

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

ACTION: NOTICE

Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Announcement for Program Funding – Vermont

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing availability of Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in Vermont (VT). NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2016 will be up to \$415,000. Proposals are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations, individuals, or legal entities for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration.

Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. Only projects with a direct nexus to the state of Vermont will be considered.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for CIG projects. Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant.

DATES: Proposals must be received at the NRCS Vermont State Office before 4:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on **Friday, June 3, 2016**.

ADDRESSES: Proposals submitted electronically must be sent by email to bob.kort@vt.usda.gov in PDF format or through www.grants.gov. If submitted via www.grants.gov, a copy must also be emailed to the NRCS Vermont state office at the email noted.

The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using mail or overnight courier service is: USDA-NRCS, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, c/o Robert Kort, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105, Colchester, Vermont 05446. Contact phone number for hand-delivered applications is (802) 951-6796 x233 or 300.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

CIG Program Contact

Robert Kort, Vermont State CIG Program Manager, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105, Colchester, VT 05446; Phone: (802) 951-6796 x233; Fax: (855) 794-3677; email: bob.kort@vt.usda.gov, Subject: Conservation Innovation Grants APF; or consult the Vermont NRCS website at

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The 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), who is Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies, while leveraging the Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection 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) into NRCS policy, technical manuals, references, and guides or to the private sector. CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology in order to increase adoption with an emphasis on opportunities to scale proven, emerging conservation strategies. CIG promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, technologies, and facilities among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. CIG funds projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations. CIG does not fund research projects, with the exception of on-farm conservation research. On-farm conservation research is defined as an investigation conducted to answer a specified conservation-related question using a statistically valid design, while employing farm-scale equipment on farm fields. Specifically, a valid study design will use an appropriate number of replications and statistical analysis of results. To the extent NRCS funds research projects through CIG, the Agency will only fund research projects that stimulate innovative approaches to natural resource management in conjunction with agricultural production.

NRCS will accept proposals under this notice for single or multiyear projects, not to exceed three years, submitted by eligible entities from Vermont. Eligible entities include federally recognized Indian Tribes, state and local units of government, non-governmental organizations, legal entities, and individuals. **Applications must have a direct nexus to the state of Vermont and include an entity from Vermont as part of the project management.**

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. Complete proposals received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Proposal Evaluation Criteria identified in the instructions in section V.B.

Scored applications will be forwarded to the Vermont State Conservationist who will make the final award selections. The State Conservationist reserves the right to not fund any or all proposals.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must promote environmental protection or natural resources enhancement, and encompass development and pilot field testing, on-farm research and demonstration, evaluation, and/or implementation of:

- Conservation adoption incentive systems, including market-based systems, or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches.

Projects or activities under CIG must comply with all Federal, State, and local regulations throughout the duration of the project and:

- Make use of proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success,
- Demonstrate, evaluate, or verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation technology in the field,
- Adapt conservation technologies, management, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance, and encourage adoption,
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector, or
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. State Component

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, the Vermont State CIG has one category of natural resources concerns and technology needs for possible funding: Water Quality. Applicants must identify the most appropriate topic under this category for their proposal. Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, federally recognized Indian Tribes or members of federally recognized Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities, are encouraged to submit application(s).

1. Water Quality

The topics listed below have been identified as priority water quality areas for consideration and funding under the Vermont CIG in 2016. Other innovative conservation approaches and technologies will be considered if they facilitate improved implementation of NRCS water quality measures in Vermont.

- **Applying Gypsum as a Soil Amendment to Reduce Available Phosphorus on Fields with High Soil Test Phosphorus Levels:**

A significant percentage of annual cropland in Vermont has high or excessive levels of phosphorus in the soils. These fields are identified as being high in phosphorus with soil testing as part of nutrient management planning. For the fields with excessive phosphorus levels no new additions of phosphorus are allowed under a nutrient management plan. Even following these requirements it may take many years or even decades before soil phosphorus levels decrease to optional levels.

The use of gypsum as a soil amendment has been shown to be able to bind with phosphorus in the soil, thus reducing the amount of soluble phosphorus lost from the field and potentially making other phosphorus unavailable for biologic uptake.

Gypsum has been historically used to help improve a variety of soil physical characteristics, such as bulk density. NRCS now has a new national practice standard for this practice, 333 Amending Soils with Gypsum to Improve Soil Properties.

Applications of gypsum will follow guidelines in the new national standard 333. Under this demonstration project at least two fields with excessive soil phosphorus levels will be identified for applications of a gypsum based soil amendment. Single or multiple applications of the soil amendments will be applied to the fields over a two year period. Soil testing will be conducted before the project and at least twice annually during the project. A final report will be provided detailing the methods and materials used and the results of the project. Outreach materials will be developed, such as presentations and brochures, to inform agricultural producers and the public of the project results.

