



Conservation Outreach: Racial Equity and Justice Conservation Cooperative Agreements

**Fiscal Year (FY) 2022
Conservation Outreach: Racial Equity and
Justice Conservation Cooperative
Agreements**

**Funding Opportunity
No. USDA-NRCS-NHQ-REJ-21-NOFO0001121**



Request for Applications (RFA)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Funding Opportunity Title: Conservation Outreach: Racial Equity and Justice Conservation Cooperative Agreements

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-REJ-21-NOFO0001121

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA): This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.902.

Funding Opportunity Summary

The Office of Outreach and Partnerships Division (OPD) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides leadership and funding to ensure that all programs and services are made accessible to all NRCS customers, fairly and equitably, with emphasis on reaching the underserved and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers and landowners. In this RFA, NRCS requests applications for four OPD priority areas through the Racial Equity and Justice Conservation Cooperative Agreements. The goal of this outreach is for NRCS in collaboration with partners to expand the delivery of conservation assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers, including socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning, tribal and veteran. Proposals should support activities that introduce the concepts of climate-smart agriculture and to assist producers with planning and implementation of conservation practices and principles.

In accordance with 2 CFR §415.1(d), this is a non-competitive RFA restricted to eligible entities listed in section C.1. NRCS has determined that noncompetitive awards under this RFA are in the best interest of the Government and necessary to the accomplishment of the goals of the program to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved communities.

The anticipated amount for cooperative agreements under this solicitation is approximately \$50 million in fiscal year (FY) 2022.

Key Dates

This RFA solicits applications for eligible entities to enter into cooperative agreements with NRCS. Applications must be received by 11:59p.m. Eastern Time on October 25, 2021. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

A webinar for potential applicants will be scheduled for late September. When available, instructions regarding how to access the webinar will be posted in the opportunity on Grants.gov in the Synopsis tab and added to this RFA.

Application Checklist

NRCS expects applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting their application to ensure that they understand the program's requirements. This application checklist provides the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

Conservation Outreach: Racial Equity and Justice Conservation Cooperative Agreements requires that **all application packages** include the following, which can be found in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity in Grants.gov:

- Project Proposal Template
 - Ensure the required format and does not exceed the page limit.
 - Ensure project excludes unallowable costs and activities per Section D, Part 6, Funding Restrictions.
- SF 424 – Application for Federal Assistance
- SF 424A – Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.
- Grants.gov Lobbying Form, Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying

If applicable, packages may also be required to include the following documents:

- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or De Minimis Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

Federal Financial Assistance Training

The funding available through this NFO is Federal financial assistance. Grants 101 Training is highly recommended for those seeking knowledge about Federal financial assistance. The training is free and available to the public via <https://www.cfo.gov/grants-training/>. It consists of five modules covering each of the following topics: 1) laws, regulations, and guidance; 2) financial assistance mechanisms; 3) uniform guidance administrative requirements; 4) cost principles; and 5) risk management and single audit. FPAC agencies also apply Federal financial assistance regulations to certain non-assistance awards (e.g., non-assistance cooperative agreements).

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A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. Legislative Authority

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, 16 U.S.C. 590a-590f, 590q.

2. Program Purpose and Priorities

- The purpose of Conservation Outreach: Racial Equity and Justice Conservation Cooperative Agreements is to enhance NRCS and partner resources to assist historically underserved farmers and ranchers in implementing natural resources conservation practices that:
 - Improve soil health;
 - Improve water quality and quantity;
 - Provide habitat for local wildlife species of concern;
 - Improve the environmental and economic performance of working agricultural land;
 - Build and strengthen local food projects that provide for sustainable healthy food production and economic opportunities; and
 - Provide conservation planning that develops solutions to frequent and changing weather patterns.

