

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project
Webinar Transcript
June 4, 2020

Stand by for real time captioning.

Jen Ryan:

Good afternoon. Welcome to today's webinar. My name is Jen Ryan and I am a natural resources specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at the national technology support center. We will get started with the presentation in a moment. First a few logistical items. All participants joining today's webinar are in listen only mode and all audio is being broadcast through your device speakers. Computer or mobile device headsets can help with your audio quality and volume. We still want you to be able to participate in today's webinar so please add your questions or comments into the Q&A pod. You can submit throughout the presentation; however, questions will be answered during the Q&A session. If you're having audio challenges, note the closed captioning link provided in today's link pod then open in a new browser window where you can follow along with the presentation. Please note the status bar indicator to the right of help in the Adobe connect menu. All green is usually an indicator your network connection is strong. If you wish to make adjustments, you can make them using the options in the screen share window. If you choose to view the presentation in full-screen mode, you want to hover your cursor at the top of your screen for the options to return to normal view. I am pleased now to turn the webinar over to our moderator, Joseph Heller.

Joseph Heller:

Welcome. I am Joseph Heller with the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and the moderator for today's webinar. This is a newly established program under the 2018 Farm Bill and fiscal year 2020 is the first time USDA is soliciting applications for this funding opportunity. \$900,000 is available to fund applications this fiscal year. Applications must be submitted online through Grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time on Friday, June 26th. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Just a few housekeeping things, please mute your phone. This is being recorded and will be posted on farmers.gov/urban for anytime viewing.

Today's presentation will be divided into five sections and be presented by our speakers who are grants management specialists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Questions can be submitted through the Q&A box on your screen. Any questions submitted and not answered during the course of the presentation will be answered at the end of the webinar. USDA is happy to field any general high-level inquiries applicants may have regarding application processes. USDA staff is unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft, structure or right one's

proposal. Part one and two of today's webinar provides an overview of the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Project and Contact Information will be presented by Annie Ceccarini. Annie works for USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service as a grants management specialist in the Grants Division is currently detailed to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production to assist with its newly established grant program and other funding opportunities. At this time, I will turn it over to Annie.

Annie Ceccarini:

Thank you. The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is new to USDA and was established under the 2018 Farm Bill. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is leading this Office which includes representatives from several other agencies such as the Farm Service Agency and Agriculture Marketing Service. The Office's mission is to encourage and promote urban indoor and other emerging agriculture practices including community composting and food waste reduction. The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production works in four areas. Today's webinar will discuss the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Pilot Project. You will see and hear us refer to this program by the acronym CCFWR.

The purpose of CCFWR is to provide assistance through a cooperative agreement to municipalities, counties, local governments, or city planners in the United States to carry out planning and implementation activities that will generate compost, increase access for agriculture producers, reduce reliance on and limit the use of fertilizer, improve soil quality, encourage waste management and permaculture business development, increase rainwater absorption, reduce municipal food waste, and divert food waste from landfills.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the awarding agency for this funding opportunity and will enter into a cooperative agreement with local or municipal governments in no fewer than 10 states to carry out community compost and food waste reduction activities. The agency and Federal partners will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement and will undertake activities such as coordinating and convening pilot project teams and Federal government, regional, institution, state, and local experts to share information and strategies to better address nationally and regionally important composting and food waste reduction goals that transcend localities. NRCS will gather the methods, results and benefits derived from pilot projects to evaluate, disseminate and highlight the innovative processes. Thirdly, it will connect pilot projects and other agencies such as USDA's Office of Chief Economist and other Federal partners like the United States Environmental Protection Agency to collaborate on project activities and outcomes that contribute to the U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 goal.

For those unfamiliar, in 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency announced the first ever domestic goal to reduce food loss and waste in half by the year 2030. It acknowledges that government alone cannot reach this goal and that effort and action

from the entire system is required. That's why the Federal government is seeking to work with communities, organizations and businesses along with our partners in state, Tribal and local governments to reduce food loss and waste by 50% over the next 10 years.