- **Demonstration and Evaluation of a Constructed Wetland for Drainage Water Treatment:**

Surface and subsurface drainage systems in agricultural fields have the potential to deliver significant concentrations and loads of phosphorus to surface waters. Increasing attention is being focused on tile discharge and its treatment as one more means of meeting TMDL goals for phosphorus reduction in Vermont. Constructed Wetland (656) is an existing NRCS conservation practice that can treat polluted water, but it has seldom been used in Vermont. As an underutilized conservation there is the need to demonstrate its use on a Vermont farm and to provide some evaluation of its practicality and efficiency.

Under this project the applicant will identify a suitable Vermont farm and field to implement one of these practices. The system will be designed and constructed as required by the NRCS practice standard for Constructed Wetland, which may involve the use of other NRCS practices such as Sediment Basin. The site should involve treatment of tile drainage water which may be combined with water from surface ditches. The constructed wetland will be evaluated for a minimum of two years after construction. Evaluation will include documentation of construction costs, procedures, maintenance costs, vegetation uptake of phosphorus and water quality. A minimum of 20 paired water quality samples will be collected from the wetland system to show differences in phosphorus concentrations between inflows and outflows. If possible, phosphorus loading estimates and reductions will also be provided. An important part of the project will be to provide tours of the sites, information pamphlets and other media to promote the practice in Vermont. A final report will also be provided as part of the project.

- **Demonstration of Two Stage Ditch Systems on Agricultural Lands:**

Many farms in Vermont have extensive surface ditch systems. These ditches were originally constructed, and are maintained as, U shaped ditches with steep sides and narrow bottoms. Little or no efforts are utilized to stabilize the ditches during or after initial construction or maintenance. Because of this design they are subject to significant erosion over time.

One alternative to the traditional U shaped ditch is a two stage ditch. These ditches are wider at the base with a bench in which lower flows of water can be transported. The second stage involves side slopes that are constructed at a lower slope. The two stage ditch should incorporate erosion control fabric and/or the seeding of vegetation to stabilize the bench and the side slopes. The design of this ditch decreases erosion from the side slopes of the ditch and may help attenuate sediment and phosphorus in the lower portion of the two stage ditch.

This project will demonstrate the installation of a two stage ditch in a location with an existing traditional ditch. The ditch will be constructed following guidance which is currently being developed by an interagency Vermont team. Estimates of erosion rates will be developed for the pre-existing condition as well as the for the new two stage ditch. Any evidence of sediment trapping will also be estimated. Reductions in total phosphorus loss under the two systems will also be estimated based on sediment loss and soil phosphorus test results. A final project report will be developed along with various public outreach materials such as a brochure and videos. At least three outreach site visits will be conducted with farmers and other interested individuals.

- **Demonstration of a Phosphorus Separation Technology for Animal Wastes:** Many Vermont farms have excessive phosphorus available in the manure produced by the farm's livestock. This can lead to increasing levels of phosphorus in soils and result in an increased loss of phosphorus in surface runoff and tile discharge. A number of new technologies are being developed to remove and/or concentrate phosphorus out of a farm's waste stream. These technologies are often used in conjunction with an anaerobic digester.

Under this project a system will be installed on a farm where the phosphorus is removed from the waste stream by mechanical means, chemical extraction or concentration, or some combination of these methods. The final product should be in a form that can be easily transported off farm and used as nutrient amendment in areas where the risk of phosphorus runoff is low. The project should include a series of on-farm tours, a final report and a project factsheet. The final report should include an analysis of the project's phosphorus removal efficiency, the cost associated with installing and maintaining the system and an overview of where the phosphorus rich product is being utilized and the impact this system has on the farm and its soil phosphorus levels.

- **Development of Phosphorus Mass Balances on Vermont Farms:** Vermont farms have been identified as a significant source of non-point phosphorus in many Vermont watersheds. Increasing attention is being focused on the amount of phosphorus being imported to farms versus the amount that is safely exported. Examining and correcting the phosphorus mass balance for farms is critical to reducing field losses of phosphorus and meeting TMDL goals for phosphorus reduction in Vermont. There are several existing tools available for quantifying farm phosphorus mass balances, including the Cornell Phosphorus Mass Balance Tool. However, to date these tools have not been used on Vermont farms.

Under this project the applicant will use one of the existing tools to develop phosphorus mass balances on at least 3 Vermont farms. The selected farms should vary in size and type. Farmers participating in the project must be willing to provide the necessary information for the tool and also be willing to participate in discussions regarding the results and changes to their farm in order to balance their phosphorus inputs and outputs. A least one scenario must be developed for each farm, and run with the tool, that provides for a balance of phosphorus inputs and outputs. A final report and factsheet must be completed that describes the tool used, the results of the farm analysis, and the farmer's responses to the results. As part of the project at least one training session will be provided to interested parties that would potentially use the tool in the future.

