – Enter the amount for each TA request type.

- d. *Deliverable Type* – This will be auto-populated based on the Technical Assistance Request type entered in the first column.
- e. *Proposed Practice* – This will be auto-populated based on the Briefly describe the types of technical assistance activities that will be performed for each deliverable.

Some sample proposed activities:

- 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

- f. *Relationship to project objectives and contributions* – Briefly justify the need and substantiate the funding request.

33. Click  to save the technical assistance funding request.
34. Repeat 30-31 as necessary for all other technical assistance funding requests.
35. Enter a description for how your organization has the capability and capacity to perform technical assistance deliverables included in the RCPP funding request table.

Describe how your organization has the capability and capacity to perform technical assistance deliverables included in the RCPP funding request table (i.e. the certifications, educational background, prior experience of individuals assigned to the task as well as the time and number of staff allocated to these tasks):

0 of 4000 characters used

36. Click  to upload supporting documents for the RCPP funding request, including any documents necessary to demonstrate the capability and capacity of individuals assigned to tasks within the RCPP funding request.
37. Click  at any time to save progress on this page.
38. Click the  to complete this section and proceed to the **Upload Map** section.

#### 4.2.8. Upload Map

39. Upload a map by clicking  or dragging a jpeg, png, or tiff file on the box shown below.

Document  
 • Upload any format (jpeg/pdf/etc) map of the proposed area of the RCPP project. Applicants may work with their local NRCS field office for help with project maps

Upload Images  
 or Drop Images

← Back Next →

File Name	Action

40. Once a file has been uploaded a checkmark will be visible on the left menu next to the section header .
41. Click the  icon to delete the file.
42. Click the  to complete this section and proceed to the **Narratives** section.

#### 4.2.9. Proposal Narrative Questions

43. The **Proposal Narrative Questions** screen is displayed. Answer all questions within this section through the input box at the bottom of the page.
44. After submitting each narrative response click  to save the response and move to the next question. Click  to save the response, mark the answer as complete, and move to the next question. Questions that have been started will display a  icon while questions that have been marked complete will show a  icon. To return to a question click on that question within the **Narratives** section.

*Note: For Renewals, only narrative questions 4, 7, 9, 10, and 14 are required.*

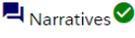
Proposal Narrative Questions
<b>Impact</b>
1. Describe compelling need for the project and an overview of how the project will generate targeted conservation benefits.
2. Describe rationale for inclusion of each RCPP activity type in project proposal, and how each activity relates to the generation of conservation benefits.

<b>Proposal Narrative Questions</b>
3. Describe the rationale for the proposed geographic scope of the project.
4. Describe proposed approach for evaluating the success of the project, including outcomes.
5. Will this project help producers meet or avoid natural resource regulatory requirements? If so, describe how.
<b>Partner Contributions</b>
6. Describe the plan for, and lead partner’s experience with, managing and tracking the delivery of third-party contributions (if included in the proposal).
7. Describe how partner contributions add value to the proposed project to leverage and multiply the benefits of the potential committed RCPP funding.
<b>Innovation</b>
8. 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?
9. Provide a justification for why this project must be carried out through an AFA rather than through the traditional RCPP Classic approach.
10. 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.
<b>Partnerships and Management</b>
11. Describe how the lead partner intends to carry out the project outside the traditional RCPP Classic approach – include details on how the partnership intends to identify participating producers/landowners and how the partnership intends to provide the necessary technical assistance to those participants.
12. 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.
13. Describe the lead and contributing partners’ experience managing Federal funding awards or similar projects and conservation projects, executing deliverables, and successfully getting conservation on the ground.

