

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department Of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)

Funding Opportunity Title: Watershed Assessments for the National Water Quality Initiative

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-SC-NWQI-19-GEN0010196

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.902

Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary

NRCS, an agency under the USDA, in the South Carolina State Office, is seeking proposals from partners to develop watershed assessment plans to support the National Water Quality Initiative Program through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS has \$200,000 available for a 1-year agreement with a qualifying local or state government entity or any non-government organization who has expertise in watershed assessment plans.

Proposals are requested from Federally recognized tribal governments, State and local units of government, non-governmental organizations, and institutions of higher learning for competitive consideration of grant or agreement awards for projects 1 years in duration.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for projects. Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant.

Key Dates

Proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on July 8, 2019. Applicants will be notified of their award status within approximately 30 days from the deadline date. Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification. Applicants shall assume that awards will be made by or about August 8, 2019 and should prepare their application accordingly. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 1, 2019.

Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts

The funding floor for this announcement \$200,000, and the funding ceiling is \$200,000. 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.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are found under the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936, as amended, Public Law 74-46, 16 USC 590 a-f; Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, P.L. 99-198, as amended; Food Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990, Title XIV, Section 1237, P.L. 1-101-624, 104 Stat. 3584-7 U.S.C. 3837, as amended; Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, P.L. 107-171, P.L. 106-387, 383-3836, 7 CFR 1410, (CFDA 10.902).

The purpose of this announcement is to work with a partner to complete four (4) watershed assessments in South Carolina to support the National Water Quality Initiative Program. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for multiyear applications submitted by eligible entities.

Watershed Assessments will need to be completed for the following 12-digit HUC watersheds in South Carolina:

1. Upper Little Saluda River – 101600110804 – Saluda County
2. Big Creek, Little Saluda River – 030501091103 – Saluda County
3. Upper Caw Caw – 030502030305 – Calhoun County
4. Smith Swamp – 030402011102 – Marion County

The elements required for each watershed assessment is outlined below:

I. Background and purpose of the assessment

Clearly identify the primary water quality resource concerns of the *pilot* watershed, what the water quality objectives will be and to what extent the problem can be addressed through NRCS technical and financial assistance.

- a. General overview and location of the watershed assessment area
- b. Specific water quality degradation resource concerns and impairments
- c. Constituents of concern
- d. Opportunities and objectives for meeting water quality goals
- e. An assessment of NRCS's ability to help partners reach the watershed goals

II. Watershed characterization

An overview of the watershed and identification of resource concerns. *This overview should be information that is useful for the water quality assessment and not just a laundry list of collected information.*

- a. Location of watershed within the drainage network.

- b. Landscape characteristics of the MLRA or ecoregion in which the watershed resides. Provide an overview of landscape conditions within which the watershed resides.
- c. Climate. Provide overview that gives context for land cover/uses and a basis for the hydrologic conditions described in section III.
- d. Topography.
- e. Geology, geomorphology, and soils and soil interpretations.
- f. Drainage network (USGS National Hydrographic Dataset link, GIS-derived flow network, National Wetland Inventory, tour and any visual assessments of the watershed).
- g. Land cover and land use.
- h. Socioeconomic conditions.
- i. Other relevant information to characterize the watershed.

III. Hydrologic and water quality characterization

Fully describe the hydrology (including irrigation) and the water quality conditions within the watershed. The analysis should demonstrate the transport mechanisms for pollutants of concern, and the spatial and temporal characteristics of transport.