Like I mentioned earlier, the Natural Resources Conservation Service will enter into cooperative agreements with local or municipal governments in no fewer than 10 states on pilot projects. Priority will be given to eligible entities whose projects include the following four components. One, the project anticipates or demonstrates economic benefits. Two, the project incorporates plans to make compost easily accessible to agriculture producers including community gardeners. Three, the project integrates other food waste strategies including food waste recovery efforts. And four, the project collaborates with multiple partners. I will further explain these four project priorities over the next few slides and how they may be incorporated into an application.

It is significant to note that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service does not have examples of projects that have been funded under the program. CCFWR is a newly established program and this fiscal year is the first time USDA is soliciting applications for this funding opportunity.

First, let's discuss how a project can anticipate or demonstrates economic benefit. Pilot projects may include deliverables and outcomes that anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits to the applicant and its collaborators. It may include economic efficiency through its project activities including a plan for self-sustainability. It may include a cost-effective budget in relation to the measurable outcomes and project impacts including the rent or lease of equipment, vehicles, land, and building space during the length of the agreement instead of purchase. Second, how can a project incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners. Pilot projects may include activities that divert food waste from landfills to generate compost. It may include activities that increase access to compost for farmers and gardeners and may include plans to continue aspects or components of the project related to composting beyond the end of the project period.

Let's discuss how a project can include innovation. Through these pilot projects, USDA is tapping into the creativity of communities across the nation to rethink the lifecycle of food in ways that minimize waste and maximize use. Pilot projects may include activities that either compliment, strengthen or non-adversely impact any existing food waste recovery and disposal by commercial marketing or business relationships in the area. They may include locally driven processes that better address nationally and regionally important composting and food waste reduction goals that transcend localities and they may include innovative solutions for increasing access to compost and reducing municipal food waste through the integration of food recovery efforts such as gleaning and donation, secondary markets like produce delivery services, feeding animals, value added products, on farm storage, and others.

Eligible entities should collaborate with two or more partner organizations on their CCFWR project. Applicants are encouraged to seek partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, academic institutions (including minority serving colleges universities) and other appropriate professional and community-based organizations. Only the applicants must meet the eligibility requirements for this funding opportunity. Thus, not eligible entities may be partners on a project. The eligible entity that submits the application to the Natural Resources Conservation Service is responsible for receiving and managing the award. Applicants that apply as partnerships or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the partner parties. Awards will only be made to a single entity. Letters of intent or support from each partner are required with the application.

I've gone over the four project components. Now let's discuss who is eligible to apply for a CCFWR cooperative agreement. Only local governments are eligible to apply for CCFWR and must be located within the United States, District of Columbia, Caribbean Area (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and the Pacific island Area (including Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

We received many questions about how local government is defined. For that reason, the definition based on the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Grants Guidance is posted on the slide. It states that local government is defined as any unit of government within a state including a county, borough, municipality, city, town, township, parish, local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937, special district, school district, interstate district, council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law and any other agencies of a multistate regional or intra-state or local government. You can find this definition listed on the frequently asked the question on Farmers.gov/urban and on Grants.gov.

That brings us to who is not eligible to apply for CCFWR. Individuals such as a farmer or gardener, for profit organizations and small businesses, Tribal governments, state governments, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) including extension programs are not eligible to apply for CCFWR projects. Applicants not located within the United States, District of Columbia, Caribbean Area (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and the Pacific Islands Area (including Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) are not eligible.

An eligible applicant can serve as the lead on only one CCFWR application and can be listed as a partner on more than one application.

The proposed project should not duplicate activities from another Federal award. Applicants can receive this award and an award from a different Federal agency as long as projects have specifically different

objectives. The minimum award amount for a pilot project is \$45,000. The maximum award is \$90,000. Applicants are expected to complete their project within the required timeframe. Projects should be 24 months or two years in duration. This opportunity requires applicants to match 25% of total project costs.

These next few slides will hopefully eliminate confusion regarding this program's matching requirement. Applicants are required to match 25% of total project costs. This means Federal funds may constitute no more than 75% of the total project budget. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a match that exceeds the required amount. If your project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary. Applications must include written documentation showing the amount and sources of match including signed letters verifying matching funds. Michele will go over this in greater detail later in the presentation. Applications submitted in Grants.gov that do not include a committed or secure match along with required matching documentation will be ineligible for an award.