- Projects should identify and remove barriers to accessing information and programs and reach historically underserved groups through a combination of outreach and technical assistance in managing natural resources that address the following four NRCS priority areas:
 1. Addressing local natural resource issues;
 2. Utilizing Climate Smart Agriculture practices and principles; to provide a foundation that will improve farming benefits to innovative conservation that leads to a more sustainable future through effective environmental practices on the land.
 3. Encouraging existing and new partnerships through emphasizing urban needs and equality in advancing underserved communities' and small-scale agriculture.
 4. Developing state and community-led conservation leadership for historically underserved producers, including training students for careers in natural resources management.

Applicants *must* propose a project that responds to one or more of the four program priority areas listed above.

For priority 2 above, the term “Climate Smart Agriculture” means planning and developing solutions to address frequent and changing weather patterns. For example, a project through outreach may introduce conservation planning alternatives to address air quality, aquatic habitat, erosion control, plant condition, nutrient management, livestock production, water quality, water quantity, irrigation water management, soil quality, and other resource concerns that

mitigate excessive climate change and the impact to their farming operation and the environment.

3. Definitions

Historically underserved producers are defined as the following:

Beginning Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years, and who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who has direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of one or more of the following groups whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities, 7 U.S.C. § 2279(e). Groups include, but are not limited to:

- African Americans
- American Indians
- Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Hispanics
- Pacific Islanders

Veteran Farmer or Rancher (VFR) is a farmer or rancher who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable and who also meets the definition of beginning farmer or rancher (BFR). The VFR must: a) not have operated a farm or ranch; or b) not have operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 consecutive years.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Available Funding

a. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this opportunity is \$50 million.

b. Federal Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The funding floor for this opportunity is \$100,000, and the funding ceiling is \$1,000,000. The funding floor means the minimum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. The ceiling means the maximum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. These numbers refer to the total agreement amount and not any specific budget period.

c. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be up to one to two years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on an estimated project start date of January 01, 2022.

d. Number of Awards

There is no commitment by NRCS to make a specific number of awards.

2. Type of Award

a. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award a cooperative agreement(s) pursuant to this opportunity. The agency will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement and will undertake activities such as the following:

- a. Authority to suspend work if specifications or work statements are not met.
- b. Review and approval of one stage of work before another may begin.
- c. Review and approval of substantive provisions of proposed subawards or contracts beyond existing Federal policy.
- d. Agency and recipient collaboration or joint participation.
- e. Project monitoring to permit specified kinds of direction or redirection of the work because of interrelationships with and impacts on other projects.
- f. Highly prescriptive agency requirements that limit recipient discretion.
- g. Review and approval of key personnel.
- h. Direct agency operational involvement or participation during the activity.

NRCS will have the following responsibilities:

- a. Collaborate with the partner to build technical capacity to implement Farm Bill Conservation Programs.
- b. Participate in building technical capacity of NRCS State level Outreach coordinators and partner field production and conservation employees to develop and implement effective projects.
- c. Intervene in project activities to achieve positive natural resources outcomes.

d. Provide assistance to entities in promoting NRCS programs and services.

b. Procurement Contracts

The agency does not expect to award procurement contracts associated with this RFA.

c. Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications

Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to apply. The project must have originally been awarded through a cooperative agreement between NRCS and the applying entity. An application for renewal means an application submitted to continue an existing cooperative agreement that meets the objectives and requirements of this RFA. An application for supplementation of an existing project means an application to add components to an existing cooperative agreement so that it would meet the objectives and requirements in this RFA.

Applicants must clearly indicate how a proposal for the same and/or continued Outreach deliverables meets the substantive need and champions efforts to remove persistent barriers within disparaging and indigenous community(s). Any current or existing award between the entity and NRCS must have documented excellent progress on current deliverables, and show how additional funds will leverage, continue, and/or further expand and not duplicate that work if applying for the same purpose or community(s).

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants and applications must meet eligibility criteria by the application deadline to be considered for award. Eligible applicant type is determined by the implementing program statute. Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted, or excluded from receiving Federal contracts and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program (2 CFR 200.206(d)). International and foreign organizations are not eligible for this funding opportunity.

Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to the following entity types based in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands):

- a. Individuals (Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization they may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.)
- b. Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)

- c. Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- d. Nonprofit organizations having a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (other than institutions of higher education)
- e. Private institutions of higher education
- f. Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education

2. Other

Any award made pursuant to this RFA will be made to a single individual or entity. Applicants that apply as “partnerships” or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the “partner” parties. In all but exceptional cases, it must be reflected in the award as an awardee/sub awardee relationship.

An applicant may not submit more than one application. If more than one application is submitted, only the last application submitted will be considered.

3. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no specified cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity. There is no competitive advantage to applicants who voluntarily provide a match.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Electronic Application Package

Applicants interested in applying in response to this RFA must submit it via email to NRCS-DCWA2-Outreach-and-Partnership-Division@USDA.GOV; the agency will not accept applications submitted any other method including through Grants.gov or via email to any other email address. All required documents must be attached in a single email, but do not need to be combined in one attachment. Please state that you are applying to the Conservation Outreach Racial Equity and Justice Conservation Cooperative Agreements RFA.

2. Address to Request Application Package

All information necessary to apply for this opportunity is included in the Grants.gov opportunity announcement.

3. Content and Form of Application Submission

The agency will not consider applications that fail to comply with the required content, format, and page limits, or those that are incomplete. To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application should contain the following:

a. Project Proposal Template

Applicants are required to prepare and submit a project proposal using the Project Proposal Template available in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity in Grants.gov. The project proposal must describe objectives and goals, project activities, monitoring and evaluation strategy of proposed activities,

and how the applicant will manage the project. Applicants should demonstrate in their proposal their knowledge and understanding to conduct the requested outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved groups.

The project proposal also includes a budget narrative and justification section where applicants should explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities.

Budget expenses can include personnel and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractors, construction, other (direct costs), and indirect charges (individual applicants cannot include indirect costs). Applicants may be eligible to direct charge financial management expenses if assistance is needed to manage the federal award.

The project proposal must be typed in a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Courier), and be no smaller than single spaced and 1-inch margins. It must not exceed 15 pages in length. Applicants must submit the Project Proposal Template as a PDF. Handwritten or MS Word will not be accepted.

b. Standard Form (SF) 424, Application for Federal Assistance.

The SF 424 is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the instructions. See Instructions for Completing an SF 424 located in the Related Documents tab of this announcement on Grants.gov.

c. Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs.

Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the agency funds. This form is the summary budget for the project and should include the full project totals on pages one and two. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov. Refer to Section D of this opportunity for information regarding indirect costs.

d. Grants.gov Lobbying Form, Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying.

Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 2 CFR Part 418, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-

appropriated funds for lobbying, you must also complete and submit the SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities located at 2 CFR 418, Appendix B. See 2 CFR, Subpart 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

e. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or De Minimis Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable).

Applicants who are charging indirect costs, that have a current NICRA with a Federal agency that has not expired, or a De Minimis Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, must provide a copy of the current agreement with the application. See Section D for information regarding indirect costs.

f. Unique entity identifier/DUNS and System for Award Management (SAM).

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

DUNS Number: A Dun and Bradstreet DUNS number is a unique, nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. Applicants must obtain a DUNS number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711.

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration: SAM is the official Federal system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registry, Federal Agency Registration, Online Representations and Certifications Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov>. The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance and can be contacted via the Help tab at the website listed above.

Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding DUNS or SAM issues.

The Government intends to replace the D-U-N-S® number with a “new, non-proprietary identifier” requested in, and assigned by SAM.gov. This new identifier is being called the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), or the Entity ID. See Planned UEI Updates in Grant Application Forms for UEI updates.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applicants must submit applications via NRCS-DCWA2-Outreach-and-Partnership-Division@USDA.GOV by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on October 25, 2021. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late (an application is considered on time at 11:59.59 pm ET, but it is late at 12:00 am ET). Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on date and time of email receipt to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. NRCS will not accept applications packages by fax or postal mail.