- a. Available data and resources.
 - i. Discuss available resources of information compiled by others.
 - ii. Gaging stations in or near the watershed.
 - iii. Surface and groundwater water quality sampling sites.
 - iv. Biological monitoring.
 - v. NRCS and partner sampling. During the 1-year assessment period, could ad hoc water quality monitoring be undertaken?
- b. Runoff and streamflow hydrology, and irrigation. Using streamflow, irrigation and climate data and other watershed information, synthesize hydrological conditions of the watershed.
 - i. Methods used in analysis.
 - ii. Runoff and streamflow generation processes. What generates runoff? Irrigation conveyances and systems.
 - iii. Precipitation-runoff budget. How much precipitation and irrigation returns as stream runoff? How much goes to deep groundwater? Evapotranspiration?
 - iv. Spatial distribution of runoff. Do certain areas of the watershed generate more runoff, due to soils, geology, topography, or land uses?
 - v. Temporal distribution of streamflow—monthly, runoff events, baseflows.
- c. Water quality conditions in the watershed.
 - i. What are the general concentrations and loads of major constituents and how do they vary with season, weather, land use, etc.?
 - ii. Sediment (if a watershed resource concern).
 - iii. Nutrients—N and P (if a watershed resource concern).
 - iv. Pathogens (if watershed resource concerns).

- v. Other (pesticides, petroleum products, selenium, etc.).

IV. Resource Analysis and Source Assessment

Documentation and comparisons between existing and potential conditions. A preliminary analysis of what could be accomplished. The types of conservation practices and extent needed to assist in meeting the water quality objectives. The potential tools that can be used to analyze the resource problems identified, and results.

- a. The causes of the resource problem are identified.
- b. What are potential tools to use related to the type of resource problems?
- c. Preliminary analysis to address the problem with available tools. Hydrologic modeling, GIS analyses, or both used to identify acres with greatest need for treatment (critical acres) based on pollutants of concern and the numbers of acres of conservation to achieve goals. Depending upon the complexity of the watershed, several methods could be used:
 - i. Simple spreadsheet mass balance models for nutrients.
 - 1. Nutrient inputs based upon areas (acres) for given land cover and use.
 - 2. Nutrient outputs.
 - 3. Possible conservation measures. Use the mass balance spreadsheet to put acres of new conservation in and see results in water quality load reductions.
 - ii. Simple spreadsheet sediment delivery budget.
 - 1. Identifies the sediment sources in the watershed.
 - 2. Estimate quantity, sediment delivery ratio, to estimate total sediment.
 - iii. Load reduction spreadsheets for best management practices.
 - iv. Watershed-based modeling of potential sources and treatment effects.
 - v. Grid-based GIS modeling.
 - vi. GIS vulnerability analysis – simple GIS analyses using GIS coverages of land use, management, physical attributes, etc., to assist in the identification of critical areas within the watershed.
 - vii. Other analyses, including watershed and stream surveys, to identify areas needing treatment.
- d. Analysis of treatment and opportunities
 - i. Current level of treatment in the watershed.
 - ii. An analysis of producers available in the watershed to participate in the initiative and their likely willingness to participate.
 - iii. An assessment of how critical area treatment is balanced with participation to achieve the most effective prioritization of implementation.
 - iv. A set of preferred practices, locations, responsible parties, costs, and time lines should be described based on the above analyses.

V. Summary and Recommendations

- a. Description of water quality impairments.

- b. Description of the goals (usually reduction goals) and practice efficiencies.
- c. Establish interim metrics to track progress. Both implementation (practices implemented on high priority acres) and effectiveness metrics (estimates of the water quality impacts of implementation – e.g., load reductions, edge-of-field reductions, improvement in biological indicators or physical indicators, monitoring trends) should be selected.
- d. Description and evaluation of planned practice scenarios and alternatives that meet the water quality objectives, including estimation of treatment costs. What are the best suites of practices (in-field, edge-of-field, and off-field) to use, and how much is needed to accomplish the treatment objectives?
- e. Documentation of NEPA concerns – refer to the CPA-52 example on the NWQI SharePoint for areawide planning.

VI. Appendix: Follow-up

Although this is an assessment (NRCS planning steps 1-6), you will need to complete steps 7-9 for a successful watershed project, if the watershed is selected. Tracking progress towards meeting project goals will be required, using the metrics established in section V. Interim metrics are established to assure the project is on track for meeting water quality objectives for agricultural lands in the watershed. Evaluation of alternatives may be necessary if anticipated progress is not being met. For watersheds with monitoring networks in place, instream monitoring data provides the best way to determine whether water quality objectives are being met for the watershed.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Funding

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this announcement is \$200,000.