This slide includes an example of how to calculate the match requirement. If the total project budget is \$90,000 thousand dollars, the applicant would request \$67,500 in USDA funds which is 75% of the budget in their application. They must provide a match amount of \$22,500 which is 25% of the budget. It's important to remember the minimum award amount for pilot project is \$45,000 and maximum is \$90,000. Your requested project budget should request funds from USDA within this range. We created the FY 2020 community compost and food waste reduction matching calculator, which is an Excel sheet to assist applicants with calculating the required match amount. You can find the link in the frequently asked question document which is posted on the www.Farmers.gov/urban website.

Let's go over what types of match will be accepted. Matching may be achieved by contribution of cash, supplies, services, third-party in-kind contributions or in combination from sources other than funds provided through the grant. Cash can be a recipient's cash outlay, or cash donation with non-Federal third parties or non-Federal grants. In-kind can be the value of non-cash contributions typically in the form of personnel, goods and services. Volunteer services provided by third-party professionals including technical personnel, consultants and others skilled and unskilled labor can be counted as cost sharing or matching if the service is an integral and necessary part of project activities.

What types of match will not be accepted? Applicants cannot use program income or any other Federal funds as a match. Applicants cannot use unrecovered indirect costs as part of the match requirement either. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount that could have been charged under the potential recipient approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA).

I have discussed the purpose of CCFWR pilot project priorities, eligible entities, available funding amounts and project lengths, and the matching requirement. My next slide will discuss what the program does and does not fund. Materials, supplies, and other costs related to the development and testing of strategies to generate compost and reduce food waste. However, the per unit cost of each supply items must be below \$5,000. Any item with a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or above and a useful life of more than one year is considered equipment.

Construction. Funds may be used to construct, alter or repair of buildings, structures, or other real property. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be considered a construction project. Funds can be used to expand or improve current compost operations. Contractual costs. Contractual costs are expenses associated with procuring goods or services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. Personnel costs. Funds may be used for personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities. The purchase of special purpose equipment and vehicles, land, and building space is allowable. If a project does not include the purchase but instead includes lease or rental of special purpose equipment, vehicle and building space during the length of the project will be given higher consideration. Any lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the award. Special purpose equipment means equipment used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities.

Project activities not funded under CCFWR include the disposal of animal carcasses and materials or animal byproducts. The purchase of general-purpose equipment, which is equipment which is not limited to research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishing, modular offices, networks, etc. Organized fundraising, this includes any financial campaign, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions, regardless of how the funds will be used. This list is not exhaustive, and a more detailed list of funding restrictions is provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

All of the overview information I shared can be obtained through the resources that have been made publicly available at [Farmers.gov/urban](https://www.farmers.gov/urban) and [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). If you've not done so already, we encourage you to visit [Farmers.gov/urban](https://www.farmers.gov/urban) to learn more about the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and its funding opportunities. You can reach out to us with any high-level inquiries about the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Project at UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov. Thank you.

Joseph Heller:

You'll be hearing more from Annie during the question-and-answer session. We will proceed to part three and part four that covers the application, evaluation and notification process and helpful tips that will be presented by Michele Devaney. Michelle has worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture since 2009 in various capacities and currently

supports NRCS and three other USDA agencies with grants administration. Take it away, Michelle.

Michele Devaney:

If anyone joined us late, I want to reiterate this webinar is being recorded and the link will be available at a later date on [Farmers.gov/urban](https://farmers.gov/urban) and [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). Also, the FAQ document currently posted will be updated to include all the questions and answers from today's webinar. If we don't get to your question, it will be included in the posted Q&A.

Now, I will jump into the process overview. You can see on this slide, steps one and two are completed by the applicant. Step one is what you are doing now, the pre-work. Finding out information. Step two is submitting your application by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 26, 2020 when the applications are due. Steps 3, 4 and 5 on the slide are completed by USDA staff. The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31st and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2020.