5. Intergovernmental Review

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

6. Funding Restrictions

Funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law and approved in writing by the agency in advance of incurring such costs:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project.
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award, including time spent applying for this opportunity.
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto.
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives.
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. Management fees and profit. Any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related direct and indirect costs only.
- i. Meals: Meals may be charged to an award only if they are necessary for the performance of the project. For instance, meals (normally only lunch) that are a necessary part of the costs of meetings and conferences (i.e., required attendance and continuity of a meeting), the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of information, are allowable, as are costs of transportation, rental of facilities, speakers’ fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences. Note: Meals consumed while in official travel status do not fall in this category. They are considered to be per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization’s established travel policies subject to statutory limitations or in accordance with Federal travel policies.
- j. Costs normally charged as indirect costs may not be charged as direct costs without proper justification and agency approval. Proper justification includes documentation that the costs meet the criteria for allowability (see 2 CFR

200.403). Examples of such costs include rent, utilities, depreciation on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.

- k. Salaries that are not commensurate with level of work: All costs must be reasonable to be allowable (CFR 200.403), and 2 CFR 200.404 defines a reasonable cost as one if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. Salaries determined not to be reasonable compared to the level of work will be unallowable.

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact listed in this RFA.

7. Indirect Cost Limitations

- a. A non-profit organization or institution of higher education awarded a cooperative agreement will be limited to a 10 percent indirect cost rate in accordance with the agency's annual appropriations act. The 10 percent indirect cost rate applies to both federal and non-federal funds. Other types of entities are not subject to this statutory limitation.
- b. To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either: 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; or 2) qualify for use of the *de minimis* rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the *de minimis* rate.
- c. Applicants not subject to a statutory limitation, which have a current NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. A recipient may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at its sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the agency. A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. Indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA. However, if an applicant with a current NICRA is subject to the statutory limitation, indirect costs must be calculated as follows. First, multiply the NICRA rate by the base stated in the NICRA to arrive at Amount A. Next, multiply the statutory limit of 10 percent by the total of all direct costs to arrive at Amount B. The lower of Amount A and B is the amount of indirect cost to include on the budget.
- d. Entities that are eligible for the *de minimis* rate who already have a *de minimis* rate agreement must use the rate and base specified in the agreement, which is modified total direct costs (MTDC) as defined by 2 CFR 200.68 and also excluding the amount of each subaward exceeding \$25,000. Note that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base to which the rate is applied. A copy of the

applicant's de minimis rate agreement must be provided with the application. If a recipient is eligible to use the de minimis rate, but does not have a de minimis rate agreement, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10 percent of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award.

- e. Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization they may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Review Process

In accordance with 2 CFR §415.1(d), this is a non-competitive RFA restricted to eligible entities listed in section C.1. NRCS has determined that noncompetitive awards under this RFA are in the best interest of the Government and necessary to the accomplishment of the goals of the program to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved communities.

NRCS will review each project proposal to ensure that it meets the statutory purpose of the program in accordance with section A, all application criteria are fulfilled in accordance with section D, and all costs are allowable in accordance with section D.6. Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or applications not meeting the formatting criteria will be eliminated from consideration. NRCS intends to make awards without notifying unsuccessful applicants, conducting any discussions or allowing applicants to correct deficiencies or omissions in their applications. Consequently, applicants must ensure their applications are complete and accurate.

In the event the number of applications received that meet all the criteria for award exceeds the available funding, NRCS will prioritize applications based on factors such as entities' experience working with or developing relationships with the populations targeted in this project, capacity and qualifications to accomplish program goals, and commitment to promoting racial equality and justice in agriculture. Any applications that meet the criteria for award that do not receive funding will be retained for consideration as additional funding becomes available.

After final award decisions, NRCS may notify the individual listed on the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 8f to clarify or negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. Failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in a project not receiving funding.

Risk reviews will be conducted by the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

2. Administrative and Risk Criteria

Notice of intent to award after the review process does not guarantee that an applicant will receive an award. Following notification of selection for funding (see section F), the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division's staff conducts a final administrative and risk review of those applications. The administrative review includes, but is not limited to, a check to ensure that RFA requirements were met (e.g., applicant meets eligibility criteria, application was submitted via email by the established deadline), and proposed costs are allowable, allocable and necessary. During this process, it may be necessary to request further documentation from the applicant (e.g., organizational information as part of the risk assessment, more detail regarding proposed costs).