2. Start Dates and Performance Periods

Project will be 1 year in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of September 1, 2019.

3. Type of Federal Award

The agency plans to award a cooperative agreement pursuant to this opportunity. The agency will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement. This would include NRCS collaboration or participation, or close NRCS oversight and control. This could include:

- a. Authority to suspend work if specifications or work statements are not met;
- b. Review and approval of one stage of work before another may begin;
- c. Review and approval of substantive provisions of proposed sub-grants or contracts beyond existing Federal policy;
- d. NRCS and recipient collaboration or joint participation;

- e. Project monitoring to permit specified kinds of direction or redirection of the work because of interrelationships with and impacts on other projects;
- f. Review and approval of key personnel; or
- g. Direct NRCS operational involvement or participation during the activity.

4. Number of Awards

The agency expects to make 1 award.

5. Procurement Contracts

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

6. Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications

Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects are not eligible to compete with applications for new Federal awards. An application for renewal means a proposal submitted to continue an existing agreement that meets the objectives and requirements of this NFO. An application for supplementation of an existing project means a proposal 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.

Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to the following entity types: Federally recognized tribal governments, State and local units of government, non-governmental organizations, or institution of higher learning.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for this opportunity.

3. Other (if applicable)

Applicant entities identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, 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 200.205(d)).

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

All standard forms necessary for this announcement are included in the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) application package. Applicants may request paper copies of materials by contacting Kellee Melton, Assistant State Conservationist, Programs at 803.765.5681 or by written request mailed to 1835 Assembly Street, Room 950, Columbia, SC 29201.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain:

- a. **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each proposal. See Instructions for Completing SF 424 located in the Related Documents tab of this announcement on Grants.gov.
- b. **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. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this announcement on Grants.gov.
- c. **Budget Narrative** - In a separate narrative 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. See Instructions for Completing Budget Narrative located in the Related Documents tab of this announcement on Grants.gov.
 - i. 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. Therefore, any U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations applying under this opportunity must include one of the following statements in its budget narrative:

"My organization was required to submit a Single Audit report last year. The reporting period covered was from (insert date) to (insert date). This

report, filed under EIN # (insert EIN), is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse Single Audit Database website (<https://harvester.census.gov/facweb/>) or will be by (insert date). “

OR

“My organization was not required to submit a Single Audit report last year.”

- ii. Required Indirect Costs Statement - All applicants except individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she may operate must complete and attach the Indirect Costs Statement located in the Related Documents tab of this announcement on Grants.gov.
- d. **Standard Form (SF) 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs.** Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following Federal regulations:
- 2 CFR Part 417, Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)
 - 4 CFR Part 418, New Restrictions on Lobbying
 - 2 CFR Part 421, Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)
- e. **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 in connection with this proposal AND the Federal share exceeds \$100,000, 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. **AD-3031, Assurance Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants.** Although the text of this document states it is applicable only to corporate entities, USDA policy requires that all entity types complete it.

g. **Proposal**

Proposals 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 support must be submitted at the time of application.

Applicants must submit only one original copy of the application in the following format.

Proposals must be divided into the following sections and are limited to the number of pages stated per section:

- I. **Project Summary:** (*First page of grant application. 1/2 page maximum.*) A good summary will provide a frame of reference for the reviewer as they begin the review process. It should be clear, concise, and interesting. The summary should be one to three paragraphs long and include the Project Title. The summary should include one or two sentences about each of the following: the applicant organization, the project start and end dates, the measurable outcomes and methodology, other organizations that may be involved, and the project total cost, and the amount requested in this proposal.
- II. **Introduction:** (*One (1) page maximum.*) This section should introduce your organization to the reviewer and lend credibility to your organization's ability to successfully manage a federal agreement. The response should be succinct, offer a good balance between quantitative and qualitative information, and be free of unnecessary verbiage. It should include a brief history of the organization, including its mission statement and goals, important past events or accomplishments Describe your history of successfully managing federal and non-federal agreements, including meeting and complying with reporting requirements, submitting final acceptable technical reports, and reporting on progress made in achieving the results under those agreements.
- III. **Program Objectives:** (*One (1) page maximum.*) This section of the proposal should demonstrate project outcomes, not project activities. This section should also contain a realistic timeline for completion.
- IV. **Methods:** (*Two (2) page maximum plus Deliverable Table.*) Methods, activities and procedures explain to the reviewer the steps that will be taken to complete the task. This section demands clarity and justification in describing how the objectives will be met. Use care to present a reasonable number of activities that can be completed within the grant period. Provide 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. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and nongovernment entities and identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.

- V. **Budget:** *(One (1) page maximum.)* Careful planning of your budget will reduce the number of changes needed during the grant period. Miscellaneous expenses and equipment needs should be itemized. Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. The format of this information, which can be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc., should be readable in 8 ½” by 11” printable pages. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the evaluators and NRCS can readily understand what expenses will be incurred to support the project.

Each page must be on numbered 8½” x 11” paper with one-inch margins. The text of the proposal must be single spaced and typed in New Times Roman, no smaller than 12 point font and must not exceed 7 pages.

Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. **Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered.** Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered.

h. **Post Award Documentation** – N/A

3. **Unique entity identifier 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 (Data Universal Numbering System (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.

Data Universal Numbering System (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/portal/public/SAM>. The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance, and can be contacted via the Help tab at the website listed above.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applicants may submit proposals via Grants.gov or via e-mail to the following address: clark.phillips@wdc.usda.gov. Proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on July 8, 2019. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation for submission made both via Grants.gov and e-mail to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received. Applicants who make submission via e-mail must contact Clark Phillips at (919) 875-4826 or clark.phillips@usda.gov to confirm receipt.

5. Intergovernmental Review (if applicable)

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, 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 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 listed in this announcement.

Indirect costs limitations:

- a. A non-profit organization or institution of higher education awarded a cooperative agreement will be limited to a 10% indirect cost rate in accordance with the Agency's annual appropriations act. The 10% indirect cost rate applies to both federal and non-federal funds.
- 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). In order to qualify for the de minimis rate, the recipient must have never had a NICRA. 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. Recipients with a 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. 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)). A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. Indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA.
- 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. 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% of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award. Applicants wishing to use the de minimis rate must submit a signed statement

certifying that the entity 1) has never had a NICRA previously and 2) specifically request a de minimis rate agreement.

- e. Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she 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. Merit/Technical Criteria

NRCS staff will evaluate complete proposals based on these Proposal Evaluation Criteria (140 points possible):

I. SUMMARY (30 points): The extent to which the summary clearly summarizes the request, is no longer than 1/2 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Identifies the grant applicant
2. Includes a statement on capability to implement the proposal
3. Includes a statement on problem addressed in the grant
4. Includes a statement on objectives
5. Includes a statement on methods
6. Includes the total cost, funds already obtained, and the amount requested in this proposal

II. INTRODUCTION (20 points): The extent which the proposal describes the applicant's organization, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Describes the applicant's organizational purposes and goals
2. Describes the applicant's programs and activities
3. Provides evidence of the applicant's accomplishments and qualifications
4. Supports qualifications in the activity areas in which funds are sought (e.g.: research, training, etc.)
5. Describe the capacity to implement the proposal

III. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES (25 points): The extent which the proposal describes the outcomes and benefits of the grant in measurable terms, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Includes when and how outcomes will be measured
2. Objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and contain a timeline for completion

IV. METHODS (40 points): The extent which the proposal describes the activities to be completed to achieve the desired objectives, is no longer than 2 pages, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Clearly describes program activities that constitute a solution
2. Describes staffing of program and brief staff job descriptions
3. NRCS assistance is minimal for project success
4. Presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be conducted within the budget, time and resources of the program

V. BUDGET (25 points): The extent which the proposal describes the cost required to achieve the desired objectives, including personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, in-kind contributions, indirect costs, and requested NRCS financial assistance, is no longer than 1 page, and addresses the following criteria:

1. Is detailed
2. Includes a narrative
3. Contains significant match in the form of cash, non-cash, or in-kind services from applicant and/or contributing organizations
4. Includes NRCS, partner, and other contributions
5. Reimbursement of Indirect Costs are 10% or less

2. Risk Criteria

The 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)).