# Proposal Narrative Questions

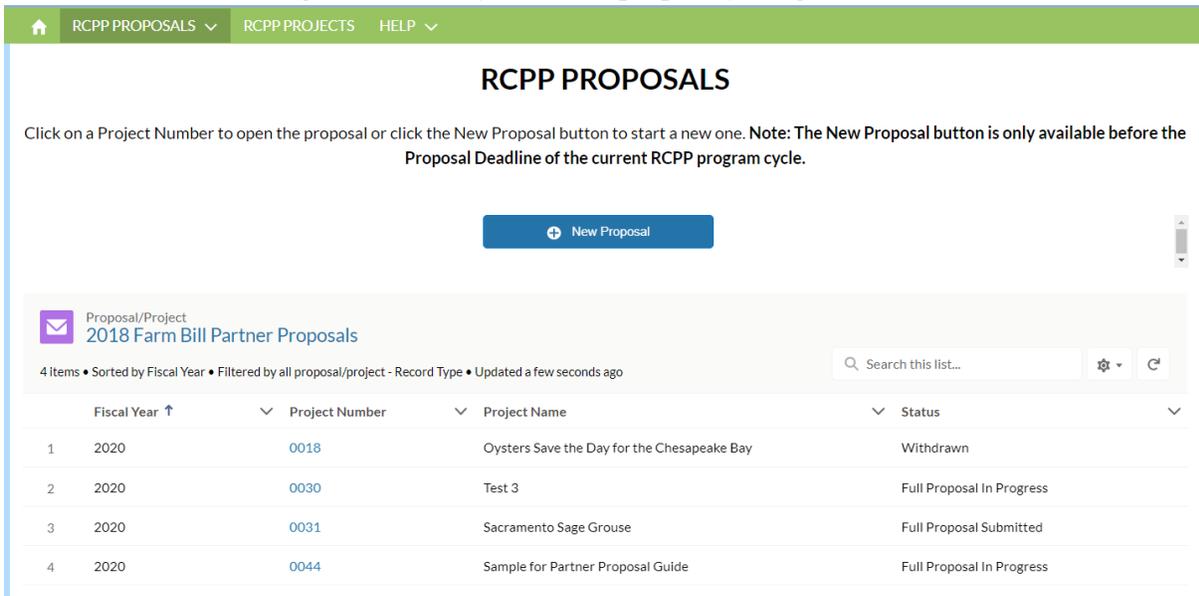
## Partnerships and Management

14. 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 include as a partner(s) organization working with or representing those groups of producers.

45. Once all of the questions have been marked complete there will be a green check mark on the section header of the left menu, .

### 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.



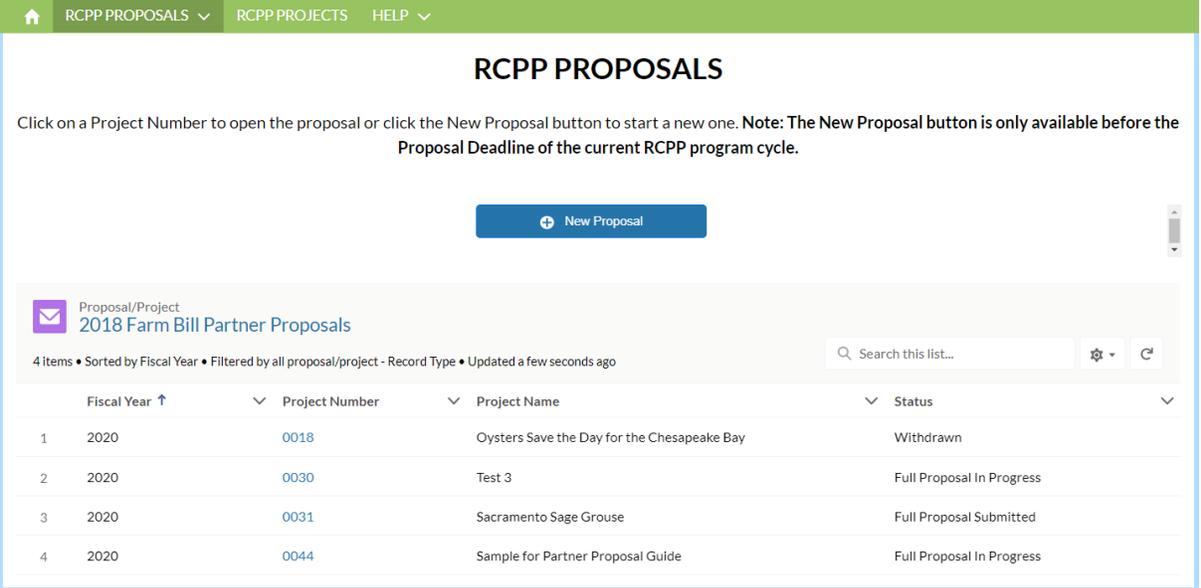
	Fiscal Year ↑	Project Number	Project Name	Status
1	2020	0018	Oysters Save the Day for the Chesapeake Bay	Withdrawn
2	2020	0030	Test 3	Full Proposal In Progress
3	2020	0031	Sacramento Sage Grouse	Full Proposal Submitted
4	2020	0044	Sample for Partner Proposal Guide	Full Proposal In Progress

2. Find the proposal in the **Proposal in Progress** status.
3. Click the project number to access 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.