In addition, to comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.205, the agency will follow, at a minimum, the risk review process described below (additional steps may be taken).

The awarding agency will check SAM to ensure the applicant is not suspended or debarred, which would preclude receiving an award. In addition, prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a)).

An applicant must meet the following standards to be considered for award:

- a. **Financial Stability.** The applicant maintains an adequate financial resources or cash flow to meet its financial obligations on a routine basis to successfully complete any agreement it may be awarded.
- b. **Quality of Management Systems and Ability to meet Management Standards** prescribed in 2 CFR Part 200. The applicant has a financial management system adequate to segregate and track federal funds. It has adequate systems in place for proper agreement administration; compliance with the standards outlined in 2 CFR Part 200 Section D for procurement, property, and records management; and required financial and performance reporting.
- c. **History of Performance.** If the applicant has previously obtained Federal financial assistance award, it has never failed to materially comply with the Federal award terms and conditions and further that it has never had an award terminated on that basis.

Submission of an application constitutes certification that an applicant meets these standards (items a through c. above). The agency may request documentation to substantiate the certification. Based on risk assessment, the agency may impose specific award conditions in accordance with 2 CFR 200.207.

3. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (if applicable)

- a. Prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider

any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a)).

- b. An applicant may review information in FAPIIS accessible through SAM and comment on any information about it that a Federal awarding agency previously entered.
- c. The agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR 200.205, Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful applicants by November 19, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by January 01, 2022.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The agency will provide notice that an application has been selected before it actually makes the Federal award. As such, the selection notification is not an authorization to begin performance. Any pre-award costs incurred by the awardee will not be reimbursed. The Notice of Grant and Agreement Award (ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency official is the only authorizing document and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized official for signature.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and the General Terms and Conditions, which are included in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity on Grants.gov.

Preapplication coordination is not applicable. Environmental impact information is not required for this program. This program is excluded from coverage under Executive Order 12372.

3. Award Recipient Reporting

Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the agency's General Terms and Conditions, which are included in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity on Grants.gov. Recipients of awards under this RFA may anticipate the following reporting requirements:

- a. Performance reports are due on an annual basis to the ezFedGrants system or the FPAC Grants and Agreements Division in accordance with the schedule included in the award statement of work. Note that the performance reporting period is based on the agreement period of performance start date.
- b. Financial reports are on a quarterly basis to the ezFedGrants system or the FPAC Grants and Agreements Division. Reports are due 30 calendar days after the reporting period on January 31, April 30, July 31, October 31. Note that financial reporting is based on the calendar year.

4. Federal Awarding Agency Payments to Recipients

Payments to award recipients will be either on a reimbursable or advance basis in accordance with the schedule in the award statement of work (typically quarterly or semi-annually). This schedule will be established in cooperation with the recipient when the agreement is executed. Payment will be made based on actual expenditures, not to exceed the amount obligated in the award. The Federal Awarding Agency will make a reimbursable payment within 30 calendar days after receipt of a proper payment request; however, payment will be withheld if the recipient has reports that are overdue.

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

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

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT

For questions regarding this opportunity, please email NRCS-DCWA2-Outreach-and-Partnership-Division@USDA.GOV with the RFA number in the subject line.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. A webinar for potential applicants will be scheduled for late September. When available, instructions regarding how to access the webinar will be posted in the opportunity on Grants.gov in the Synopsis tab and added to this RFA.

2. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Applications are considered confidential information. Applications are not shared with individuals or entities seeking public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without the consent of the applicant. More specifically, Executive Order 12600 and USDA FOIA regulation 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A requires the awarding agency to

provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information, and requires the awarding agency to consult with applicants regarding the releasing their records.

3. Government Obligation

The Federal Government is not obligated to make any Federal award because of this opportunity. Only authorized federal officials can bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Statement

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

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, 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 <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer> and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(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.