



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA ANNOUNCES FISCAL YEAR 2008 SIGN-UP FOR UP TO \$20 MILLION IN CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17, 2007-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Arlen Lancaster today announced the request for proposals for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for fiscal year 2008. The CIG program is designed to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies.

“CIG enables NRCS to work with other public and private entities to accelerate transfer and adoption of promising technologies and conservation approaches to address some of the Nation's most pressing natural resource concerns,” said Lancaster. “CIG benefits agricultural producers by providing more options for environmental enhancement.”

The Department of Agriculture’s NRCS administers CIG. For fiscal year (FY) 2008, up to \$20 million is available for the National CIG competition. Funds for single- or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process with applications accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) and the Pacific Basin Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) from all eligible non-federal government or non-government organizations or individuals, including federally recognized tribes.

There are three CIG categories available in FY 2008:

- **Natural Resource Concerns Category**—up to \$10 million available for proposals addressing one or more of the CIG natural resource concerns. This component was also offered in FY 2004, FY 2005, FY 2006, and FY 2007 awards.
- **Technology Category**—up to \$5 million available for proposals addressing one or more of the CIG technology categories. This component was offered for the first time in FY 2006.
- **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Category**—up to \$5 million available for proposals addressing one or more of the CIG natural resource concerns in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This component was also offered in FY 2005, FY 2006, and FY 2007. For FY 2008, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will be accepting and reviewing the applications for this category. For information on applying for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Category, please visit www.nfwf.org/cheasapeake.

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Applicants should explain how large a geographic area that the project would benefit. Projects may be watershed-based, regional, multi-State, or nationwide in scope. Applications should describe the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address a natural resource conservation concern(s).

Funding for CIG is made available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). All proposed CIG projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers. CIG funds that are used to provide direct or indirect payments to individuals or entities to implement structural, vegetative or management practices are subject to the \$450,000 EQIP payment limitation. CIG is not a research program, but rather a tool to stimulate the adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a high likelihood of success, and are likely candidates for eventual technology transfer.

CIG will fund projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations. Technologies and approaches that are commonly used in the geographic area covered by the application, and which are eligible for funding through EQIP, are not eligible for funding through CIG. Proposed projects must conform to the description of innovative conservation projects or activities published in the Announcement of Program Funding (APF).

CIG funds pilot projects and conservation field trials that can last from one to three years. Grants for approved projects cannot exceed 50 percent of the total project cost. The federal contribution for a single project cannot exceed \$1 million. At least 50 percent of the total cost of the project must come from non-Federal matching funds (cash and in-kind contributions) provided by the grantee. While NRCS will provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award, the grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project.

Applications must be received in the NRCS National Headquarters by 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST), on Wednesday, February 20, 2008. Applications should be sent to: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Conservation Innovation Grants Program; Financial Assistance Programs Division, Room 5239-S; 1400 Independence Ave, SW.; Washington, DC 20250.

To view the complete Announcement of Program Funding visit:

<http://frwebgate1.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=901000168785+0+0+0&WAISaction=retrieve>.

To apply electronically visit: <http://www.grants.gov/>. For more information about NRCS conservation programs online, visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>, or visit the nearest USDA Service Center in your area.

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