

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. How to Obtain Application Materials

The announcement for the Vermont CIG funding opportunity can be found on the following websites: <http://www.grants.gov> and <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CIG/index.html>.

All Office of Management and Budget standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following website: http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp. An application package checklist and project summary sheet are included in Part VIII of this announcement. Standard forms, samples of certain completed forms, as well as editable versions of the checklist and summary sheet are on the Vermont NRCS website.

B. Application 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 may submit either a written application accompanied by an electronic copy on compact disc (CD) or an electronic application through Grants.gov.

Applications should be formatted for and 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. 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. All forms and narrative sections must be properly completed (e.g., fill out *all* sections of SF-424A and other forms). Incomplete applications will not be considered.

1. **Cover Sheet:** Applicants must use Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp , <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CIG/index.html> or obtained from the Vermont NRCS State Office.
2. **Project Summary Sheet:** Applicants must submit a Project Summary Sheet (no more than two pages in length) that includes the listed information. A template for the Project Summary Sheet is in Part VIII.B.
 - a. Project title
 - b. Project director name and contact information (including e-mail)
 - c. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
 - d. Project purpose
 - e. Project deliverables/products
 - f. Project scope/area
 - g. Project start and end dates (Plan to begin projects no earlier than August 31, 2010 and no later than September 30, 2010)
 - h. Applicant determined CIG category (Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture, Energy, or Priority Landscapes)
 - i. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement
 - j. Declaration of Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Indian Tribe

k. Total project cost and Federal funds requested

3. **One-Page Abstract:** Include a one-page, 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.
4. **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. It should provide a clear description of the work to be undertaken and how it will be accomplished, and provide sufficient information for the reviewers to evaluate the application in accordance with the merit review criteria listed in Part V.B.
 - 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 (EQIP eligible producers must be involved in the project).
 - 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. Failure to disclose ongoing, completed, or funded projects in a category similar to that for which CIG funds are being requested could lead to termination of a CIG award. 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. **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.
 - i. **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 quarterly report of progress, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.)
 - j. **Environmental Information and Assessment of Environmental Impacts:** Describe and assess 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 full description and assessment of the potential impacts to all potentially impacted environmental resources must be disclosed. One line or short descriptions of environmental impacts are not acceptable. The length of the analysis should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the environmental impacts impacted either directly, indirectly (later in time), or cumulatively. Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc. 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: [NRCS-CPA-52](#). 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 the 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:** Applicants must prepare a Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs to document budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp or can be obtained from the Vermont NRCS State office or website. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. The budget form may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable statutes, regulations, Federal cost principles, and NRCS program guidelines and can be justified, as necessary, for the successful conduct of the proposed project. Applicants must also include a budget narrative to justify their budget requests (see number 6 below). Indirect costs are based on total *Federal funds* awarded and cannot exceed 15 percent.
- 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 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. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel salaries such as resumes. A budget narrative is also required for the matching portion.
- 7. Matching Information:** Applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties.

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement 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" 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 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 organization should 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 for additional guidance on cost principles that apply to their entity, and for other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs

- 8. Declaration of EQIP Eligibility:** Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP eligible producers. Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP (if EQIP eligible producers are not involved, the proposal will be considered ineligible).
- 9. Declaration of Beginning, Limited Resource or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Indian Tribe:** If an applicant wishes to be eligible for the in-kind contribution exception, applicant must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning, Limited Resource, or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Indian Tribe or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities.
- 10. Certifications:** All applications must include a signed Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. SF-424B may be found at: http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp , <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CIG/index.html> , or the Vermont NRCS State Office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 Code of Federal Register (CFR):
 - a. Part 3017, [Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#);
 - b. Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#); and
 - c. Part 3021, [Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#).

- 11. 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 <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.
- 12. 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 is used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the Government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

C. How to Submit a Written Application

Applicants must submit one signed original copy of each project application. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a compact disc (CD). Electronic files must be either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat (pdf) files. Applications submitted via facsimile or e-mail will not be accepted.

If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate, complete application package for each project.

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

Conservation Innovation Grants Program
c/o Patricia Pickett
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
356 Mountain View Drive, Suite 105
Colchester, Vermont 05446

Contact phone number for hand-delivered applications is (802) 951-6796 x224.

