

## **SUMMARY INFORMATION**

**Federal Awarding Agency Name:** U.S. Department Of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Maryland Cooperative Agreement Opportunities

**Announcement Type:** Initial/New Announcement

**Funding Opportunity Number:** **USDA-NRCS-MD-CTA-19-GEN0010337**

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 10.902

### **Funding Opportunity Announcement Summary**

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking proposals for cooperative agreements to help address Maryland's most pressing natural resource concerns. Up to \$300,000 in funding will be made available statewide.

NRCS will select proposals that leverage USDA and partner resources to effectively implement projects. Successful proposals will address at least one of the following:

- Increase the number of applications for USDA NRCS Agriculture Conservation Easement Program – Wetlands Reserve Easements
- Provide in stream monitoring for assessing changes in the surface water quality in response to the implementation of conservation practices in the Catoctin Creek watershed in Frederick County, MD.
- Provide direct technical services to assist producers in planning and/or implementing conservation practices throughout Maryland.
- Develop the tools, technologies, and strategies to support next-generation conservation efforts on working lands in Maryland and develop market-based solutions to resource challenges.
- Conduct an economic analysis on high priority best management practices in Maryland such as nutrient management, manure storage, animal mortality, cover crop, heavy use area protection (HUAPS) and others.
- Provide professional training sessions for partner employees on topics related to conservation planning and agriculture. Work with NRCS to ensure the courses align with the Certified Planner curriculum.
- Provide training and expert guidance on irrigation system planning, design (including but not limited to micro irrigation), and Irrigation Water Management (IWM) Plan development.

### **Key Dates**

Applications must be received by 5 pm Eastern Daylight Time on August 13th, 2019. Questions must be submitted by 5 pm Eastern Daylight Time on July 26th, 2019, and answers to questions will be posted to Grants.gov by August 9th, 2019. NRCS anticipates announcing selections no later than August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019, and making awards by August 25th, 2019.

## **Federal Funding Floor and Ceiling Amounts**

The funding floor for this announcement is \$50,000.00, and the funding ceiling is \$300,000.00. 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 Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, Public Law 74-76, Statute N/A, N/A, 16 US Code 590 a-f.

Technical assistance to the general public in planning and applying natural resource conservation practices, systems, and treatment; and furnishing technical natural resource conservation information to State and local governments. Technical assistance to decision-makers on lands in agriculture, forestry and related uses for planning and applying natural resource conservation practices, systems, and treatment; and furnishing technical natural resource conservation information to State and local governments.

### **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

#### **1. Estimated Funding**

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this announcement is \$300,000.00.

#### **2. Start Dates and Performance Periods**

Projects may be between 1 and 3 years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of approximately 10/1/2019.

#### **3. Type of Federal Award**

The agency plans to award between 1 and 3 cooperative agreements pursuant to this opportunity. The agency will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement and will undertake activities including the monitoring of project milestones, the facilitation of data and information sharing, and meetings to discuss topics pertaining to the project(s).

#### **4. Number of Awards**

The agency expects to make between 1 and 3 awards.

#### **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.

This opportunity is open to all domestic applicants.

### 2. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

### 3. Other

All applicants must have an active DUNS through SAM.gov. 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 contacting Laura Eddy at [Laura.Eddy@usda.gov](mailto:Laura.Eddy@usda.gov).

### 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**  
Applicants must complete the Statement of Work outline to clearly define the purpose, objectives, budget needs, resources required, party responsibilities, expected accomplishments and deliverables, milestones, and any potential additional provisions. NRCS will work with the awardee(s) to finalize the Statement of Work.

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.

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** – The successful applicant must enroll in the ezFedGrants system. More information will be provided to the award recipient.

### 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 must submit proposals via Grants.gov. Proposals must be received by 5:00 pm EST on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received.

#### **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:

- Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto;
- Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- 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
- 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. 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). 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. Applicants not subject to the statutory limitation stated above, 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. 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. 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% 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 subcontract 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% of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a de minimis rate agreement will be executed along with the award.
- 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**

The attached Merit Review Worksheet will be used to rank all applications. The ranking is based on the following criteria:

1. Purpose, Approach, and Goals
  - Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technical approach.
  - Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
  - Outcome is clearly measurable.
  - Potential for successful completion.
2. Project Management
  - Milestones and timeline are clear and reasonable.
  - Project staff has the technical expertise needed.
  - Budget is adequately explained and justified.
  - Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions, and agencies.

## **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 Maryland State Conservationist, Terron Hillsman.

#### **4. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold**

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 19th, 2019 and making awards by August 25th, 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.

## **G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)**

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

Administrative Contact (Primary Contact)

Name: Stephanie Mitchell

Grants Management Specialist

USDA-NRCS

Mailing Address: 4405 Bland Rd., Raleigh, NC 27609

Phone Number: 919-873-2054

Email: Stephanie.mitchell2@usda.gov

Program Contact

Name: Ramon Ortiz

ASTC M&S

USDA-NRCS

Mailing Address: 339 Busch's Frontage Rd, Suite 301, Annapolis, MD, 21409

Phone Number: 443-482-2962

Email: Ramon.Ortiz@usda.gov

## **H. OTHER INFORMATION**

1. Questions regarding this announcement must be submitted to the Administrative Contact identified above via email with the Opportunity Number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by 5 pm Eastern Daylight Time on July 26th, 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 5 pm Eastern Daylight Time on August 9th, 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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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