- **Economic Benefits of Applying Cover Crops and Reduced or No Till:** Soil health practices and soil health management systems are being promoted by NRCS and many of our partners. These practices have the potential to provide an array of benefits including increased organic matter, improve the physical and chemical characteristics of soil, improve water quality and reduce greenhouse emissions. Some of these practices such as cover crops and reduced tillage can also result in economic benefits to the producer. Knowing that these practices can provide economic returns is a powerful motivation for adoption and continued use of the practices.

A project that will provide information on the economic benefits of cover crops and reduced/no-till for Vermont producers is a priority. This project should include a summary of existing literature and information on the economic benefits of these practices, with an emphasis on data from the northeast U.S. It also should include a case study or studies on producers(s) that have recently adapted the practices in Vermont. These case studies will be developed with producers that have agreed to provide their information to the applicant. All information collected should also be formulated into summaries, brochures, factsheets, etc. that will be effective for communication with Vermont producers.

- **Wetlands Restoration Demonstration and Monitoring Project:** Mosquitoes are natural components of many types of wetland ecosystems. It is well documented in the scientific literature that dragonflies, damselflies, backswimmer bugs, salamander larvae, fish and other mosquito predators in wetlands can reduce mosquito populations. Restored wetlands along riparian areas improve water quality by storing floodwater, retaining sediment, and retaining, removing, and transforming nutrients. However, public perception of natural and restored wetland sites remains mixed, with appreciation of wetland functions and values including floodwater retention, wildlife habitat, and aesthetics coupled with fears that all wetlands produce mosquitoes and that all mosquitoes are vectors for diseases such as West Nile Virus or Eastern Equine Encephalitis. These negative public perceptions of wetlands are a barrier to further participation in and public acceptance of wetlands restoration projects. Using restored wetlands as demonstration sites to showcase wetlands restoration practices and related mosquito and mosquito predator populations along with public education and outreach will increase awareness of the benefits of wetlands restoration.

Under this project the applicant will sample two NRCS-identified restored floodplain wetlands and two nearby currently drained floodplain wetland hayfields or pastures dominated by Reed Canarygrass. NRCS will be involved in an advisory capacity on sample design. Mosquito sampling will follow VT Agency of Agriculture protocols and recommendations. Sampling and species identification will include three years of data collection on a minimum of the following for each area:

- Mosquito Larvae and adults
- Invertebrate larvae and adults (ex. dragonflies and damselflies)
- Fish

Required project deliverables include:

- Providing two mosquito and mosquito predator sampling workshops for interested citizen scientists, mosquito detection volunteers with mosquito control districts, or other participants. (One for each demonstration site)
- Two onsite field trips for the general public (one for each demonstration site)
- Data from field sampling
- Final report summarizing findings from field sampling
- Fact sheet detailing demonstration site results
- Creation of a presentation showing results of demonstration site sampling
- Presentation of results presented at three public forums within the towns nearby demonstration sites

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2016 will be up to \$415,000.

CIG will fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years (anticipated project start date of September 16, 2016). Funds will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed \$75,000 in FY 2016. Multi-state proposals will not be considered under this State CIG option.

Due to the limited amount of funds, NRCS reserves the right to offer less funding than what is requested in the grant application.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

A. Applicant Eligibility

CIG applicants must be a federally recognized Indian Tribe, state or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, legal entity, or an individual.

B. Project Eligibility

To be eligible, projects must involve producers who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements set forth in 7CFR § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3). Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip>. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

C. Matching Funds Requirements

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost not to exceed \$75,000. CIG recipients must provide non-Federal funding equal to the amount of Federal funds requested. Non-Federal funds must be derived from cash and/or in-kind sources.

Matching funds must be secured at time of application. Proposals should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Additional information about matching funds can be found at [2 CFR § 215](#).

D. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

The following payment requirements apply to CIG:

- 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 2014 and FY 2018.
- All agricultural producers receiving a direct or indirect payment through participation in a CIG project must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR § 1466.6(b)(1) through (3).
- In addition, 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 Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program).

To participate in EQIP financial assistance, an individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements in 7 CFR § 1466.6, which include the following:

Criteria	Potential Verification Documentation*
Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 CFR Part 12)	Documentation of their compliance status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service on-line portal
Have an interest in a farming operation as defined in 7 CFR Part 1400	Documentation of their interest in a farming operation can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center or through the USDA customer service on-line portal showing that the producer has established farm records

Have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract period	Documentation can be provided in the form of a deed, lease, or other documents which show the producer has adequate control for the term of the proposed contract period
The average adjusted gross income of the individual, joint operation, or legal entity may not exceed \$900,000	If using FY 2014-2018 CIG funding, documentation of a producer's Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) eligibility status can be obtained by the producer at their local USDA Service Center, or through the USDA customer service on-line portal.