The screenshot shows the 'RCPP PROPOSALS' interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'RCPP PROPOSALS', 'RCPP PROJECTS', and 'HELP'. Below the navigation bar, the title 'RCPP PROPOSALS' is centered. A note states: 'Click on a Project Number to open the proposal or click the New Proposal button to start a new one. Note: The New Proposal button is only available before the Proposal Deadline of the current RCPP program cycle.' A blue button labeled 'New Proposal' is visible. Below this, there is a section for '2018 Farm Bill Partner Proposals' with a search bar and a table of proposals. The table has columns for Fiscal Year, Project Number, Project Name, and Status.

	Fiscal Year ↑	Project Number	Project Name	Status
1	2020	0018	Oysters Save the Day for the Chesapeake Bay	Withdrawn
2	2020	0030	Test 3	Full Proposal In Progress
3	2020	0031	Sacramento Sage Grouse	Full Proposal Submitted
4	2020	0044	Sample for Partner Proposal Guide	Full Proposal In Progress

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

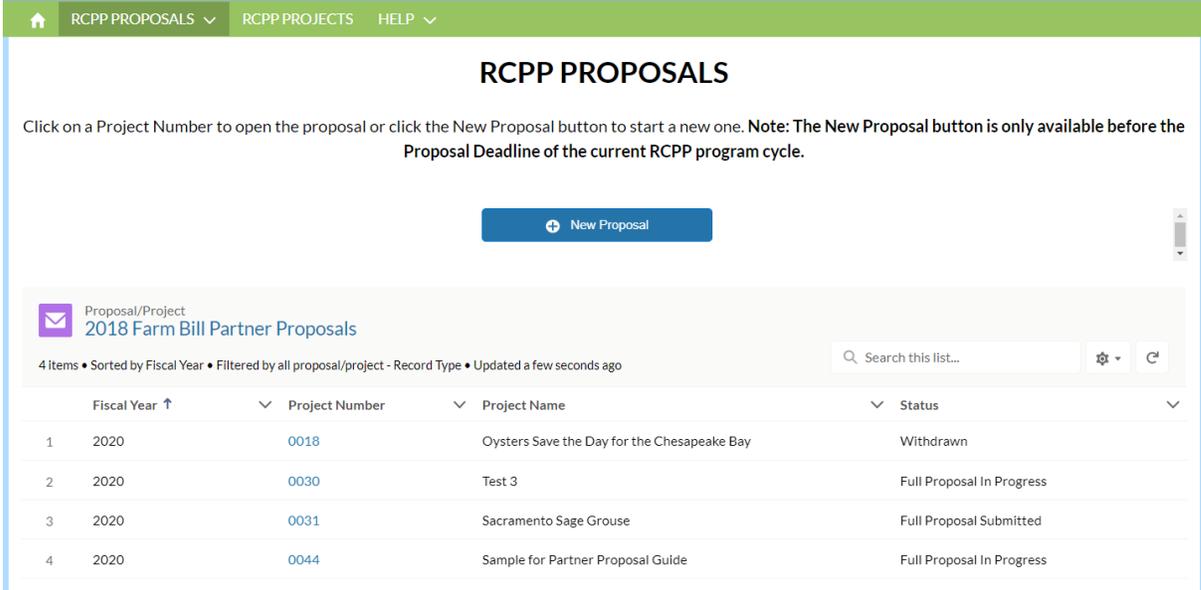
**Please note:** Upon submission, (1) the Status of the Proposal changes to Pre-Proposal Submitted, (2) the user receives an email confirmation for their submission, and (3) the pre-proposal is locked for editing.

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 and select **2018 Farm Bill**. 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 the RCPP PROPOSALS interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a home icon, 'RCPP PROPOSALS', 'RCPP PROJECTS', and 'HELP'. Below this is a header 'RCPP PROPOSALS' and a note: 'Click on a Project Number to open the proposal or click the New Proposal button to start a new one. Note: The New Proposal button is only available before the Proposal Deadline of the current RCPP program cycle.' A blue button with a plus icon and 'New Proposal' is visible. Below the button is a section for 'Proposal/Project 2018 Farm Bill Partner Proposals' with a search bar and a refresh icon. A table lists 4 items, sorted by Fiscal Year. The table has columns for Fiscal Year, Project Number, Project Name, and Status.

	Fiscal Year ↑	Project Number	Project Name	Status
1	2020	<a href="#">0018</a>	Oysters Save the Day for the Chesapeake Bay	Withdrawn
2	2020	<a href="#">0030</a>	Test 3	Full Proposal In Progress
3	2020	<a href="#">0031</a>	Sacramento Sage Grouse	Full Proposal Submitted
4	2020	<a href="#">0044</a>	Sample for Partner Proposal Guide	Full Proposal In Progress

2. Find the proposal in the Proposal Submitted status.
3. Click the project number to access 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 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 and select **2018 Farm Bill**. 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.

