

Tennessee
Natural Resources
Conservation Service
Collaborative
Outreach for Natural
Resources
Conservation
Agreements

Fiscal Year (FY) 2021

**FY 2021 TN NRCS Collaborative Outreach for
Natural Resource Agreements**

National Funding Opportunity (NFO)

No. USDA-NRCS-TN-MULTI-21-NOFO0001087

Date Issued: April 6, 2021



Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Tennessee State Office

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title: TN FY2021 Collaborative Outreach for Natural Resources Conservation

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: *USDA-NRCS-TN-MULTI-21-NOFO0001087*

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA): This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.069 Conservation Reserve Program, 10.902 Conservation Technical Assistance, 10.912 Environmental Quality Incentives Program, 10.924 Conservation Stewardship Program, 10.931 Agricultural Conservation Enhancement Program

Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is announcing the availability of funding for the purpose of leveraging NRCS resources to encourage collaboration with partners in providing farm bill program outreach to historically underserved groups. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) includes provisions that address the unique circumstances and concerns of beginning farmers and ranchers, veteran farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and limited resource farmers and ranchers, collectively referred to as “historically underserved producers.” Additional information is available here: [Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#). The overall intent of this solicitation is to solicit partnerships to help enhance the implementation of key conservation outreach objectives and priorities outlined in this announcement.

Proposals will be accepted from eligible entities for projects located in Tennessee. NRCS anticipates the total amount awarded under this announcement in Federal fiscal year 2021 will be approximately \$100,000.00. Proposals are requested from eligible entities for competitive consideration of agreement awards for projects between one (1) to three (3) years in duration. Entity types that may be eligible under these criteria include the following:

- City or township governments
- County governments
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)

- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Private institutions of higher education
- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
- Special district governments
- State governments

For new users of Grants.gov, see Section D.1. for information about steps required before submitting an application via Grants.gov.

Key Dates

Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov **by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on June 7, 2021**. For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts. Questions regarding this notice of funding opportunity (NFO) may be submitted until May 5, 2021. Responses to questions posed will be posted on Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the application due date.

The agency anticipates making selections by June 30, 2021 and expects to execute awards by September 15, 2021.

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The estimated funding floor for this opportunity is \$10,000, and the estimated funding ceiling is \$25,000. The funding floor means the minimum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. The ceiling is the maximum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. These numbers refer to the total agreement amount, not any specific budget period.

Federal Financial Assistance Training

The funding available through this NFO is Federal financial assistance. Grants 101 Training is highly recommended for those seeking knowledge about Federal financial assistance. The training is free and available to the public via <https://www.cfo.gov/grants-training/>. It consists of five modules covering each of the following topics: 1) laws, regulations, and guidance; 2) financial assistance mechanisms; 3) uniform guidance administrative requirements; 4) cost principles; and 5) risk management and single audit. FPAC agencies also apply Federal financial assistance regulations to certain non-assistance awards (e.g., non-assistance cooperative agreements).

Table of Contents

A.	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....	5
B.	FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION	6
	1. Available Funding.....	6
	2. Type of Award.....	7
C.	ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION	7
	1. Eligible Applicants	7
	2. Other.....	8
	3. Cost Sharing or Matching.....	8
D.	APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION	8
	1. Information for New Users of Grants.gov.....	8
	2. Electronic Application Package	12
	3. Content and Form of Application Submission.....	12
	4. Submission Dates and Times and Correspondence.....	15
	5. Intergovernmental Review	16
	6. Funding Restrictions.....	16
	7. Indirect Costs Limitations	17
E.	APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION.....	18
	1. Review and Selection Process.....	18
	2. Merit/Technical Criteria	19
	3. Administrative and Risk Criteria.....	19
	4. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (if applicable)	20
	5. Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates	20
F.	FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION.....	21
	1. Federal Award Notices.....	21
	2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	21
	3. Reporting.....	22
G.	FEDERAL AWARDDING AGENCY CONTACT.....	22
H.	OTHER INFORMATION	22

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are:

Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, Public Law 110-246; Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Section 1237, Public Law 99-198, 16 U.S.C 3831-3835a. Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, 16 U.S.C. 590 a-f. Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Section 2602, Public Law 110-246; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, Section 2502, Public Law 107-171; Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Section 387, Public Law 104-127, 110 Stat. 888, 16 U.S.C 2826a. Subtitle I of Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 as amended by section 2401 of the Agriculture Act of 2014.