*Many of the verification documents will require that the producer have current records established with the Farm Service Agency or require that the producer establish new records.

E. Activities Limitation and Implementation

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach. Applicants should reference the Vermont EQIP Eligible Practices List on the [Vermont EQIP](#) webpage.

CIG is designed to provide financial assistance to grantees. Procurement of any technical assistance required to carry out a project is the responsibility of the grantee. Technical oversight for grant projects will be provided by a Federal technical representative who will be designated by NRCS. NRCS will also designate a Program Contact and Administrative Contact for each project.

IV. SUBMISSION INFORMATION FOR PROPOSALS

All standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following website: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#).

A. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for this CIG funding opportunity can be found on the following websites: [www.grants.gov](#) and http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/farmbill/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522.

An application package checklist is included in Part VIII of this announcement. Standard forms, samples of certain completed forms, as well as an editable version of the checklist is on the Vermont NRCS website.

B. Content and Format

Proposals must contain the content, format, and information set forth below to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application. Applicants must submit only one original copy of the application in the following format:

- Each page must be on numbered 8½” x 11” white paper that has one-inch margins; and
- The text of the application must be typed single spaced in a font no smaller than 12-point.

Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered. Proposals must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered. *All forms and narrative sections must be properly completed* (e.g., fill out *all* sections of Standard Form (SF) 424A and other forms). If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project.

1. **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each proposal. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](https://www.grants.gov) or the Vermont CIG webpage.
2. **Project Executive Summary**— (One (1)-page maximum.) Applicants must submit a description including the information below:
 - a. Project title;
 - b. Primary area for consideration – both category (Water Quality) and topic (refer to page 3) and why;
 - c. Project duration (anticipated project start date of September 16, 2016, not to exceed three years);
 - d. Project director name, and contact information (including address, email, and telephone number);
 - e. Names and affiliations of project collaborators;
 - f. Project background (describe the issue or problem and how the project addresses it innovatively as defined in Section I.C. - one paragraph)
 - g. Project objectives (purpose and goals);
 - h. Project methods (methodology, tools, and processes)
 - i. Project geographic area/location (where project activities will take place);
 - j. Project deliverables/products;
 - k. Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement. Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers and describe and certify their type and level of involvement in the project. Projects that do not involve EQIP eligible producers are ineligible for a CIG award;
 - l. Declaration of Previous CIG Project(s). A statement indicating whether the applicant or any of the principal investigators has been involved in a previously awarded CIG project(s);
 - m. Declaration of federal funds for similar project(s). A statement indicating whether the applicant or any of the principal investigators is requesting or has received federal funds from other sources (non-CIG) for the same or a similar project(s); and
 - n. Total project cost and Federal funds requested.
3. **Project Description:** (Fifteen (15)-page maximum.) The description must include the following information:
 - a. **Project background:** Describe the issue or problem, and the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success of the project.
 - b. **Project objectives:** Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project’s purpose and goals. Describe how the project is innovative.

- c. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project.
 - d. Geographic location and size of project or project area: Describe the geographic location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
 - e. EQIP eligible producer participation: Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers involved in the project, and describe the type and extent of their involvement (Note: Producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements).
 - f. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Anticipated project start date of September 16, 2016.
 - g. Project management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and non-government entities. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
 - h. Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and payment. The proposal shall include a set of technical deliverables designed to evaluate the performance and broader applicability of the project being proposed for implementation. In addition to project-specific deliverables, selected applicants will be required to provide the following:
 1. Quarterly progress reports;
 2. Supplemental narratives that explain and support payment requests;
 3. A final report;
 4. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress;
 5. A new technology and innovative approach or “lessons learned” fact sheet, or a case study, as is appropriate;
 6. A draft practice standard, if appropriate; and
 7. Participation in at least one NRCS approved event during the grant period.
 - i. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities, and explain how the results will be measured. Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; historically underserved producers and communities; rural communities; and municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.
 - j. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project for the final report. Grant recipients will be required to provide a quarterly progress report, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.
4. **Assessment of Environmental Impacts**: Will implementation of the proposal have physical, chemical or biological impacts on the environment? If so, describe in general terms what they will be and how extensive they will be. The description of the potential environmental impacts must address 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. *One line or very short descriptions of environmental impacts are not acceptable.* 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.

