

Iowa Component Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year 2011 Announcement of Program Funding

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) requests applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. Iowa NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 will be approximately \$300,000, with individual grants not to exceed \$75,000. Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. Applications are requested from eligible organizations (government or non-government) or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between one and three years in duration. This notice identifies the Iowa CIG program objectives and eligibility criteria for projects, and provides application instructions.

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov or to the e-mail address listed below. Applications submitted through Grants.gov or e-mail 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. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date of **March 4, 2011**. E-mailed applications must be received by NRCS on or before the submission deadline.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site 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.

E-mail address: IOWACIGFY11@ia.usda.gov

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

Richard Sims, State Conservationist
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2180

For more information contact:

Roy Campbell
CIG Program Coordinator
USDA-NRCS
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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

CIG was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under Section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985, as added by Section 2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and 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, guides, and references or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Projects intended to formulate hypothesis do not qualify. CIG is to apply proven technology which has been shown to work previously. It is a vehicle to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success, and to be candidates for eventual technology transfer or institutionalization. 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.

The NRCS will accept applications for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, submitted by eligible entities, including federally recognized Indian Tribes, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. Iowa component CIG projects must take place in Iowa; multi-state projects will not be considered. Complete applications will be screened for eligibility determination by appropriate NRCS staff. Applications determined eligible will be evaluated a subcommittee of the Iowa State Technical Committee (ISTC). Applications will be forwarded to the state conservationist for final selection and funding decisions.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must encompass the development, field testing, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of:

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems, including market-based systems; or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches; and
- Environmental soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement.

To be given priority consideration, the innovative project or activity should:

- Make use of a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate and verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy use, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation technology in the field;
- Adapt conservation technologies, 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; and
- Adapt conservation technology, management, or incentive systems to improve performance; and
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. CIG Categories

Iowa Natural Resource Concerns

Applications must demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address a natural resource concern or concerns. The following natural resource concerns for possible funding through Iowa CIG for FY 2009 are:

Water Resources

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance water quality and/or quantity in watersheds with predominantly agricultural land uses while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

- Nutrient, pesticide, and/or pathogen transport to surface water and groundwater.
- Technologies scalable to small farms and ranches to maintain, restore, or enhance water quality and/or quantity.
- Innovative approaches to animal manure or poultry litter management systems to reduce nutrient loading to ground and or surface water.
- Innovative approaches contributing to implementation of pollution reduction strategies to improve water quality locally or on a regional or watershed scale.

Soil Resources

The objective of this natural resource concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance soil resources associated with agricultural and forest land uses while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

- Application of continuous no-till crop production to enhance soil resources while maintaining crop productivity.
- New, innovative methods for erosion control under all land uses.
- New and innovative methods to improve soil tilth and soil quality related to maintained or improved productivity.

Atmospheric Resources

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance air quality and atmospheric resources through agricultural and forest practices while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

- Agricultural emissions of particulates, odors, volatile organic compounds, and greenhouse gases.
- Identification and quantification of management practices for air quality and atmospheric change concerns at animal operations.

Grazing Land and Forest Health

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance grazing land and forest health while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

- Invasive species management on grazing and/or forest land.
- Systems or practices to minimize overgrazing and restore lands suffering effects of overgrazing.

Wildlife Habitat

The objective of this natural resource concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches for environmentally sound wildlife habitat management while sustaining agricultural productivity. Possible subtopics include:

- Riparian area management and restoration.
- Invasive species management.
- Pollinator habitat
- Biodiversity
- Crop production, grazing management, or forestry practices that enhance wildlife habitat.

The “Natural Resource Concerns” category also includes market-based approaches to address any or all of the five resource concern areas.

Iowa Technology Concerns

Applications must demonstrate the use of innovative approaches that address specific technology needs areas identified by NRCS.

Improved On-Farm Energy Efficiency

The objective of this technology concern is to promote and implement technologies and/or approaches that efficiently use of energy resources. Possible subtopics include:

- Bio-based energy opportunities
- Methane recovery and reduction in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and sulfur dioxide (SO₂).
- Improving the energy efficiency of land-based agricultural production through conservation practices and activities.
- Energy audit of activities related to natural resource concerns (soil, water, air, plants, and animals) on agricultural lands.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Effective on the publication date of this notice, the Iowa NRCS State Conservationist announces the availability of \$300,000 for CIG proposals in the state, with individual grants not to exceed \$75,000. The intent of the state component is to provide flexibility to target CIG funds to individual producers and smaller organizations that may possess promising innovations, but may not compete well on the larger scale of the national grants’ competition.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Applicants must provide non-federal funding (matching funds) for at least 50 percent of the project cost. Up to half of the applicant’s matching funds (up to 25 percent of the total project cost) may be from in-kind contributions.

B. Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers and Indian Tribes

For the FY 2011 grant award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG may be set-aside for applications from Beginning Farmer or Ranchers, Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers, or Indian tribes or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these

entities. Up to three-fourths of the applicant's required matching funds (up to 37.5 percent of the total project cost) may derive from in-kind contributions. This exception is intended to help Beginning Farmers or Ranchers, Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers, and Indian tribes meet the statutory requirements for receiving a CIG.

To compete for these set-aside funds, the applicant must make a declaration in the application as described in Part IV.A.2.b.(12) in this notice. Applications that are unsuccessful in the set-aside competition will automatically be placed in the general application pool for consideration. Funds not used in the set-aside pool will revert back into the general funding pool. Below are definitions of Beginning Farmer or Rancher and Limited Resource Producer. Definitions can also be found at: <http://www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

Beginning Farmer or Rancher:

- A person or legal entity who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity 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; and
- In the case of a contract with an entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher:

- A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$155,200 in each of the previous 2 years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service); and
- 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 2 years (to be determined annually using Department of Commerce data).

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher:

- Farmers or ranchers who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identity as a member of a group without regards to their individual qualities. Those groups include African Americans, American Indians or Alaska natives, Hispanics, Asians, and native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders.

C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C.3839aa-7, imposes a \$300,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between 2008 and 2012. The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements; these grant agreements are not EQIP contracts. Thus, CIG awards are not limited by the payment limitation.
- Direct or indirect payments made to an individual or entity using funds from a CIG award to carry out structural, vegetative, or management practices count toward each individual's or entity's EQIP payment limitation. Through project progress reports, CIG grantees are responsible for certifying that producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to NRCS. Direct or indirect payments can not be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds through any of the USDA programs (EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance [AMA], Conservation

Security Program [CSP], Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program [WHIP], etc.) since this would be considered a duplicate payment.

The following are two examples of how the \$300,000 EQIP payment limitation applies to CIG projects:

A \$75,000 CIG is awarded to a state environmental agency to demonstrate an innovative, market-based, water quality-trading program. The money is used to finance the development of a market infrastructure, and none of the funds is used to implement structural, vegetative, or management practices. Producers in the trading market demonstration area may indirectly benefit from their eventual participation in the market, but there is no direct or indirect payment of CIG dollars. If, on the other hand, part of the CIG award was used to make payments to producers who implement conservation practice on their land as part of a trading program, those payments would count towards each producer's \$300,000 EQIP payment limitation.

A \$75,000 CIG grant is awarded to a conservation district to pilot a community-based animal waste treatment technology innovation. The EQIP eligible producers in the area transport their animal waste to a central treatment location. Because producers are not directly or indirectly receiving CIG funds, the payment limitation does not apply. If, however, the producers were paid for their waste, or for transporting their waste to the central treatment location using CIG funds, the payments would be subject to each producer's EQIP payment limitation.

D. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in 16 USC 3839aa-1. Further, all agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

A person or legal entity will not be eligible to receive any benefit during a crop, fiscal, or program year, as appropriate, if the average adjusted gross non-farm income of the person or legal entity exceeds \$1,000,000, unless not less than 66.66 percent of the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income.

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance and Wetland Compliance provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

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 appropriate State's EQIP Eligible Practices List by contacting the NRCS State office).

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, Administrative Contact, and Technical Contact to provide oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Application Materials

All Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp. An application checklist is available on the Iowa CIG website: www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CIG.html.

B. Proposal Content and Format

Applications are required to contain the content, format, and information set forth below in order 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 the application. Applicants must submit one original copy of the application in the following format:

- Applications should be typewritten or printed on 8½" x 11" white paper. The text of the application should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, single-spaced, single-sided, with one-inch margins and page numbered.
- Applications that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding.

Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- 1. Proposal Cover Sheet:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from Grants.gov-Forms.
- 2. One-Page Abstract:** A one-page, single-sided, non-confidential technical summary that describes the work to be undertaken and the expected outcome and benefits. The technical summary should take into account the priorities and evaluation factors described in this solicitation. Pages in excess of the one-page limit will be discarded.
- 3. Project Description:** The description must include the following information and is limited to 10 pages in length. Pages in excess of the 10-page limit will be discarded and not evaluated. Bibliography, resumes, and references will be included in the page count for the project page limit.
 - a. Project background:** Describe the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good 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. Location and size of project or project area:** Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
 - e. Producer participation:** Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (all producers involved in the project must be eligible for EQIP).
 - f. Project action plan and timeline:** Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion.
 - 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.
 - i.** In addition to specific deliverable, applications must include the following activities as deliverables:
 - ii.** Semi-annual reports
 - iii.** Supplemental narratives to explain and support payment requests
 - iv.** Final report