Agricultural Conservation Enhancement Program: Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Part Subtitle D, Section 1237, Public Law 99-198, as amended by Agricultural Act of 2014, Title II, Part Subtitle D, Section 2301, Public Law 113-79, 128 Stat. 731 -744, 16 U.S.C 3865 - 3865d (CFDA No. 10.931).

Conservation Reserve Program: 16 U.S.C. 3831-3836, 7 CFR 704, 7 CFR 1410; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L.107-171 (CFDA No. 10.069).

Conservation Stewardship Program: 16 U.S.C. Section 3838 (CFDA No. 10.924).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program: Federal Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, P.L. 104-127, as amended; Food Security Act of 1985, Subtitle D, Title XII, 16 U.S.C. 3830 et seq.; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L. 107-171 (CFDA No. 10.912).

Soil and Water Conservation/Conservation Technical Assistance: 16 U.S.C. 590a-590f, 590q, 7 CFR part 610 (CFDA No. 10.902).

Overview

The purpose of these Conservation Outreach Agreements is to accomplish the following:

1. Increase the delivery of conservation assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers through a combination of program outreach and education.
2. Educate and inform NRCS employees regarding the unique nature of working with Historically Underserved and Tribal audiences.
3. Educate and inform existing NRCS customers and potential new NRCS customers on NRCS conservation programs available to them through the 2018 Farm Bill using plain, understandable language.
4. Tailor Farm Bill outreach messages and products to specific audience needs, for example providing translated materials, graphically enhanced materials, and readable, common-sense messaging.

5. Build the capacity of local partners to develop and implement effective outreach projects to continue increasing participation among historically underserved farmers and ranchers.
6. Increase by 10 percent the number of eligible program applications received from historically underserved populations using FY 2018 application data as the baseline.
7. Value of Conservation: Highlight the value of private lands conservation and the important role that agricultural producers play in voluntarily conserving the nation's resources.

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

1. Provide outreach to increase participation among historically underserved farmers and ranchers in NRCS conservation programs and services.
2. New grants or agreements where applicants do not currently have a grant or agreement with NRCS that ends later than 09/30/2021.
3. Clearly identify how the intended groups and geographic area were selected.
4. Demonstrate how proposal will lead to quality applications for program funding.
5. Build the capacity of local partners to develop and implement effective outreach projects to continue increasing participation among historically underserved farmers and ranchers.

Applicants should consider these goals and how their proposal will assist the agency in meeting these objectives.

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance under the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals may be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. Evaluated proposals will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Available Funding

a. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this opportunity is \$100,000.

b. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Projects may be between 1 and 3 years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on an estimated project start date of September 15, 2021.

c. Number of Awards

The agency expects to make 6 award(s).

2. Type of Award

a. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award grant agreements pursuant to this opportunity

b. Procurement Contracts

The agency does not expect to award procurement contracts associated with this NFO.

c. Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications

Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards. An application for renewal means an application submitted to continue an existing agreement that meets the objectives and requirements of this NFO. An application for supplementation of an existing project means an application to add components to an existing agreement so that it would meet the objectives and requirements in this NFO.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants and applications must meet eligibility criteria by the application deadline to be considered for award. Eligible applicant type is determined by the implementing program statute. Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted, or excluded from receiving Federal contracts and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program (2 CFR 200.206(d)).

Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to the following entity types:

- City or township governments
- County governments
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Private institutions of higher education
- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
- Special district governments

- State governments

2. Other

Any award made pursuant to this NFO will be made to a single entity. Applicants that apply as “partnerships” or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the “partner” parties. In all but exceptional cases, it must be reflected in the award as an awardee/subawardee relationship.

An applicant organization may submit more than one application.

Projects awarded pursuant to this NFO are not Farm Bill incentive contracts; therefore, the awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation in Chapter 58 of 16 U.S.C. However, any agricultural producers receiving a payment through participation in a project awarded under this NFO must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR Part 12 and 7 CFR Part 1400 and have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed award period.

3. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity. There is no competitive advantage to applicants who voluntarily provide a match.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Information for New Users of Grants.gov

a. Overview

While a Grants.gov account is not required to download an NFO and related documents, it is required to submit an application. If your organization has never submitted an application via Grants.gov, please be aware that there are several

steps you must take to register your organization before you can submit an application. **Completing those steps takes a significant amount of time.**

For information about the Grants.gov pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html>.

b. Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Carefully review the registration steps and gather information requested prior to beginning the registration process to avoid last-minute searches for required information. For assistance with the registration process, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Organizations must complete all steps to register (steps i. through v. below). Complete organization instructions are included on Grants.gov here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.

Although creating a Grants.gov account online can take only minutes, DUNS and SAM registrations may take several weeks. Therefore, organizations should begin the process early to ensure they have sufficient time to complete registration and meet required application submission deadlines.

Individuals are not subject to the DUNS or SAM requirement and may begin with step iii., Create a Grants.gov Account, listed below. (Note: Individuals are not eligible for all opportunities.)

c. Steps to Register:

- i. *Obtain a DUNS Number:* All entities applying for funding must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS Number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a DUNS Number, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>
- ii. *Register with SAM:* All organizations must register with System for Award Management (SAM) in order to apply online through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. Part of the SAM registration process includes designating an Electronic Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC). **The EBiz POC plays an integral part in the organization's Grants.gov registration and application process.** The individual in that role must authorize all other roles in Grants.gov. For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>
- iii. *Create a Grants.gov Account:* From the Grants.gov webpage (<https://www.grants.gov/>), click "Register" in the top right-hand corner and follow the on-screen instructions or refer to the detailed instructions here:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>
- iv. *Add an Organization Applicant Profile to a Grants.gov Account:* A profile in Grants.gov corresponds to a single applicant organization the user represents (i.e., an applicant) or an individual applicant. If you work for or consult with multiple organizations and have a profile for each, you may login to one

Grants.gov account to access all of your grant applications. To add an organizational profile to your Grants.gov account, enter the DUNS Number for the organization in the UEI (Unique Entity Identifier) field while adding a profile. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html>

- v. *EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles:* After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, you must establish roles for individuals in the organization. The Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role is critical; it gives an individual permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. Without this role, the organization cannot submit any applications. The request for role assignment will be routed to the organization's EBiz POC for approval. Once approved, the AOR can submit an application online. For more detailed instructions about creating a EBiz POC authorized profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>

Track Role Status: To track your role request, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>

- d. *Electronic Signature.* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize people who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role. **This step (step c.v. above) is often missed and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**
- e. *Workspace.* Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each NFO, you can create individual instances of a workspace. An applicant can start an application in Workspace and return to work on it later within Workspace.
- f. *Apply for an Opportunity.* Below is an overview of applying on Grants.gov. For complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>
 - i. *Create a Workspace:* Creating a workspace allows you to

complete an application online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.

ii. Complete a Workspace: Add participants to the workspace to work on the application together, complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the status of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.

- Adobe Reader: If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>

- Mandatory Fields in Forms: In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.
- Complete SF-424 Fields First: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS Number. Once it is completed, the information will transfer (i.e., prepopulate) to the other forms.

iii. Submit a Workspace: An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

iv. Track a Workspace Submission: After successfully submitting a workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted workspace.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html>

2. Electronic Application Package

Applicants interested in submitting an application in response to this NFO must submit it via Grants.gov; the agency will not accept applications submitted via email or any other method. Applicants are urged to submit early to the Grants.gov system.

For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.

Address to Request Application Package

All information necessary to apply for this opportunity is included in the [Grants.gov](#) opportunity announcement.

3. Content and Form of Application Submission

The agency may choose not to consider applications that fail to comply with the required content, format, and page limits, or those that are incomplete.

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain the documents in a-e below.

a. Project Narrative

Each page must be numbered and have one-inch margins. The text of the project narrative must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Courier) with no smaller than 12-point font. The project narrative must not exceed 3 pages. This page limitation applies to the project narrative only.

Project narratives must contain the content, format, and information set forth below 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 their application. All federally required forms and letters of third-party funding support must be submitted at the time of application.

Project narratives should include the:

- i. Project title.
- ii. Project director/contact name, and contact information (including address, email, and telephone number).
- iii. Project objectives (purpose and goals).

- iv. Project geographic area/location (where application activities will takeplace).
- v. Project proposed activities.
- vi. Project deliverables and benefits.