These resources are outlined in the NRCS Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, NRCS Conservation and Planning Application (CPA) form 52, which is available at: [NRCS-CPA-52](#). The NRCS CPA-52 form can be used as a guide for the scope of environmental information that should be prepared for this section of the application (note that CPA-52 does not need to be completed unless awarded a CIG). In addition to describing impacts, applicants are required to assess the significance or degree of potential environmental impact of the proposed project on environmental resources.

Note #1: Please be aware that proposals for projects with potentially adverse impacts to natural resources may need to be modified in order to achieve acceptable and beneficial levels of environmental impact. NRCS may choose not to select projects that cannot be modified.

Note #2: Please be aware that applicants must permit NHPA Section 106 review and consultation by NRCS State with required consulting parties (such as the pertinent SHPO and federally recognized Tribes) prior to the implementation of conservation practices and/or activities for their potential to affect cultural resources.

5. **Budget Information:** (Twelve (12)-page maximum.) The budget portion of the application consists of the two parts described below:
 - a. **Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information- Non-Construction Programs:** Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. This form is the summary budget for the project.
 - b. **Detailed Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. In addition, any subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. The budget narrative should support the Federal funds requested and the applicant's matching funds.

The format of this information, which can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc., should be readable in 8 ½" by 11" printable pages. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the evaluators and NRCS can readily understand what expenses will be incurred to support the project. *The breakdown of the Federal share and matching funds should be shown separately as in the SF-424A, not combined.*

Note: Matching funds need to be adequately documented in the Budget Narrative. There needs to be a real basis for the numbers used in the budget to provide confidence that the personnel time will be put into the project. Additional

information will be requested to substantiate such entries in the budget when necessary.

6. Indirect Costs

- a. Applicants wishing to claim indirect costs must have a federally approved indirect cost rate. The approved indirect cost rate must be included in the application package.
- b. An indirect cost rate not to exceed 15 percent may be approved for applicants without a preexisting, federally approved indirect cost rate. To be considered for an indirect cost rate not to exceed 15 percent, applicants must submit an indirect cost rate proposal with the application that includes the following:
 1. Applicant's written policy for allocating and identifying direct and indirect costs;
 2. The contact information of the person who prepared proposal;
 3. Breakdown of indirect salaries by position title and amount;
 4. Line item expenditure descriptions describing how the costs are being allocated between direct and indirect costs;
 5. Applicant's tax identification number; and
 6. Signed certification attesting that (i) all costs in proposal are allowable under the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) cost principles; (ii) costs treated as indirect have not been claimed as direct; (iii) similar types of costs have been accounted for consistently; and (iv) the applicant will notify the Federal Government of any account changed that would affect the rate. This certification should be signed by the applicant's approving official or the applicant's chief financial officer.
- c. If applicant does not have a federally approved indirect cost rate, it is at NRCS' discretion whether to allow indirect cost.

7. **Matching:** Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-Federal third parties.

Cash Match

For third-party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the contributor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash contribution, and (5) a statement that the contributor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

In-Kind Match

"In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third-party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of "in-kind" contributions include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and verifiable.

For any third-party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the contributing organization and the applicant, which must include: (1) the name, address,

and telephone number of the contributor, (2) the name of the applicant's organization, (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third-party in-kind contribution, and (5) a statement that the contributor will make the contribution during the grant period.

Note: The value the producer's time as an in-kind match needs to be substantiated (hours and hourly rate). This needs to be more than a number conveniently used (so it seems) to balance the budget. Matching credit will not be given for activities that would have been part of normal farmstead operations if a CIG award was not received.

The value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars and Cost Principles for additional guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

8. **List of Letters of Support:** Include entity name, location, role, and if a commitment of cash or in-kind support has been made, the type (cash vs. in-kind) and value.

Note: NRCS may conduct reference checks to ensure that organizations identified are supportive and involved with the project.

9. **Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement and Past Performance:** Identify any previously awarded National or State CIG projects related to this proposal and any of their principal investigators and please respond to item 9.a below. If you have never received an NRCS CIG, but have received other Federal or non-Federal assistance agreements (an assistance agreement is a grant or cooperative agreement and not a contract), please respond to item 9.b below. If you have never received any type of Federal or non-Federal assistance agreements, please indicate this in your proposal.

- a. Applicant has previously received an NRCS CIG

Identify the NRCS CIG(s) you currently have or have received in the past. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award. For up to the five most recent projects (if within the past two years), demonstrate how you successfully managed the grant(s), and successfully performed all phases of work under the previous or existing grant(s), including whether the desired outcomes of the project(s) were met by providing information on the following:

1. Funds Expenditure: the balance of grant funds currently remaining.
2. Describe your compliance with grant requirements, including, but not limited to, information regarding your compliance with the work plan, schedule, terms and conditions, and timely reporting (e.g., semiannual progress reports, financial status reports, and any other required submittals).
3. Describe your success using NRCS grant funds, including whether you reported accomplishments to NRCS.

