

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
USDA-NRCS-MD-08-01
COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT
for**

FORAGE PRODUCTION STUDIES

(APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS)

I. APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Applications are due no later than **3:00 PM local time July 28, 2008**. Applicants may submit application packages electronically (on-line via Grants.gov) or by hard copy through the mail. Applications will not be accepted by facsimile. If submitting hard copies, applicants must submit one (1) original and two (2) copies of their application to the Agency Point of Contact identified in Section VII of these instructions.

II. ON-LINE APPLICATION THROUGH GRANTS.GOV:

- a. If an applicant chooses to apply on-line through Grants.gov at <http://www.grants.gov>, applicants are required to initiate and complete the steps to register with Grants.gov at <http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted>. Please note that these steps could take several days to complete, which should factor into the applicant's submission timing to avoid the rejection of an application due to potential delays. Documents should be saved as **.doc** or **.pdf** files prior to electronic submission through grants.gov.
- b. 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. Therefore, applicants should verify that they have a DUNS number or take the steps needed to obtain one. For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- c. 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. Applicants must be registered with the CCR. To register, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>. Registering with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR), will take some time to complete, so keep that in mind when beginning the application process. In order to register with the CCR, your organization will need DUNS Number. Be sure to complete the Marketing Partner ID (MPIN) and Electronic Business Primary Point of Contact fields during the CCR registration process. These are mandatory fields that are required when submitting grant applications through Grants.gov.

III. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to complete the grant agreement application. The applicant must tailor the submittal to address the Evaluation Factors (listed below), provide a detailed cost breakdown to support the proposed budget and include a Program Narrative Statement with a detailed discussion of the project and methodology that will be used. The Program Narrative Statement should address the following as a minimum:

- a. A description of the resources and experience of the organization or individual necessary to successfully perform these services.
- b. A budget and detailed narrative in support of the form SF-424 for the overall project period. Show all funding sources and itemized costs by the following line items on the budget form: personnel, equipment, material and supplies, travel, all other costs, and indirect costs. Funds may be requested under any of the line items listed above provided that the item or service for which support is requested is identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed project, is allowable under the authorizing legislation and the applicable Federal cost principles, and is not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute. Salaries of project personnel who will be working on the project may be requested in proportion to the effort that they will devote to the project. Show any costs that the applicant indicates will be contributed in support of this project.
- c. The organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the project.
- d. A description of the capabilities to fulfill the terms of the cooperative agreement, including a brief description of the organizational entity and of the qualifications, employment status, current responsibilities, and proposed level of effort for the project coordinator, and staff responsible for implementation. Resumes for key personnel should be included in an appendix.
- e. List of past experience with providing technical services of this type, to include at a minimum;
 - Evidence of demonstrating proficiency in agricultural research and plot study work.
 - Evidence of providing technical assistance in the field directly to farmers.

- Evidence of teaching of complex agronomic concepts to agricultural professionals.
 - Evidence of development of technical publications for the general public on pasture management and grazing.
- f. Additional material may be included in the appendix. Material should be included only when necessary to support information provided in the narrative. Copies of documents, resumes, brochures, etc., are encouraged to demonstrate experience, publications, knowledge, skills and abilities.
- g. **Forms** - The following forms are to be submitted. They can be filled in electronically if applying on-line through the grants.gov web site, or if submitting hard copies, the forms can be obtained from the Agency Point of Contact identified below or from the web sites indicated:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_forms.html
 SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance
 SF 424A Budget Information – Non-construction Programs
 SF 424B Assurances – Non-construction Programs

The following forms are also to be submitted and can be obtained from the Agency Point of Contact identified below or from the web sites indicated. If applying electronically, fill in the forms and attach them as an attachment to the application. If submitting hard copies, submit them as an attachment to the hard copy of the application.

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/forms/ad.shtml>
 AD-1047 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Responsibility Other Matters, Primary Covered Transactions
 AD-1048 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion, Lower Tier Covered Transactions

IV. EVALUATION FACTORS AND WEIGHTS:

All application packages will be reviewed to confirm that the applicant is an eligible recipient and to ensure that the application contains all of the items specified in the Application Requirements, Section III of these Instructions. Applications from eligible recipients will then be evaluated based on the following evaluation factors.

- a. **Evaluation Factor 1 - Program Narrative Statement and Organizational Capabilities** (Total 30%):
 Adequacy of the Program Narrative Statement and the organizational resources available to successfully manage and perform the work.
- b. **Evaluation Factor 2 - Project Personnel** (Total 40%):
 Qualifications and experience of the key technical person with natural resources, grazing lands, or range science education, (preferably a Doctorate degree in Agronomy or closely affiliated specialty) to assist the GLCI Committee with technical guidance for workshops and presentations. This technical person should have sufficient education and experience to maintain a working relationship with NRCS field office staff, grazing land owner/managers and operators and the skills and experience to develop technical fact sheets and publications on pasture management and grazing, and to teach complex agronomic concepts to other agricultural professionals.
- c. **Evaluation Factor 3 - Project Budget** (Total 30%):
 Reasonableness of the budget proposed to successfully manage and perform the work.

V. DISCUSSIONS:

Discussions may be held with each applicant regarding the applicant's experience, the proposed plan of action or alternative courses of action. Negotiations may be necessary regarding cost and terms and conditions for inclusion in the cooperative agreement.

VI. AWARD:

It is anticipated that one (1) cooperative agreement will be awarded to the applicant that provides the best value. NRCS reserves the right to not award a cooperative agreement as a result of this solicitation if it is in the best interest of the government.

VII. AGENCY POINT OF CONTACT:

Robert A. Ellsworth, Contract Specialist
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 Natural Resources Conservation Service
 339 Busch's Frontage Road, Suite 301
 Annapolis, MD 21409-5543
 Telephone: (443) 482-2921
 Email: robert.ellsworth@md.usda.gov