RCPP PROPOSALS

Click on a Project Number to open the proposal or click the New Proposal button to start a new one. Note: The New Proposal button is only available before the Proposal Deadline of the current RCPP program cycle.

+ New Proposal

Proposal/Project  
2018 Farm Bill Partner Proposals

4 Items • Sorted by Fiscal Year • Filtered by all proposal/project - Record Type • Updated a few seconds ago

	Fiscal Year ↑	Project Number	Project Name	Status
1	2020	0018	Oysters Save the Day for the Chesapeake Bay	Withdrawn
2	2020	0030	Test 3	Full Proposal In Progress
3	2020	0031	Sacramento Sage Grouse	Full Proposal Submitted
4	2020	0044	Sample for Partner Proposal Guide	Full Proposal In Progress

2. Find the proposal in the Proposal Submitted status, click on the project number to access and the proposal entry. The proposal opens in the same screen.
3. At the bottom of the screen click  to completely remove the proposal from consideration. This cannot be undone.
4. The message below will be displayed prompting users to confirm that they want to withdraw the proposal and understand this action is permanent. Click yes to confirm the proposal withdrawal.

**Withdraw Proposal**

Are you sure you want to withdraw this Proposal ?

Yes No

**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.

## Appendix A – RCPP Activity Types

**RCPP Classic uses the following activity types to align work under an RCPP agreement with eligible activities. In Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) may contain aspects similar to any of the activity types below, excluding U.S.-held easements.**

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) <b>NOTE: U.S.-held easements are not available as part of Alternative Funding Arrangements.</b>
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.

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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.

Please note the following table applies primarily RCPP Classic. For AFAs, partners may propose methods, valuations, and match requirements that differ from the following 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).	<p>Landowner is paid a percentage of the value of the easement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Up to 100% of easement value for a high level of landowner restriction (e.g., current ACEP-WRE)</li> <li>- 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)</li> <li>- Up to 50% of easement value for a low level of landowner restriction (e.g., current ACEP-ALE)</li> </ul>	Easement value determined via appraisal of before-and-after fair market value of the offered acres.	<p>Expanded ACEP-WRE model--cash match not required but contributions encouraged to further RCPP project objectives.</p> <p>Partner innovations/support for U.S.-held easements (e.g., preparedness to accept third-party monitoring and/or enforcement responsibilities) also considered.</p>
Entity-held		Cost-share provided to the entity for their purchase of an easement based on a percentage of the value of the easement.		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%

Easement Type	Potential Land Use	Basis for RCPP Compensation Cap	Valuation Methodology	Partner Match
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Up to 50%—with U.S. right-of-enforcement</li> <li>- Up to 25%—without U.S right-of-enforcement</li> </ul>		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.

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## **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.

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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

## Appendix C – Alternative Funding Arrangements

The FY 2018 Farm Bill expanded the authority of NRCS to use grant-like Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) with eligible partners that can leverage the additional flexibility to provide innovating conservation benefits. Unlike RCPP Classic, lead partners will directly contract with producers and landowners to provide financial and technical assistance. While NRCS may provide technical assistance to the partner, producers, and landowners, NRCS will prioritize proposals in which the partner delivers a significant portion of the technical assistance.

The farm bill provides a list of potential activities to be covered under an AFA. Below is a crosswalk of the statutory language and more concise AFA Types.

<b>Statutorily Expected AFA Types</b>	<b>Portal Description/"AFA Type:</b>
Infrastructure investments relating to agricultural or nonindustrial private forest production.	Infrastructure Improvements
Projects addressing natural resources concerns in coordination with producers, including the development and implementation of watershed, habitat, or other area restoration plans.	Coordinate Watershed Efforts
Projects that use innovative approaches to leveraging the Federal investment in conservation with private financial mechanisms, in conjunction with agricultural production or forest resource management, such as—	
the provision of performance-based payments to producers; and	Performance Based Payments to Producers
support for an environmental market;	Support for an Environmental Market
other projects for which the Secretary determines that the goals and objectives of the program would be easier to achieve the funding agreement under paragraph	Other Innovative Activities
	Partner Led Traditional Activities

The categories above are broad, and NRCS expects most projects to fit within one of these AFA types.

For the “Other Innovative Activities” type partners will be expected to describe why it does not fit one of the other five categories.

For activities where NRCS standards will be met, partners should select “Partner Led Traditional Activities.” Partners should also describe why the project is a better fit for an AFA rather than the RCPP Classic model. This includes, but is not limited to, innovative ways to deliver, pay, or achieve conservation benefits.