- b. Applicant has received other Federal and/or non-Federal assistance agreements

1. Identify current and/or prior federally and/or non-federally funded assistance agreements. Please provide information on no more than five of your most recent assistance agreements (if received within the past two years). Describe your history of successfully managing these agreements and performing the

agreements including meeting and complying with reporting requirements, submitting final acceptable technical reports, and reporting on whether you were making progress towards achieving the results under those agreements and, if not, whether you explained why.

10. **Certifications:** Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. All proposals must include this document. The SF-424B may be found at: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#) or Vermont NRCS CIG webpage. In addition, applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following Federal regulations:
- a. 2 CFR Part 417, [Government wide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#)
 - b. 7 CFR Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#)
 - c. 2 CFR Part 421, [Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#)

C. Additional Pre-award Requirements

The following items must be obtained prior to entering into an agreement with the Federal Government but do not need to be provided in the proposal. Applicants are encouraged to apply early for their Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)/System for Award Management (SAM) number.

1. **DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) 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. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
2. **SAM:** Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>. Please allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the SAM registration.

D. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit proposals electronically to the email address listed below or through Grants.gov. If submitted via www.grants.gov, a copy must also be emailed to the NRCS Vermont state office at the email noted. Alternatively, proposals may be submitted via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed below. All proposals must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Grants.gov provides date and time stamps on proposals submitted through its website. All proposals regardless of how they are submitted must be received on **Friday, June 3, 2016**. Emailed proposals must be received by NRCS before the submission deadline.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grants.gov or emailed submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process or send their email in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems.

Paper applications must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a compact disc (CD) or flash drive.

If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate, complete application package for each project.

The address for submitting a proposal by email is bob.kort@vt.usda.gov

The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using mail or overnight courier service is:

Conservation Innovation Grants Program
c/o Robert Kort
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105
Colchester, Vermont 05446

Contact phone number for hand-delivered applications is (802) 951-6796 x233 or 300.

Note: Proposals submitted by fax will not be considered. The use of Federal Government postage-paid envelopes, email and/or equipment in filing proposals is a violation of Federal law and will disqualify you from consideration.

E. Due Date

Applications must be received in the NRCS Vermont State Office by 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), on **Friday, June 3, 2016**. A postmark date is NOT a factor in whether a written application is received on time. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed proposals early via email to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

F. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely proposals via email. An applicant who does not receive such an email acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission, but believes he/she submitted a timely proposal must contact the NRCS program contact below within 30 days of submission deadline. Failure to do so will result in the proposal not being considered.

CIG Program Contact

Barbara Bardin
Grants Management Specialist
USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Centers Servicing Unit
501 W. Felix St.
Bldg. 23 - FWFC
Fort Worth, Texas 76115
Office Phone: (817) 509-3519
Email: barbara.bardin@ftw.usda.gov

G. Withdrawal

Proposals may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made. Proposals may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

H. Funding Restrictions

Awardees may not use unrecovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds.

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:

1. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
2. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
3. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
4. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
5. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
6. 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
7. 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. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person listed on Part VII.

I. Review

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. Complete proposals will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Proposal Evaluation Criteria identified in the instructions in section V.B. Scored applications will be forwarded to the Vermont State Conservationist who will make the final award selections. The State Conservationist reserves the right to not fund any or all proposals.

J. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with 2 CFR §200.48. 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 §200.448, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal Government 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.

K. Natural Resources and Historic Property Review Requirements

1. The Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 and the NRCS regulation that implements NEPA at 7 CFR part 650 require that an environmental review be prepared for Federal actions that may have environmental effects. NRCS financial assistance under the CIG program

requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application packet, applicants are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project if there will be actions with potential to affect the environment to help NRCS determine the appropriate documentation required to comply with NEPA and NRCS regulations. If the application is selected for funding, the NRCS Program Contact, Technical Contact and NRCS Environmental Liaison will coordinate with the selected applicant concerning documentation for compliance with NEPA. The selected applicant will be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement if required for NEPA compliance). Grant funding cannot be approved until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

2. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 and 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 yes, if they are adverse and how the effects may be addressed. This NHPA review and compliance in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 must be completed by NRCS and may not be delegated. This compliance process includes consultation with SHPOs, Tribes, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO), Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHO), and the appropriate preservation community regarding identification, evaluation of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility, evaluation of effects, and if the effects are adverse, treatment. This treatment may include avoidance or other forms of mitigation of adverse effects. This mitigation will occur after the grant is awarded but before it is implemented.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

A. Review and Selection Process

Prior to the technical review, proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. Proposals need to demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one of the topics provided in section I.D. of this notice.