D. How to Submit an Application Electronically

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov, the Federal Government's e-grants portal. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete application and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, abstract, narrative, and declarations are posted on Grants.gov. Instructions for adding attachments are available on Grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date. Note that NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or website problems related to Grants.gov submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process well before the submission deadline to avoid problems.

E. Application Due Date

Applications must be received in the NRCS Vermont State Office by 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), on Tuesday, July 6, 2010. A postmark date is NOT a factor in whether an

application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application 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

Applications received by the due date will be acknowledged with an official letter. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgement within 15 days of the submission, they must contact the NRCS programmatic contact (see Part VII). Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel.

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:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. 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,
- g. 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 person.

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. 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.

J. Withdrawal of Applications

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before an award is made. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative thereof, if the representative's identity is made known and the representative signs a receipt for the application.

K. Deliverables

Applications must include the following activities as deliverables:

- a. Quarterly reports;
- b. Supplemental narratives to explain and support payment requests;
- c. Final report;
- d. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress; and
- e. New technology and innovative approach fact sheet.

Important: Applications Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered

**VERMONT STATE CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT
FISCAL YEAR 2010 APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST**

- 1. Cover Sheet:** Complete Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Application for Federal Assistance

- 2. Project Summary Sheet:** (Two pages maximum, template available)
 - a. Project title
 - b. Project director name and contact information (including e-mail)
 - c. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
 - d. Project purpose
 - e. Project deliverables/products
 - f. Project scope/area
 - g. Project start and end dates (Plan to begin projects no earlier than August 31, 2010 and no later than September 30, 2010)
 - h. Applicant determined CIG category (Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture, Energy, or Priority Landscapes)
 - i. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement
 - j. Declaration of Beginning, Limited Resource or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Indian Tribe
 - k. Total project cost and Federal funds requested

- 3. One-Page Abstract:** (non-confidential summary describing the project and expected outcomes and benefits)

- 4. Project Description:** (10 pages maximum, single spaced, single sided, 12 point font)
 - a. Project background
 - b. Project objectives
 - c. Project methods
 - d. Location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
 - e. Producer participation
 - f. Project action plan and timeline
 - g. Project management
 - h. Benefits or results expected and transferability
 - i. Project evaluation
 - j. Environmental information and assessment of environmental impacts

- 5. Budget Information:** Submit a completed Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs (*completely filled out*)

- 6. Budget Narrative:** Submit a detailed budget narrative (maximum of 9 pages)

- 7. Matching Information:** Provide details on both cash and in-kind matching support

- 8. Declaration Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility:** Include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP-eligible producers. Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP. (If EQIP eligible producers are not involved, the proposal will be considered ineligible.)

- 9. Declaration of Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Indian Tribe.** If applicable, include a statement declaring your status as a Beginning, Limited Resource or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Indian Tribe, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.

- 10. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs

- 11. DUNS Number:** 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.

- 12. Required Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration:** Visit <http://www.ccr.gov> to register.

VERMONT STATE CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT
FY 2010 Project Summary Sheet

Project Title:

Project Director:

Contact Information:

E-mail:

Telephone:

Fax:

Project Collaborators and Affiliations:

Project Purpose:

Project Deliverables/Products:

Project Scope/Area:

Project Start and End Dates:

Select the Applicable Category: (Check one)

Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture

Energy

Priority Landscapes

Declaration of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility

1) The applicant has read and understands the responsibilities related to EQIP eligibility and payment limitations as outlined in Part III of this announcement. (Check one)

Yes

No

2) The applicant and any producers that will receive direct or indirect payments through this project are eligible to participate in the EQIP program. (Check one)

Yes

No

3) The applicant is requesting or has received federal funds from other sources for the same or a similar project. (Check one)

Yes. Identify _____

No

Declaration of Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Indian Tribe

The applicant wishes to be eligible for the in-kind contribution exception, and declares their status as a Beginning, Limited Resource or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Indian Tribe, or community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities. (Check one)

Yes. Specify _____

No

Total Cost of Project: \$

Federal Funds Requested: \$