The following documents do not count toward the above stated page limit.

- b. **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) See Instructions for Completing SF 424 located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.
- c. **Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.** Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the agency funds, and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds. This form is the summary budget for the project and should include the full project totals on pages one and two. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov. Refer to Section D of this opportunity for information regarding indirect costs.
- d. **Budget Narrative.**
 - i. In a separate document titled "Budget Narrative," explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the totals on the SF- 424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency's approval and estimate its cost. The pages included as the budget narrative to not count toward the page limit.
 - ii. As required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System.
 - iii. All applicants are hereby notified of the following:
 - Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are

prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award. (Accepting the 10percent *de minimis* rate as a condition of award constitutes establishing an approved rate.)

- Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award.
 - Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.
- e. **Grants.gov Lobbying Form, Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 2 CFR Part 418, Appendix A- Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying, you must also complete and submit the SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities located at 2 CFR 418, Appendix B. See 2 CFR, Subpart 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.
- f. **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement** (if applicable). If charging indirect costs (including for cost share), upload the agreement under Other Attachments in the Grants.gov Opportunity Application Package. See Section D for information regarding indirect costs.
- g. **Post Award Documentation.** A completed Statement of Work, using the ezFedGrants Template, will need to be submitted after the recipient is notified of intent to make a Federal Award.
- h. **Unique entity identifier/DUNS and System for Award Management (SAM).** Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a

valid unique entity identifier (DUNS number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the agency is ready to make an award, it may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

Entities must obtain a DUNS and register in SAM prior to registering with Grants.gov. A description of each is below. Entities are strongly encouraged to apply early for their DUNS number and SAM registration.

DUNS Number: A Dun and Bradstreet DUNS number is a unique, nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. Applicants must obtain a DUNS number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711.

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration: SAM is the official Federal system that consolidated the capabilities of Central Contractor Registry, Federal Agency Registration, Online Representations and Certifications Application, and Excluded Parties List System. To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov>. The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance and can be contacted via the Help tab at the website listed above.

Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding DUNS or SAM issues.

The Government intends to replace the D-U-N-S® number with a “new, non-proprietary identifier” requested in, and assigned by SAM.gov. This new identifier is being called the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), or the Entity ID. See [Planned UEI Updates in Grant Application Forms](#) for UEI updates.

4. Submission Dates and Times and Correspondence

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov. Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time (ET) on June 7, 2021. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late (an application is considered on time at 11:59.59pm ET, but it is late at 12:00 am ET). Late

submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role attempting to submit the application. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process; be patient and give the system time to process the application.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any issues. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part G. for Grants.gov contact information.

For applications successfully transmitted to Grants.gov before the deadline: The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive:

- an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov;
- an email with the official date/time stamp (this stamp is used to determine if the application was received prior to the deadline) and Grants.gov

When the agency successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will also provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the applicant.

5. Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

6. Funding Restrictions

Funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law and approved in writing by the agency 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 award, including time spent applying for this opportunity;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and

- amendmentsthereto;
- 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.
 - h. Management fees and profit. Any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related direct and indirect costs only;
 - i. Meals: Meals may be charged to an award only if they are necessary for the performance of the project. For instance, meals (normally only lunch) that are a necessary part of the costs of meetings and conferences (i.e., required attendance and continuity of a meeting), the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of information, are allowable, as are costs of transportation, rental of facilities, speakers' fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences. Note: Meals consumed while in official travel status do not fall in this category. They are considered to be per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization's established travel policies subject to statutory limitations or in accordance with Federal travel policies.
 - j. Costs normally charged as [indirect costs](#) may not be charged as [direct costs](#) without proper justification and agency approval. Proper justification includes documentation that the costs meet the criteria for allowability (see 2CFR 200.403). Examples of such costs include rent, utilities, depreciation on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.
 - k. Salaries that are not commensurate with level of work: All costs must be reasonable to be allowable (CFR 200.403), and 2 CFR 200.404 defines a reasonable cost as one if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. Salaries determined not to be reasonable compared to the level of work will be unallowable.

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact listed in this NFO.