To help avoid an application that is incomplete or does not comply with the provisions of this notice, the applicant can contact the Vermont State CIG Program Manager prior to submission of their application with questions about application materials, or for assistance in completing the required forms.

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be reviewed and scored by a peer review panel based on criteria which includes that listed in Part V.B below. The peer review panel will include NRCS and other technical specialists. Scored applications will be forwarded to the Vermont State Conservationist for final selection and funding decisions.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to do enough upfront homework so their application is well developed, has adequate detail, and demonstrates a high likelihood of the proposed project being successful. Such applications will rank higher and have a better chance of being funded.

B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must promote environmental protection or natural resources enhancement, and encompass development and pilot field testing, on-farm research and demonstration, evaluation, and/or implementation of:

- Conservation adoption incentive systems, including market-based systems, or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches.

Projects or activities under CIG must comply with all Federal, state, and local regulations throughout the duration of the project and:

- Make use of proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success,
- Demonstrate, evaluate, or verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation technology in the field,
- Adapt conservation technologies, management, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance, and encourage adoption,
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector, or
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

The Technical Peer Review Panel will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals:

1. Purpose, Approach, and Goals
 - a. Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
 - b. Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
 - c. Project outcome is clearly measurable.
 - d. Potential for successful completion.
 - e. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and an acceptably significant level of improvement will be achieved.
2. Innovative Technology or Approach
 - a. Project is innovative (national, regionally, and/or local in nature).
 - b. Project conforms to description of innovative projects or activities in Announcement for Program Funding.
3. Project Management
 - a. Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
 - b. Project staff has technical expertise needed.
 - c. Budget is adequately explained and justified.
 - d. Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions and agencies.
4. Benefits and Transferability
 - a. Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology/approach or technologies/approaches.
 - b. Potential to transfer the approach or technology nationally or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas.
 - c. Potential for successful transfer, through planned project activities, to historically underserved producers and communities.
 - d. Potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods.

- e. Project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.).
5. Other
- a. Addresses more than one Vermont CIG topic.
 - b. Timing and synergy with other Vermont or regional projects.
 - c. Match leverages Federal funds better than one to one minimum.
 - d. Dollar amount requested leverages Federal funds.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

NRCS anticipates announcing CIG selections by September 1, 2016, and awarding all grants by September 16, 2016. However, NRCS will not distribute any funds, and grantees cannot begin work until the parties execute an appropriate CIG agreement.

Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 16, 2016.

D. Unsuccessful Proposals

Applicants whose proposals are not selected for funding will be notified of their status within 30 days of the announcement of CIG selections.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive official notification from the NRCS Vermont State Office. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental, cultural and historic properties/resources review process by the appropriate NRCS State Office and financial review.

Note: Appropriations Restrictions: Awards made under this solicitation are subject to the provisions contained in the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. No. 112-55), Division A, Sections 738 and 739, regarding corporate felony convictions and corporate Federal tax delinquencies.

B. Grant Agreement

Through NRCS, CCC will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in the CIG component of EQIP.

The grant will permit the NRCS Technical Contact to be involved in overseeing the work performed by the selected recipients. Although NRCS will negotiate precise terms and conditions as part of the award process, the anticipated Federal involvement for this project may include:

- close monitoring of the recipient's performance to verify the results
- collaborating during performance of the scope of work
- reviewing substantive terms of proposed contracts
- reviewing qualifications of key personnel (NRCS will not select employees or contractors employed by the award recipient)
- reviewing and commenting on reports prepared under the agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient)

C. Natural Resources and Historic Property Review Requirements

1. Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the [NRCS State Office Environmental Liaison](#) to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation required for the project. The environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to implementing activities with grant funds.

Selected applicants may be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document(s) if an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

2. Upon notification of selection, the recipient must contact the NRCS State Office to discuss if National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review is needed. The NRCS State Conservationist and appropriate staff, including the State Resources Conservationist, Cultural Resources Specialist (CRS) or Coordinator (CRC) will help and, under the direction of the State Conservationist, are responsible for completing this compliance, consultation and review. Additionally, in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA, implementing regulations for Section 106 (36 CFR Part 800), and with USDA regulations on consultation with Tribes, and related authorities, the NRCS State Conservationist, using appropriate historic preservation staff such as the CRS or CRC, shall consult with concerned federally recognized Indian Tribes and the State Historic Preservation Officer. NRCS may not delegate or assign consultation with Tribes or the SHPO to the recipient or other parties and must carry out agency historic preservation responsibilities quickly as possible and prior to implementation of the grant project by the recipient. The State Office may have programmatic agreements in place to help facilitate and streamline this process. State CRSs and CRCs have extensive experience in determining if Section 106 review and compliance is needed. If Section 106 review and compliance is needed, it must be completed prior to expenditure of funds.