- v. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress [A thorough list and explanation of measurable performance items specific to the project will be used in the technical evaluation (refer to “CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria”)]
 - vi. New technology and innovative approach fact sheet
 - vii. Participation in at least one NRCS CIG Showcase or comparable NRCS event during the period of the grant
- 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; 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 semi-annual progress report, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.
- 4. Environmental Information and Assessment of Environmental Impacts:** Describe the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project. The description of the potential environmental and social impacts must address all potential beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. A description of the potential impacts to all environmental resources must be disclosed. Environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other specific resources protected by law, Executive Order, and Agency policy. These resources are outlined in the NRCS Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, form NRCS-CPA-52, which is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ECS/environment/CPA-52.doc>. The 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. 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. Applicants may consult with NRCS Environmental Liaison concerning the scope of what should be addressed in this section of the application. A list of the Environmental Liaisons can be found on the following website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ECS/environment/liaison.doc>
- Note: Please be aware that applications for projects with potentially adverse impacts may need to be modified in order to achieve acceptable and beneficial levels of environmental impact. If projects cannot be modified, then there is a potential during the screening process that the application may not be selected.*
- 5. Budget Information:** Submit a completed Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs.
- 6. Budget Narrative (maximum 9 pages):** In addition to the SF-424A, all applicants must provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. All budget categories for which support is requested must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget (SF-424A) and justified on a separate sheet of paper and placed immediately behind the Budget Form (SF-424A). Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how budget items such as personnel, travel, equipment, etc. are essential to achieving project objectives. List all position titles and salaries, description of fringe, travel, supplies, list equipment and cost and list other cost items. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries such as resumes and description of duties. In addition to the information above, the subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. A budget narrative is also required for the matching portion.
- 7. Matching:** Applications must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third, non-federal parties.
- Cash Match - For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant

organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation, and (5) a statement that the donor 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 include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and are 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 donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant's organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation 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 donor will make the contribution during the grant period. The sources and amounts of all matching support from outside the applicant institution must be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support (matching support means a budget narrative broken down by year).

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

8. **Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement:** Identify any previously awarded CIG projects involvement related to this proposal and any of its principal investigators. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award.
9. **Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher, or Indian Tribe:** If an applicant wishes to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool (see Part III. B. that describes the provision of a set-aside pool of funding for Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher, and Indian Tribes) and avail themselves of the in-kind contribution exception, applicants must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher, Indian Tribe, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities.
10. **Declaration of EQIP Eligibility:** Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP.
11. **Certifications:** All applications must include a signed **SF-424 B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs**. The SF-424 B may be found at: www.grants.gov/agencies/approved_standard_forms.jsp or contact the Iowa NRCS State Office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they comply with the following from 7 Code of Federal Register (CFR):
 - a. Part 3017, Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement) www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3017_04.html.
 - b. Part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3018_04.html.
 - c. Part 3021, Government wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance) www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3021_04.html.
12. **DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS or phone 1-866-705-5711. Note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

13. Required CCR Registration: The Central Contractor Registry (CCR) is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the government. All CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, visit www.ccr.gov. Allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration.

C. How to Submit a Written Proposal

Applicants must submit six complete copies of each project application. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left-hand corner. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a compact disc (CD). Electronic files must be either Microsoft Word or Acrobat (PDF) files. The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using regular, express mail, or overnight courier service is:

Richard Sims, State Conservationist
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2180

Note: Applicants must submit one signed original copy of each project application. Applications submitted by fax will not be considered.

D. How to Submit a Proposal Electronically

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov or to the e-mail address listed below. Applications submitted through Grants.gov or e-mail 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. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date of March 4, 2011. E-mailed applications must be received by NRCS before the submission deadline.

E-mail address: IOWACIGFY11@ia.usda.gov

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site 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.

E. Proposal Due Date

Proposals must be received in the Iowa NRCS State Office by **12:00 p.m. (noon), Central Time, March 4, 2011**. A proposal's postmark date is not a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in proposal delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

F. Acknowledgement of Submission

Proposals received by the due date will be acknowledged with an official letter. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgement within 30 days of the submission, they must contact the NRCS Program Contact (see Part VII.). Otherwise, the application may not be considered for funding.

G. 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:

- Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- 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,
- 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 listed in Section VII.

H. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR 3019.36. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 7 CFR 3019.2, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. The 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.

I. Environmental Review Requirements

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and NRCS regulations that implement NEPA require that an environmental review be prepared for actions where the Agency has discretion and control. Accordingly, 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 (described further under Part IV B.4.j) 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 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/or pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment and/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.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW

A. Proposal Review and Selection Process

Prior to the evaluation review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice by appropriate Iowa NRCS staff. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the provisions of this notice will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be scored by a subcommittee of the Iowa State Technical Committee (ISTC) against the Criteria for Proposal Evaluation listed below. Scored applications will be forwarded to the state conservationist for final selection and funding decisions.

B. Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

A subcommittee of the ISTC will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals. Each criterion carries an equal weight of 25 percent.

Peer review panels will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals:

Purpose, Approach, and Goals

- Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
- Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
- Project outcome is clearly measurable.
- Potential for successful completion.
- Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and an acceptably significant level of improvement will be achieved.

Innovative Technology or Approach

- Project is innovative (national, regionally, and local in nature).
- Project conforms to description of innovative projects or activities in proposal request announcement.

Project Management

- Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
- Project staff has technical expertise needed.
- Budget is adequately explained and justified.
- Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions and agencies.

Transferability

- Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology or technologies.
- Potential to transfer the approach or technology nationally or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas, including limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally underserved producers and communities.
- Potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods.
- Project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.).

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The Iowa NRCS expects to announce CIG awards by May 27, 2011. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start, until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee. All agreements are expected to be awarded by August 12, 2011.

VI. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

The state conservationist will notify applicants who have been selected. Anticipated date for projects to begin is October 1, 2011. The state conservationist will also notify applicants whose proposals have not been selected.

B. Environmental Review Requirements

Project proponents that are selected to receive grant funding will need to work with the NRCS Program Contact and NRCS Environmental Liaison concerning what documentation will need to be prepared for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and NRCS regulations. Selected applicants may be required to prepare and/or pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document if an Environmental Assessment and/or Environmental Impact Statement are needed. Grant funds can not be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

C. Grant Agreement

The Commodity Credit Corporation, through NRCS, will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in the CIG component of EQIP. The official notice will also

indicate the need to work with the administrative contact to develop an agreement prior to starting work on the project. The grant agreement will include:

1. Project purpose
2. Project objectives
3. Project deliverables
4. Final project plan listing cooperators in the project and identifying the grant applicant and project manager
5. Project timelines and expected project completion date
6. Project progress and budget reporting requirements
7. Award amount and budget information
8. Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement
9. Role of NRCS technical oversight in the project
10. Reporting requirements including attendance at NRCS CIG showcase or comparable NRCS event during the period of the grant
11. Changes in project plans
12. Other requirements and terms deemed necessary by the CCC to protect the interests of the United States

D. Reporting Requirements

Grantees receiving an advance of federal funds of more than \$25,000 are required to submit a SF-272, (Federal Cash Transactions Report), and when necessary, the continuation sheet, SF-272-A, no later than 15 days following the end of each quarter or 90 days after project completion. These reports are used to monitor cash advanced to recipients and to obtain disbursement and outlay information for each award.

Grantees must submit a Financial Status Report (SF 269) no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. The SF-272 and SF-269 are available at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html.

In addition, every six months the grantee must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program/technical contact. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous six-month period, including any funded or unfunded time extensions, a comparison of actual accomplishments to project goals, and a statement of work projected to be completed in the next six-month period.

To satisfy the requirements of EQIP (7 CFR 1466) compliance measures, the grantee is required to submit as a component of the semi-annual progress report:

- A list of producers, identified by name and social security number, of all EQIP eligible producers or entities involved in the project.
- The dollar amount of direct and indirect payment made to each individual producer or entity for any structural, vegetative, or management practices. Both quarterly and cumulative payment amounts must be submitted.
- A self-certification indicating that each individual or entity receiving a direct or indirect payment through this grant complies with the EQIP Payment Limitation, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), Highly Erodible Land (HEL), and Wetlands Conservation Compliance Farm Bill provisions.

Progress report templates will be provided to grantees by the NRCS program contact. This template is also available on the NRCS CIG Web site at:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html.

The NRCS will designate a program/technical contact for the project. This individual will have technical oversight responsibility for the project. The grantee must send copies of each semi-annual progress report to this NRCS contact, and comply with any requests for information from

this individual.

Upon passage of the completion date of the project, a final report must be submitted within 90 days detailing project activities, funding received, funding expended, results, and potential for transferability of results. The final report should address completion of the project deliverables listed in the grant agreement.

VII. CIG CONTACTS

CIG program contact:

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Des Moines, Iowa 50309-2180
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Fax: (515) 284-4394
E-mail: roy.campbell@ia.usda.gov

Administrative contact: (contract, Grants.gov)

Michelle Bales, Contract Specialist
USDA-NRCS
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- VIII. Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQ's), is available on the following CIG Web sites: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig or www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CIG.html.