



United States Department of Agriculture

FY20 Alaska Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Applicant Teleconference

The logo for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a large, stylized yellow number "4" with a white outline, positioned on the right side of the slide. It overlaps two images: a close-up of dark, textured soil or mulch in the upper right and a photograph of several white geese in a grassy field at sunset in the lower right.

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/

March 26, 2020

Amanda Crowe, CIG Program Manager

Topics

1. Background of the program
2. Eligibility; who can apply, participants, required match funds
3. Application Categories and what is in the application packet
4. Provide guidance on how to develop your budget
5. Evaluation Process
6. What makes a successful and not so successful proposal



Proposal Due date



- Proposals must be submitted in grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Alaska Standard Time (AKST) on Friday, May 15, 2020.
- Grants.gov provides date and time stamps for all proposals submitted
- The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application receipt.



Funding Opportunity



The fiscal year 2020 Announcement for Program Funding (APF) for the State CIG was published on March 9th 2020.

The APF is available at: www.grants.gov

– Direct Link:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=325258>

– Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-AK-CIG-20-GEN0010741



Topics



1. **Background of the program**
2. **Eligibility; who can apply, participants, required match funds**
3. Application Categories and what is in the application packet
4. Provide guidance on how to develop your budget
5. Evaluation Process
6. What makes a successful and not so successful proposal



CIG Background



The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is re-authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) under the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill).

The amount allocated is determined by the NRCS State Conservationist. This year Alaska allocated up to \$445,000 for the state component of CIG.

Maximum state award is \$445,000.



CIG Background



CIG is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.



CIG Background



NRCS expects to incorporate innovative technologies and approaches that result from CIG into NRCS programmatic and technical manuals, guides, activities, and references, and to transfer these innovations to others in the public sector.

Transferability is key to a successful proposal and project!



CIG Background



CIG does not fund research, 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.

Although “on farm” research is permissible, CIG still maintains the provision not to fund research projects tests hypotheses in laboratory settings.



Applicant Eligibility



All U.S.-based non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals, with the exception of Federal agencies, are eligible to apply for projects carried out in Alaska.

Individuals and entities may submit more than one application and may receive more than one award.



Project Eligibility



Applications are accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area, and the Pacific Islands Area

However, projects must be in Alaska.

Important for entities outside the state of Alaska who wish to apply for the Alaska CIG MUST be familiar with the states resource issues, agricultural operations, and producers general objectives.



Project Eligibility



To be eligible for CIG, projects MUST involve producers who meet the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) eligibility requirements.

- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions (7 CFR Part 12).
- Be a person, legal entity, joint operation, Indian tribe, or native corporation who is engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or has an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation as defined in 7 CFR Part 1400.
- Have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed contract period.
- All agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a CIG project must have an AGI that does not exceed \$900,000 (7 C.F.R. Part 1400)



Project Eligibility



If awarded a grant, grantees must self-certify and maintain records showing that participating producers receiving payments using CIG funding meet the EQIP eligibility and AGI requirements.

Direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds, through any of the USDA Programs (EQIP, Conservation Stewardship Program, etc.) This would be considered a duplicate payment.



Project Eligibility



Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

EQIP Eligibility information:

- <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip>



Project Eligibility



If the technology or innovation is already funded under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program then it will be considered as duplicate efforts and not be eligible for funding. Except where the technology is clearly innovative. The applicant will need to clearly explain why the project is different from an established practice.

- Example: pest management = 595 pest management practice
 - NRCS provides financial assistance through EQIP for practice 595-Pest Management, the applicant must clearly explain the difference between the proposed innovation and the existing conservation practice in order not to be considered duplicative.

If you have questions whether the proposed project is duplicative to NRCS practices you can contact the NRCS Alaska technical staff.

The project must address a Natural Resource Concern and subtopic which is identified under the State Resource Category in the Announcement for Program Funding (APF)



Matching Funds



Selected applicants may receive CIG grants for up to 50 percent of the total project cost - federal contribution not to exceed \$445,000.

CIG recipients must match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis (1:1 match) from non-Federal sources with cash and/or in-kind contributions.

Applicants WILL need to include in their application, written support verifying commitments of match from their partners who are involved in the project. This applies to both cash and in-kind contributions from third parties!



Matching Funds



Resources:

- State CIG APF: Section IV 5-8
- Statute: 2 CFR § 200.306 - Cost sharing or matching



Summary of Eligibility



NOTE: Applications missing any of the basic eligibility criteria as required in the APF will be ineligible.

i.e.