7. Indirect costs limitations:

- a. A non-profit organization or institution of higher education awarded a cooperative agreement will be limited to a 10 percent indirect cost rate in accordance with the agency's annual appropriations act. The 10 percent indirect cost rate applies to both federal and non-federal funds. Other types of entities are not subject to this statutory limitation.
- b. To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; or 2) qualify for use of the *de minimis* rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the *de minimis* rate.
- c. Applicants not subject to a statutory limitation, which have a current NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. A recipient may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at its sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the agency. A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. Indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA. However, if an applicant with a current NICRA is subject to the statutory limitation, indirect costs must be calculated as follows. First, multiply the NICRA rate by the base stated in the NICRA to arrive at Amount A. Next, multiply the statutory limit of 10 percent by the total of all direct costs to arrive at Amount B. The lower of Amount A and B is the amount of indirect cost to include on the budget.
- d. Entities that are eligible for the *de minimis* rate who already have a *de minimis* rate agreement must use the rate and base specified in the agreement, which is modified total direct costs (MTDC) as defined by 2 CFR 200.68 and also excluding the amount of each subaward exceeding \$25,000. Note that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base to which the rate is applied. A copy of the applicant's *de minimis* rate agreement must be provided with the application. If a recipient is eligible to use the *de minimis* rate, but does not have a *de minimis* rate agreement, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10 percent of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a *de minimis* rate agreement will be executed along with the award.

- e. If voluntarily reduced or waived, the recipient may choose to apply any unrecovered indirect costs as part of their cost share or match. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount which could have been charged to the Federal award under the recipient's approved negotiated indirect cost rate (2 CFR 200.306(c)).
- f. Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization they may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or applications not meeting the formatting criteria may be eliminated from competition. In that event, the agency will send notification of elimination to the applicant. The agency intends to make a selection and award without conducting any discussions or allowing applicants to correct deficiencies or omissions in their applications. Consequently, applicants must ensure their applications are complete and accurate. However, while the agency intends to make a selection without contacting applicants, it reserves the right to request applicants to revise their applications to correct deficiencies or omissions it identifies. If this occurs, the agency will conduct discussions with all applicants, identify deficiencies and omissions for all, and give applicants an opportunity to submit a revised application by a common cut-off date. The agency may also contact individual applicants to clarify certain components of their applications.

Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by a technical review board nominated by the approving official. Risk reviews will be conducted by the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the Tennessee State Conservationist, Sheldon Hightower.

2. Merit/Technical Criteria

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance under the provisions of this notice. Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or proposals not meeting the formatting criteria will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant. Initially, all application packages will be reviewed to confirm that

applicants are eligible recipients. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this announcement.

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

1. Provide outreach to increase participation among historically underserved farmers and ranchers in NRCS conservation programs and services.
2. New grants or agreements where applicants do not currently have a grant or agreement with NRCS that ends later than 09/30/2021.
3. Clearly identify how the intended groups and geographic area were selected.
4. Demonstrate how proposal will lead to quality applications for program funding.
5. Build the capacity of local partners to develop and implement effective outreach projects to continue increasing participation among historically underserved farmers and ranchers.

Applications will be evaluated against the specific objectives identified under the Program Description. Business evaluations are performed by the grants and agreements or contract specialist. Technical reviews are performed by the program manager. Failure to identify the specific opportunity title may result in a determination of ineligibility.

3. Administrative and Risk Criteria

Notice of selection after merit/technical evaluation does not guarantee that an applicant will receive an award. Following notification of selection for funding (see section F), the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division's staff conducts a final administrative and risk review of those applications. The administrative review includes, but is not limited to, a check to ensure that NFO requirements were met (e.g., applicant meets eligibility criteria, application was submitted via Grants.gov by the established deadline), and proposed costs are allowable, allocable and necessary. During this process, it may be necessary to request further documentation from the applicant (e.g., organizational information as part of the risk assessment, more detail regarding proposed costs).

In addition, to comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.205, the agency will follow, at a minimum, the risk review process described below (additional steps may be taken).

The awarding agency will check SAM to ensure the applicant is not suspended or debarred, which would preclude receiving an award. In

addition, prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a)).