Step one, do the pre-work. The pre-work involves several steps that the applicant is responsible for completing. If you haven't done so already, read the 17-page Notice of Funding Opportunity to make sure you are eligible to apply and that you understand the instructions. There are screenshots of where to find that Notice of Funding Opportunity. If you determine your organization is eligible and wants to apply, follow the instructions. Next, for your review are forms you need to submit. You can see the required documents are on the slide 24. The opportunity package contains the Standard Forms necessary to apply in their most current version. Do not use old copies of Standard Forms. Please use the versions in the opportunity package or you can download the most current version by noting the date. The required use of Project Summary and Abstracts, there's a Proposal Narrative as well. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) has specific instructions for the Proposal Narrative. I will list details here but you don't need to write them down because they are in detail in this NFO. The text must be single spaced and typed in Times New Roman, no smaller than 12-point font and must not exceed a total of 15 pages. Of that 15 pages, 10 can be written text and up to five additional pages can be for figures and tables. That maximum has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition.

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

Next on the list is the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424), that is followed by Standard Forms for budget information. You will see under required and if applicable that there are two budget forms – the SF 424A and the SF 424C. Both of these are budget information forms. Complete the SF 424A only if the proposal does not include construction. If it does include construction, then complete the SF 424C, which is specific for construction. If your application includes both non-construction and construction, submit the SF 424A. Explain and justify all requested budget

items and costs in the Budget Narrative. Detail how totals on SF 424A or SF 424C were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and proposed project activities.

Next up is verification of matching funds, which are signed letters verifying matching funds for each cash and/or in-kind resource is required. For third-party contributions, a separate letter of support is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization.

Next you have collaborator letters. Documentation verifying support from collaborators. Those are required letters. Letters documenting collaboration are not included in that 15-page limit. The next is an easy one-page certification and disclosure of lobbying activities. Last, if you are requesting indirect costs, a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), or signed agreement is required. They must be in PDF format and attach to Grants.gov application package. Recipients who did not request indirect costs are prohibited from charging indirect costs to the Federal award.

What other steps are required? This chart is a general overview that includes steps an organization that has never applied for a Federal grant before must complete outside of Grants.gov prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov. You will see some estimated time frames here on the slide. Start now if you need to complete any of these steps and do not wait until the last minute. The first is EIN (Employer Identification Number) or TIN (Federal Tax Identification Number). Most applicants who are local governments would have the number. If you don't, you should allow up to 35 days to obtain one of those from the IRS. Next is DUN and Bradstreet. A DUNS number is a unique identification number. If you don't have a DUNS, that number is free and that takes anywhere from 1-2 business days on average to receive. Then there's the System for Award Management (SAM) registration. This registration is also free. Prior to starting the registration process, you need to have the EIN and a DUNS number. If you're previously registered with SAM, check to make sure it's active because an annual certification is required. So, if you have an administrative person that handles that, check in with them now to ensure that registration is applied for and is active. Since applications will only be received via Grants.gov, you need to have an account. If you don't already have one, you should allow two full weeks to clear the registration steps. Additional time may be required. More detailed information about the steps or registering in Grants.gov can be found on the Grants.gov registration page.

Last, CCFWR applications must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 26, 2020 through Grants.gov. Only applications submitted through this electronic system will be considered.

Okay, what if you need technical assistance? These systems are not owned or managed by USDA; you must contact the application website directly for assistance. You will see IRS phone numbers on there also.

There's the DUNS number, if you're having SAM issues, go to the help tab at the top of their website for assistance. They have user guides as well. For Grants.gov issues use the phone number or email address to receive support from the applicant support desk. I will note a couple things, the links to DUNS and SAM are at the bottom of the Grants.gov website and at the bottom of every Grants.gov webpage is a phone number and email address for support. I have recently heard from Grants.gov that they are dealing with a lot of capacity with COVID-19 grants so if you need support from them, reach out early in your process. I also recommend using email over phone support due to current long waits. Also, if you contacted them, keep a record of any correspondence including any ID or case numbers involved.

I mentioned we would have a slide about how to find this on Grants.gov. Here is a screenshot of their homepage. You can find the funding opportunity to download the 17-page grant opportunity and related documents by coming here. You can do a keyword search for CCFWR. You

can search by typing 10.935 in as the CFDA number also known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. Or you can enter this funding opportunity number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CCFWR-20-NOFO0001018 on the slide where the circle is at the top. There are also field searches on the left-hand side.