- Must address a natural resource concern on agricultural lands
- Must involve EQIP eligible participants
- Must have 1:1 Match
- Must not be a duplication efforts (innovation similar to an existing conservation practice NRCS offers in a financial assistance program)
- Project must be in Alaska
- Applicant must not be a federal agency



Topics



1. Background of the program
2. Eligibility; who can apply, participants, required match funds
3. **Application Categories and what is in the application packet**
4. **Provide guidance on how to develop your budget**
5. Evaluation Process
6. What makes a successful and not so successful proposal



Proposal Submission



Application forms can be obtained at www.grants.gov

The application packet contains the Announcement for Program funding (APF), which provides the rules and instructions to submit a proposal; AND all the necessary documents and forms you will need to complete a successful application.

Use the checklist to insure all the necessary information is in your application.



Proposal Submission



Utilize the Application Package Checklist

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

- Project Abstract (1 page max)
- Standard Application Form (SF 424)
- Project Narrative (15 page max)
- Assessment of Environmental Impacts
- Budget Information
 - SF424a Budget Information Non-Construction Programs
 - Detail budget narrative
- Indirect Costs (Section IV.A.7.)
- Matching (if matching funds are coming from a third party)
 - Signed commitment letters of matching support
- List of previous CIG Awards (if applicable)
- Certifications (Section IV.A.11.)
 - SF424b Assurance for Non-Construction Programs
 - Certification Regarding Lobbying

Ensure your DUNS and SAM Registration is complete/up to date



Proposal Submission



SF424a Budget Information Non-Construction Programs

Hardest form to fill out – itemization of the direct costs. Show where all the project dollars are going and show your match.

Several direct cost categories: personal, fringe benefits, travel, construction, other equipment, supplies, contractual.

Any agreement has to mirror these numbers if the project is approved. Important to get this form right.

Each of the direct cost categories, you must have a paragraph in your budget narrative which explains how you developed this number and how you are matching this.

The SF424a must mirror the budget narrative.



Proposal Submission



DUNN: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>

SAM: Registration: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

- This is a FREE registration.
- If you find a website that is requiring you to pay for registering, you are on the wrong website
- Link your banking information to SAM. If you change your banking information/name you must update SAM.



Proposal Submission



APF Section I.D.: Alaska has 3 Priorities some have subtopics:

- Wildfire Hazard from Biomass Accumulation
- Plant Productivity and Health
 - Automatic/remote controlled livestock management systems
 - Frost-free watering systems
- Soil Health
 - Soil health management systems on soil properties
 - Mono vs multi species cover crop mixtures
 - Economic and financial case studies on soil health mang. systems

Proposals must explicitly state which priority(ies) and sub-topic(s) are being addressed. Some projects may fit more than one sub-category please identify the primary one. This is important, because proposals will be evaluated by technical experts in that sub-category.



Proposal Submission



- Project Background
 - Identify the Resource Concern Priority and if applicable sub-topic
- Project Objectives
 - Clearly state objectives of the project and link it to the resource concern
- Project Methods
- Location and Size of Project or Project Area
- EQIP Eligible Participants
 - preferably, identify producers, producer groups or individuals that will participate in the project.
- Project Action Plan and Timeline



Proposal Submission



- **Project Management**
 - Qualified personnel must be identified in the application. Don't forget to mention Universities/ Extension agents that are assisting in the project.
- **Project Deliverables/Products**
 - This is important for NRCS in what products will be tested/developed. This section should also coincide with the Project timeline section. BE SPECIFIC !!
- **Benefits and Transferability**
 - This is extremely important to discuss how the project can be transferable to NRCS. Alaska NRCS has allocated a portion of their general EQIP funding to the State CIG so it is important that the investments made to fund these innovations or technology will benefit Alaska NRCS.
- **Project Evaluation**
 - How will the innovation be evaluated and monitored. Longevity - after the project is completed.
- **Environmental and Social Impacts** (*next two slides*)





Proposal Submission



Natural Resources and Historic Property Review Requirements

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 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.

Questions: Scott Crockett: 907-761-7758 scott.crockett@usda.gov



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/

Proposal Submission



Natural Resources and Historic Property Review Requirements (Continued)

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, THPOs, NHOs, and the appropriate preservation community regarding identification, evaluation of 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**.