D. Reporting Requirements

Selected applicants will be required to submit a SF-425, Federal Financial Report to the NRCS administrative contact, no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. In addition, every 3 months the selected applicant must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS technical contact. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 3-month period and include, at a minimum:

- Project Status:
 - Summary of progress, including the results to date and a comparison of actual accomplishments with proposed goals (milestones) for the period and, where project output can be quantified, a computation of the costs per unit of output
 - Current problems or unusual developments or delays
 - Reasons why goals and objectives were not met, if appropriate
 - Additional pertinent information including, where appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit cost
 - Any time extensions
 - Any changes to the project's original objectives, methods, or timeline with a summary of the justification for the changes

- Lessons learned that inform future project activities or broader efforts in the project's topic area
- Work to be performed during the next three month period
- Project Results
 - Any preliminary results that can be used by NRCS for practice-standard revisions, policy changes, program revisions and training opportunities.
 - Products/software tools and/or technologies currently ready for adoption and/or transfer
 - Potentially promising products/software tools and/or technologies not yet ready for adoption and/or transfer, and a description of what is needed to reach that maturity.
 - Identification of new data or research needs to inform broader efforts in the project's topic area
 - Project activities that have been featured on recipient or partner websites and success stories that could be amplified by NRCS
- EQIP Requirements
 - Provide the following in accordance with the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and CIG agreement provisions:
 - A listing of EQIP-eligible producers involved in the project, identified by name and address;
 - A self-certification statement indicating that each individual or entity receiving a direct or indirect payment for any structural, vegetative, or management practice through this grant is in compliance with the adjusted gross income (AGI) and highly-erodible lands and wetlands conservation (HEL/WC) compliance provisions of the Farm Bill.

The final report is due to the NRCS technical contact 90 days after completion of the project. This report is distinct from the performance progress reports described above. The final report will summarize the project and describe methods, quality control, findings, and recommendations.

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. The NRCS Vermont State CIG Program Manager will have technical oversight responsibility for each project receiving an award.

E. Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

Applicants should be aware that some or all of the information submitted in their application may be subject to public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Applicants are advised to mark confidential information, such as proprietary information, to prevent disclosure.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For programmatic questions (e.g., CIG categories, application completion and review, etc.), please contact:

Robert Kort
Vermont State CIG Program Manager

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105
Colchester, VT 05446
Phone: (802) 951-6796 x233
Email: bob.kort@vt.usda.gov

For administrative questions (e.g., indirect costs, contracts, forms, etc.), please contact:

Barbara Bardin
Grants Management Specialist
USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Centers Servicing Unit
501 W. Felix St.
Bldg. 23 - FWFC
Fort Worth, Texas 76115
Office Phone: (817) 509-3519
Email: barbara.bardin@ftw.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQs), is available on the National CIG webpage:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=nrcs143_008205 and the Vermont State CIG webpage:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/vt/programs/?cid=nrcs142p2_010522

Signed this 8th day of April, 2016 in Colchester, Vermont.

Vicky Drew
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Attachments

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

VERMONT STATE CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS FISCAL YEAR 2016 APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECK LIST

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

- 1. **Application Form:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- 2. **Project Executive Summary:** (1 page maximum in length, single-spaced, 12 point font). Provide the project title, applicant entity name, funding requested, resource concern, project duration, geographic area/location, funding pool, primary category and topic for consideration, and describe in non-technical language the issue or problem and how the project addresses it innovatively through its objectives (one paragraph), methods, environmental outcomes, participating partners, deliverables, and any potential negative impacts.
- 3. **Project Description:** (15 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)
 - a. Project background
 - b. Project objectives
 - c. Project methods
 - d. Geographic location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
 - e. EQIP eligible producer participation (Note: Producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements)
 - f. Project action plan and timeline
 - g. Project management
 - h. Project deliverables/products
 - i. Benefits or results expected and transferability
 - j. Project evaluation
- 4. **Assessment of Environmental Impacts**
- 5. **Budget Information:** Submit a completed Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs.
 - a. Complete SF-424A
 - b. Detailed budget narrative
- 6. **Indirect Costs:** Submit documentation of federally approved indirect cost rate or indirect cost rate proposal if claiming indirect costs.
- 7. **Matching:** Submit written verification of commitments of matching support from non-Federal third parties.
- 8. **List of Letters of Support:** Include entity name, location, and if a commitment of cash or in-kind support has been made, the type (cash vs. in-kind) and value.
- 9. **Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement and Past Performance**
- 10. **Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign and mail the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form \(PDF\)](#), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at:

USDA
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Or by email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities and you wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

[Equal Employment Opportunity Data Posted Pursuant to the No Fear Act -](#)

This is the reporting page for the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (NO FEAR Act), Public Law 107-174.