

Application and Submission Information

(Proposal amendments and notifications, if required, will be managed through grants.gov and associated e-mails registered on that system.)

1. How to Obtain Application Materials

All OMB standard forms necessary for proposal submission are posted on the following site: http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp

2. Proposal Content and Format

Proposals must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for an award. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the work described in the application. Proposal must include all required forms and narrative sections described below; incomplete applications will not be considered. Do not include letters of support, endorsement or recommendations for award.

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to complete the grant or cooperative agreement application. Applicants should refer to <http://www.grants.gov> to apply. Further, the applicant must respond to the Evaluation Factors for Award, provide cost data to support a proposed budget and include project narratives with a detailed discussion of the project and methodology used.

3. Cover Sheet.

Applications must use Standard Form 424 (including SF 424A and 424B) with the required information filled in and the certified assurance signed as the cover sheet for their proposal.

4. Project Funding.

The SF424 will document pricing information for the initial one year project period. Address all data points as applicable. The evaluation of pricing information will be to insure all costs are allowable in accordance with the following paragraph.

NRCS intends for the final project funding to be determined on a site by site basis. WRP is a detailed and extensive restoration implementation process. For agreement obligation purposes, an average restoration cost per easement will be used to support "Attachment B – Work Products" of the agreement. NRCS will complete the engineering, survey, design, and zone specific seeding plans which will provide the basis for the government estimate. NRCS will forward the conservation plan, schedule, and design specifications to the awardee(s) and request the submission of a cost proposal and breakdown. NRCS will negotiate with the awardee(s) if the proposed costs are not fair and reasonable considering the government estimate. The agreement Attachment B will then be amended as necessary to show funds committed to each individual easement restoration.

5. Project Description.

The application shall include a narrative statement that addresses the following as a minimum:

- a) A description of the resources and experience of the organization necessary to successfully perform implementing wetland and associated upland restoration activities.
- b) The organization's level of commitment in terms of the staff, equipment resources, and/or funding support necessary to leverage the cooperative agreement.
- c) A brief description of the capabilities to perform 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 to the application. Similar information requested in this paragraph may also be included for subawardees, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers that would be beneficial for proposal evaluation.
- d) A list of past experiences with providing implementation of wetland and associated upland restorations for conservation contracts.
- e) The application shall include an appendix. Material should be included only when necessary to support information provided in the narrative. Copies of documents, brochures, etc. are encouraged to demonstrate experience, knowledge, skills and abilities.

Evaluation Criteria:

The New Hampshire NRCS anticipates the possibility of up to two awards for this announcement.

Prior to the evaluation review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice by the appropriate 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 evaluated by an evaluation team against the evaluation criteria. The evaluation team will make recommendations to the State Conservationist for final selection and award.

The focus of the evaluation will be the responses to the evaluation criteria. There is no sample project or associated pricing required. Proposers are welcome to reference NRCS restoration examples or sample projects if they choose. Capability, not cost, is the basis of the evaluation process and following criteria.

The applications will be evaluated using the following criteria that are listed in descending order of importance:

A. Specialized experience and technical competence in the type of work required (45%)

- Evaluation will be based on the extent of related experience in performing planning, designing and implementing wetland and associated upland restorations. Consideration will be given to those applicants with knowledge of and direct experience in implementing wetland and associated upland restorations in New Hampshire. Some key areas of expertise that will be evaluated include, but are not limited to:
- Organizational capabilities. The adequacy of organizational resources and experience to successfully install wetland restoration projects. Share in a common mission that supports the natural resource conservation efforts with private landowners.
- Project personnel. The reasonableness and feasibility of the applicant's approach and expertise for successfully achieving the objectives of the project within the required time frame.
- Understanding the intent of WRP. The applicant's recognition of the value and need of the project and the full understanding of the intent of WRP.
- Ability to demonstrate successful past history and credibility of working with private landowners.
- Experience working on wetland restoration in the State of New Hampshire or similar ecosystems, to include expertise in specific types of ecozones. Examples of previous work shall be documented for review.

B. Professional qualifications necessary for satisfactory performance (25%)

Evaluation will be based upon the number of qualified personnel, their knowledge and experience associated with the requirements above, and their availability to perform work on this agreement.

C. Capacity to accomplish the work (15%)

Evaluation will be based upon the number of qualified personnel, the quantity of existing work under contract and the schedules for completion of the existing work.

D. Past performance regarding work of this nature (15%)

- Past experience with other government agencies and other organizations in regards to work of this nature.
- Quality and timeliness of performance of work performed.

Selection

Each proposal will be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the evaluation factors listed above. Discussions may be held with each applicant regarding the applicant's experience and operational methods. NRCS reserves the right to select more than one applicant for award. Applicant(s) may be selected to perform work by New Hampshire NRCS Easement Area(s), Ecozone(s), other geographical or program area, statewide or combination(s) thereof. After selection, NRCS will enter into

negotiations with the selected applicant(s) to discuss cost and the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement to be signed. The cooperative agreement will identify the USDA Field Office(s) or locations to be served. NRCS has the option to cancel the announcement if there no qualified applicants or limit the number of awards made from this announcement. If multiple awards are made, NRCS reserves the right to designate what restoration projects are to be completed by which awardee. It is expected that restorations will be packaged in groups to obtain the best value to the government.

Award Information-Cooperative Agreement

The NRCS will use a cooperative agreement with selected applicants to document the agreement parameters. The cooperative agreement will include:

- Project purpose;
- Project objectives and deliverables;
- Project progress and budget reporting requirements;
- Award amount and budget information;
- Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement;
- Other requirements and terms deemed necessary to protect the interests of the United States.

Neither the approval of any application nor the award of any cooperative agreement commits or obligates the United States to provide further support of a project or any portion thereof or implies any endorsement. This award is not subject to Intergovernmental Review, Executive Order 12372.