An applicant must meet the following standards to be considered for award:

- a. **Financial Stability.** The applicant maintains an adequate financial resources or cash flow to meet its financial obligations on a routine basis in order to successfully complete any agreement it may be awarded.
- b. **Quality of Management Systems and Ability to meet Management Standards** prescribed in 2 CFR Part 200. The applicant has a financial management system adequate to segregate and track federal funds. It has adequate systems in place for proper agreement administration; compliance with the standards outlined in 2 CFR Part 200 Section D for procurement, property, and records management; and required financial and performance reporting.
- c. **History of Performance.** If the applicant has previously obtained Federal financial assistance award, it has never failed to materially comply with the Federal award terms and conditions and further that it has never had an award terminated on that basis.

Submission of an application constitutes certification that an applicant meets these standards (items a through c. above). The agency may request documentation to substantiate the certification. Based on risk assessment, the agency may impose specific award conditions in accordance with 2 CFR 200.207.

4. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (if applicable)

- a. Prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a));
- b. An applicant may review information in FAPIIS accessible through SAM and comment on any information about it that a Federal awarding agency previously entered;
- c. The agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in

addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR 200.205, Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

5. Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by June 30, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 15, 2021.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The agency will provide notice that an application has been selected before it actually makes the Federal award. As such, the selection notification is not an authorization to begin performance. Any pre-award costs incurred by the awardee will not be reimbursed. The Notice of Grant and Agreement Award (ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency official is the only authorizing document and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized official for signature.

Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the award decision via letter.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All project funds will be used in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and the General Terms and Conditions, which are included in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity on Grants.gov.

Projects performed pursuant to this opportunity may be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If applicable, NRCS must work with awardees to complete an environmental review of each awarded project before project commencement. In addition, prior to any ground-disturbing activities related to NRCS funding, the awardee must work with NRCS staff to complete an environmental evaluation (EE) related to those activities. Awardees may be required to prepare or pay for preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), should any environmental review find that an EA or EIS is required.

In addition, a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106 review and consultation by an NRCS State or area office with

consulting parties (such as the pertinent State Historic Preservation Officer and federally recognized Indian Tribes) may be required prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact cultural resources. NHPA Section 106, its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800), and other related authorities, require Federal agencies to determine if a project has the potential to cause an effect to historic properties and, if so, if they are adverse and how the effects may be addressed.

The NHPA review and compliance in accordance with section 106 of NHPA and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 must be completed by NRCS and applicants may be required to pay for any cultural resource surveys needed for NRCS to assess project effects. More information on the applicant's role in the NHPA Section 106 process can be found on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation website at

<https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/section-106-applicant-toolkit>.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service under the section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is also required for projects that may affect listed or proposed species or destroy or modify critical habitat. The ESA consultation in accordance with section 7 of the ESA and implementing regulations at 50 CFR Part 402 must be completed by NRCS prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact species or habitat protected under the ESA. More information on the section 7 consultation process can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/consultations-overview.html>.

3. Reporting

Reporting will follow the guidelines included in the agency's General Terms and Conditions, which are included in the Related Documents tab of the opportunity on Grants.gov.

If the Federal share of any agreement awarded under this opportunity notice may include more than \$500,000 over the period of performance, recipients must also comply with the post award reporting requirements reflected in Appendix XII of 2CFR Part 200 —Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

Applicants that receive awards pursuant to this opportunity and any subawardees must comply with the reporting requirements described at 2 CFR Part 170, unless an exception applies. Applicants must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with those requirements. A list of exceptions can be found at 2 CFR 170.110(b).

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact the following individual with the NFO number in the subject line:

Administrative Contact
(Primary Contact) Name:

Shynika Loften
Grants

Management
Specialist FPAC
Business Center

Mailing Address: 355 E. Street SW, Suite 11-147B, Washington,
DC 20024 Phone Number: (202) 572-5851

Email: shynika.loften@usda.gov with a copy to FPAC.GAD.BC@USDA.GOV

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions regarding this opportunity must be submitted to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact identified above via email with the NFO number in the subject line.

Questions must be submitted by May 5, 2021. A summary of questions and answers will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this NFO in Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the application due date.

2. For technical issues with Grants.gov, please contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.

3. **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**

Applications are considered confidential information. Applications are not shared with individuals or entities seeking public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without the consent of the applicant. More specifically, Executive Order 12600 and USDA FOIA regulation 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A requires the awarding agency to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information, and requires the awarding agency to consult with applicants regarding the releasing their records.

4. **Government Obligation**

The Federal Government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of this opportunity. Only authorized federal officials can bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or

administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer> and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call

(866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for
Civil Rights
1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.