Questions: Kristi Harper: 907-761-7737 kristine.harper@usda.gov



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



United States Department of Agriculture

Proposal Submission - Budget

Budget Questions:

Cassie Storms

907-761-7776

cassie.storms@usda.gov



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/

Proposal Submission - Budget



Total Cost = Direct Costs + Indirect Costs

Direct cost: things consumed in the project – i.e. nail

Indirect cost: equipment you use on every job – i.e. hammer

Indirect costs are allowed (refer to APF Section IV.B.7)

- Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA)

or

- De minimis rate of 10% (as authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f))
- List the indirect costs on the SF424a



Proposal Submission - Budget

Unauthorized Costs (examples):

- costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- costs outside the scope of the approved project,
- entertainment costs,
- compensation for injuries or damage to property,
- purchase or installation of fixed equipment,
- planning,
- repair,
- rehabilitation,
- AQUISTION, or
- construction of buildings or facilities.



Proposal Submission - Budget



Patents and Inventions:

Regulation provides that small businesses and commercial organizations normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support.

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.



Proposal Submission



Declaration of Previous CIG Involvement

- Identify any National or State CIG's you have had or currently have been awarded
- If you have never received a CIG or any type of Federal or non-Federal assistance agreements, please indicate this in your proposal.



Proposal Submission



Applications must be submitted by 5:00PM (AKST) on Friday May 15, 2020.

Must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov

NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grants.gov submissions.

Applications submitted via facsimile, email, or by post will not be accepted



Topics

1. Background of the program
2. Eligibility; who can apply, participants, required match funds
3. Application Categories and what is in the application packet
4. Provide guidance on how to develop your budget
- 5. Evaluation Process**
6. What makes a successful and not so successful proposal



Review Process



Review Process in the APF Section V.B.

- Design and implementation is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology
- The project is innovative
- Transferability to NRCS and the agricultural community



Review Process



Transferability

- Potential for NRCS Alaska to successfully use the innovative approach or methods. (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.)
- Potential for producers and land managers to use the innovative technology or methods
- Potential to transfer the approach or technology to other parts of Alaska.



Review Process



Ensure basic eligibility has been met:

- 1) Address a natural resource concern,
- 2) Involve EQIP producers,
- 3) meet the required match,
- 4) is not a duplication of efforts,
- 5) Is an eligible applicant,
- 6) technology/innovation is demonstrated in Alaska, and
- 7) the application packet is complete (contains all required content, format and information)



Review Process



Proposal Evaluation Process (APF Section V.B.)

Eligible applications will be evaluated on a 3 tiered review process:

- Technical Review Team – NRCS technical specialists who evaluate the proposals on their technical merit
- Executive Review Team – Alaska NRCS Leadership Team will prioritize proposal based on 1) strategic approach, 2) applicability, 3) transferability
- Final Selection – made by the State Conservationist



Topics

1. Background of the program
2. Eligibility; who can apply, participants, required match funds
3. Application Categories and what is in the application packet
4. Provide guidance on how to develop your budget
5. Evaluation Process
6. **What makes a successful and not so successful proposal**



Successful Applications



Inventory technologies/innovations – Where the inventory is a new methodology or approach in assessing a resource concern. This provides NRCS with new protocols in assessing a resource concern for conservation planning.

Design method - Where the technology provides new design and installation criteria to address a resource concern

Market Based Approach – Where the market base approach provides incentives to the agricultural community, either by environmental offsets, credits, or certifications. This provides NRCS with additional incentives to offer landowners in adopting conservation practices.



Successful Applications



Interim conservation practice or enhancement – That provides a new conservation practice or enhancements that can be incorporated in an NRCS program, OR that provides a new conservation practice scenario which can be incorporated in an existing conservation practice NRCS offers under a financial assistance program.

Assessment or Management tool – Where the technology is a computer or web-based program that can help NRCS and producers assess or model management scenarios on the agricultural or forest operation.



Unsuccessful Applications

- Solely a research projects
- Does not involve EQIP eligible producers
- Technology is adopted through EQIP
- 50/50 or applicants cash match not met
- Workshops
- Infrastructure for new or established business
- Land acquisition
- Proposal already funded under the National CIG
- Demonstration projects on lands owned by a federal agency
- Some proposals mention a technology that is similar to an NRCS management practice. It will be up to the applicant to clearly define the differences of what currently NRCS offers to the proposed technology.





United States Department of Agriculture

Alaska NRCS Contacts



CIG Program Questions: Amanda Crowe

907-761-7757

Amanda.Crowe@usda.gov

Budget Questions: Cassie Storms

907-761-7776

cassie.storms@usda.gov

Environmental Impact Questions: Scott Crockett

907-761-7758

scott.crockett@usda.gov

Cultural Impact Questions: Kristi Harper

907-761-7737

kristine.harper@usda.gov



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



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

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

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

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender

