



United States Department of Agriculture

March 2014

## Overview

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are competitive grants that stimulate the development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands.

# CIG

Conservation Innovation Grants



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment.

## Benefits

CIG accelerates technology development and transfer, and the adoption of promising technologies and approaches to address some of the nation's most pressing natural resource concerns; projects often result in production and operational benefits as well. NRCS identifies successful projects for potential integration of technologies and approaches into NRCS' toolkit of conservation practices.

CIG has supported projects ranging from the implementation of computer-controlled, automated sprinkler systems that save growers time, money and water; to the development of quantification tools that support ecosystem services markets and provide a new income stream for producers.



*Helping People Help the Land*

## Eligibility

CIG applications are accepted from state or local governments, federally recognized Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations and individuals in all 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).

Conservation approaches or technologies must be sufficiently studied to indicate a likelihood of success to be considered likely candidates for technology transfer. CIG funds innovative on-the-ground conservation projects, including pilot projects and field demonstrations. Proposed projects must conform to the description of innovative conservation projects or activities published in the funding notice. For example, technologies and approaches commonly used in the geographic area covered by the application, and which are eligible for EQIP funding, are not eligible for funding through CIG.

At least 50 percent of the total project cost must come from non-federal matching funds (cash and in-kind contributions) provided by the grantee. The grantee is also responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project. NRCS will provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

Proposed projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers. CIG funds provided directly or indirectly to producers are counted toward a producer's EQIP funding cap.

## How to apply

**National CIG:** A CIG funding notice is announced each year. Funds for single- or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. Projects may be watershed-based, regional, multi-State, or nationwide in scope. The natural resource concerns eligible for funding through CIG will be identified in the funding announcement and may change annually to focus proposals on new and emerging high priority natural resource issues.

Applications should describe the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address a natural resource conservation concern or concerns. Applications are evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice. Evaluated applications are forwarded to an NRCS Grants Review Board which makes recommendations to the NRCS Chief for final selection. Awards are made through a grant agreement.

**State CIG:** The State component emphasizes projects that benefit a limited geographic area. Projects may be farm-based, multi-county, small watershed, or Statewide in scope. Public notices in each participating State will announce the availability of funds for the State CIG competitions.

## Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers, Veterans and American Indian Tribes

NRCS recognizes the need to provide special consideration to historically underserved producers, and strives to ensure that these producers benefit from innovative technologies and approaches.

CIG offers two programmatic exceptions intended to encourage the participation of beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers, and Indian Tribes, in CIG. 1) Each year, up to 10 percent of National CIG funds may be set aside for applicants who are beginning or limited resource farmers and ranchers, or Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. 2) CIG allows applicants that are historically underserved to derive a higher percentage of project matching funds from in-kind contributions.

## More Information

Once funds for CIG become available, a funding notice is posted on the federal eGrants portal, [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). The funding notice also may be accessed from the NRCS website at: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig)

The notice will specify the information required from applicants. Complete applications must be submitted to the NRCS National office at the address identified in the notice.

If you need more information about CIG, contact the National CIG Program Manager at [nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov).

## What's new in CIG

CIG now facilitates on-farm conservation research and demonstration and pilot-testing of new technologies or innovative conservation practices.

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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