To further comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.205, the agency has established the following risk review process and related standards that an applicant must meet to be considered for award:

- a. **Financial Stability.** The applicant certifies that it maintains adequate financial resources or cash flow to meet its financial obligations on a routine basis and 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 certifies it has a financial management system adequate to segregate and track federal funds. It further certifies 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 certifies that 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 a proposal constitutes certification that an applicant meets these standards.

3. Review and Selection Process

Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with 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. 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, they must ensure their applications are complete and accurate. However, while the agency intends to make a selection and award without discussions, it reserves the right to conduct discussions for the purpose of allowing applicants to revise their applications to correct deficiencies or omissions identified by the NRCS. If this is done, the agency will conduct discussions with all applicants and identify deficiencies and omissions and give applicants an opportunity to submit a revised application by a common cut-off date.

Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by a technical review board nominated by the approving official. Risk reviews will be conducted by the Grants and Agreements Service Branch. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the SC State Conservationist.

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

Notice to applicants:

- 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 Announcement and Federal Award Dates

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 8, 2019 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 1, 2019.

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 (form NRCS-ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency representative is the only authorizing document, and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized representative 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 NRCS' General Terms and Conditions; a copy of the General Terms and Conditions may be obtained by contacting the Federal Awarding Agency Contacts listed in this announcement.

3. Reporting

Reporting will follow NRCS' General Terms and Conditions, but will generally include electronic submission of semiannual progress reports, quarterly financial status reports, and final reports.

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 2 CFR Part 200 —Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

Selected applicants will be required to submit a SF-425, Federal Financial Report to the NRCS administrative contact, no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. In addition, every 6 months the selected applicant must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program, technical, and administrative contacts. **NRCS will provide a template for the formatting that must be used in the report.** This report is

distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous 6-month period and include, at a minimum:

- Summary of progress, including the results to date and a comparison of actual accomplishments with proposed goals (milestones) for the period and, where project output can be quantified, a computation of the costs per unit of output
- Current problems or unusual developments or delays
- Reasons why goals and objectives were not met, if appropriate
- Additional pertinent information including, where appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit cost
- Any time extensions
- Any changes to the project's original objectives, methods, or timeline with a summary of the justification for the changes.

The final report is due to the NRCS program, technical, and administrative contacts 90 days after completion of the project. This report is distinct from the performance progress reports described above. **NRCS will provide a template for the formatting that must be used in the Final report.** The final report will summarize the project and describe methods, quality control, findings, and recommendations.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact one of the following individuals:

Administrative Contact (Primary Contact)

Name: Clark Phillips

Grants Management Specialist, Quality Assurance Branch 1

Grants and Agreements Division (GAD)

Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

(919) 875-4826

Email: clark.phillips@usda.gov

Program Contact

Name: Kellee Melton

Assistant State Conservationist, Programs

USDA-NRCS

Mailing Address: 1835 Assembly Street, Room 950, Columbia, SC 29201

Phone Number: (803) 765-5681

Email: kellee.melton@sc.usda.gov

H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions regarding this announcement must be submitted to the Administrative Contact identified above. Submission via email is preferable with the Opportunity Number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by May 31, 2019. A questions and answers document addressing all questions will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this announcement in Grants.gov as a modification by June 14, 2019.

2. **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**
Proposals to NRCS are considered to be confidential information. Proposals 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 NRCS to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information, and requires NRCS to consult with applicants regarding the releasing their records.

3. **Government Obligation**
The Federal Government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of the announcement. 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, audiotape, 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.

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