

Overview

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are competitive grants that stimulate the development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands.

NRCS has doubled the dollar amount for a single national CIG award.

CIG At-a-Glance:

- *Authorized by 2002 Farm Bill*
- *Funding source: Environmental Quality Incentives Program*
- *Annual national CIG funding average: \$20 million*
- *Total national CIGs awarded since 2004: 634*
- *Total national CIG funding since 2004: \$237 million*

CIG

Conservation Innovation Grants



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment.

Benefits

CIG accelerates technology transfer and the adoption of promising technologies and approaches to address some of the nation's most pressing natural resource concerns. Projects often result in production and operational benefits as well. NRCS identifies successful projects for potential integration of technologies and approaches into NRCS's current conservation tools, including suites of conservation practices.

CIGs have supported promising new technologies to improve fertilizer, water and on-farm energy use to innovative environmental markets to improve water quality or to make agriculture more resilient to weather extremes. CIGs are sparking the next generation of conservation tools for the benefit of farmers, ranchers and forest landowners nationwide.



Eligibility

CIG applications are accepted from state or local governments, federally-recognized American Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations and individuals in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

Conservation approaches or technologies should be sufficiently studied to indicate a likelihood of success to be considered likely candidates for technology transfer. CIG funds innovative, on-the-ground conservation projects, including pilot projects and field demonstrations. Proposed projects must conform to the description of innovative conservation projects or activities published in the funding notice. As such, technologies and approaches commonly used in the geographic area covered by the application, and that are eligible for EQIP funding, are not eligible for funding through CIG.

At least 50 percent of the total project cost must come from non-federal matching funds (cash and in-kind contributions) provided by the grantee. Any combination of cash and in-kind funding can be used to meet the non-federal match. The grantee is also responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project. NRCS will provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

How to apply

National CIG: A CIG funding notice is announced each year. Funds for single- or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. Projects may be watershed-based, regional, multi-State, or nationwide in scope. The natural resource concerns eligible for funding through CIG will be identified in the funding announcement and may change annually to focus on new and emerging, high priority natural resource issues.

Applications should describe the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address a natural resource conservation concern or concerns. Applications are evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice. Evaluated applications are forwarded to an NRCS Grants Review Board that will make recommendations to the NRCS Chief for final selection. Awards are made through a grant agreement.

State CIG: The State component emphasizes projects that benefit a limited geographic area. Projects may be farm-based, multi-county, small watershed, or Statewide in scope. Public notices in each participating State will announce the availability of funds for the State CIG competitions.

New and Beginning, Historically Underserved, Military Veteran Farmers, Ranchers, and Forest Landowners

NRCS recognizes the need to provide special consideration to historically underserved agricultural producers and forest landowners and strives to ensure that they benefit from innovative technologies and approaches. CIG offers an incentive to encourage the participation of historically underserved and veteran farmers and ranchers, beginning farmers and ranchers and those with limited resources. Each year, up to 10 percent of national CIG funds may be set aside for applicants who are beginning or limited resource farmers and ranchers, American Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations that include or represent these producers and private forest landowners.

More Information

CIG applications are accepted Once funds for CIG become available, a funding notice is posted on the federal eGrants portal, www.grants.gov. The funding notice also may be accessed from the NRCS website at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig. The funding notice will specify the information required from applicants. Complete applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov and e-mailed to the NRCS National office at nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov.

What's new in CIG

The maximum amount for a national CIG has doubled. That amount has increased from \$1 million in previous years to \$2 million for fiscal year 2016.

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service