APPLICATION and SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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 (OMB) 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 Standard Form (SF) 424A and other forms). Incomplete applications will not be considered.

1. **Cover Sheet:** Applicants must use SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance as the cover sheet for each project application. SF-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 area/location

g. Project start and end dates (Plan to begin projects no earlier than July 1, 2011 and no later than September 30, 2011)
h. CIG category (Energy, Soil Quality, Priority Landscapes, Nutrient Management, Program Outreach and Conservation Technology Transfer to Targeted Groups, or Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture)
i. Declaration of Previous CIG Project
j. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement
k. Declaration of Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Indian Tribe
l. 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 12 pages in length. Pages in excess of the 12-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. Project deliverables: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products for the project. This should include but is not limited to a final report and a new technology or innovative approach factsheet.
i. 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.
j. 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.

5. **Assessment of Environmental and Social 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 resources 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, NRCS Conservation and Planning Application (CPA) form 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.

6. **Budget Information:** Applicants must prepare a SF-424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs to document budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: HTTP://WWW.GRANTS.GOV/AGENCIES/APPROVED_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. However the item or service for which support is requested must be allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable statutes, regulations, Federal cost principles, and NRCS program guidelines. It also needs to 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 7 below). Indirect costs are based on total *Federal funds* awarded and cannot exceed 15 percent.

7. **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 page 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.

8. **Matching Information:** Applications should include written commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-federal third parties**.**

   Cash match: 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 match: "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.

9. **Declaration of Previous CIG Project:** Identify involvement in any previously awarded CIG projects related to this proposal and any of its principal investigators. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award. Also identify any federal funds requested or received from other sources (non-CIG) for the same or a similar project.

10. **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). The declaration must describe and certify the level of involvement by EQIP eligible producers.

11. **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.

12. **Certifications:** All applications must include a signed 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. HTTP://WWW.ACCESS.GPO.GOV/NARA/CFR/WAISIDX_04/7CFR3017_04.HTMLPart 3018, NEW RESTRICTIONS ON LOBBYING; and
    c. Part 3021, GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE).

13. **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.

14. **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, April 5, 2011. 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.