Once you find it, four blue tabs will appear. The "Synopsis" tab on the far left is only a summary of the opportunity. This is very high-level. What you need to do is click on "Related Documents" tab to get into where the funding opportunity is located. You will see here, the full announcements. You can download the full announcement, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and other associated documents and instructions.

When you're ready to submit you click the apply button on the "Package" tab. As a reminder, applications must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 26 through Grants.gov.

Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt as documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received.

Moving onto USDA review process, each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First applications will be screened to ensure it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. The slide shows examples of applications that would not meet the administrative requirement. Those are; the application is submitted late through Grants.gov; proposal does not comply with the required content, format and formatting structure including page length. The application is incomplete or noncompliant. The application does not fit the purpose of the CCFWR project. Some additional examples are if the proposal includes activities funded by another award or applicants

that do not meet eligibility criteria including eligible applicant types. Applicant is identified in the SAM.gov exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited, restricted or excluded. Last, applicant has committed fraud including material, misleading or incorrect information in the application.

The second part of the process involves applications that have met the administrative review requirements will be evaluated with the technical evaluation by a review panel. Appropriate members of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other USDA agencies will review all applications submitted if necessary, also may seek the opinions of others who are qualified to give expert advice on that specific topic. Reviews will be conducted by teams comprised of three USDA employee who represent different agencies, subject areas and geographic locations.

Then you can see from the slide more about those reviewers. Reviewers must sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest statement in order to serve in this role. They will review approximately 10 proposals and serve on assigned teams of three. They must commit approximately 50 hours over 4-6 weeks for this review process.

Continuing on technical review process. Notice of Funding Opportunity contains specific links for evaluation criteria that reviewers will be considering when evaluating each proposal. Be sure to review the five criteria yourself stated in that Notice of Funding Opportunity so you can understand what you should address in your project and budget narrative.

A summary of the five criteria for this funding opportunity are on the slide. They're all equally weighted at 20%. I will read each one in full. Again, this information is very clearly stated on the Notice of Funding Opportunity. You don't have to scramble to take notes. One is alignment and intent is consistent with the CCFWR purpose and priorities presented herein. The second is achievability potential for significant, positive impact with food waste recovery and disposal by commercial, marketing, or business relationships. Three, quality of the plan presented to integrate innovative food waste strategies and methods such as food recovery and ability to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers including community gardeners. Four is anticipated or demonstrated economic efficiency of the project which includes evaluating the amount of Federal funds requested and the cost-effectiveness of the budget. Including analysis of such items as rental of equipment, vehicles, land and building space during the length of cooperative agreement instead of purchase thereof. Last is collaboration partners. That is the quality of the plan for collaborating with multiple partners including public or private entities, nonprofit or for-profit entities, academic institutions and or other appropriate professional, community-based organizations and local government entities in order to achieve project outcome objectives.

After technical reviews have been completed, pilot project will be submitted to the approving official. Who, for this opportunity is the Chief

of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. They will make the final award decisions.

Here's a recap of the tentative timeline. Steps one and two must be completed by the applicant by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 26 when applications are due in Grants.gov. Steps three and four are the application review period anticipated between July 6th and July 24th and step five the agency is announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31, 2020 and expects to have Federal words in place by September 30, 2020.

This is the last content slide before we move on to the Q&A. First and foremost, do not wait until the last minute. Again, read in detail the Notice of Funding Opportunity. You can see the opportunity number is listed there if you don't have it already. Make sure you align your project proposal narrative with your budget narrative. Make sure the funding amounts on your forms match and make sure the funding amounts on your SF 424 match your budget narrative. Make sure your proposal complies with the required content and the format stated in the NFO including the 15-page limit for the proposal. Get input from collaborators and partners. When I say partners, it's important to note I do not mean NRCS staff. Do not go to your local USDA Service Center asking for help in completing this application or with questions about your proposal.

Although your local service center has a wealth of knowledge and a number of other programs, they are unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft or write your proposal and cannot offer assistance in preparing applications.

Next we will have the Q&A session. If anyone joined us late, I want to reiterate again that this webinar is being recorded. The link to the webinar and all slides will be available at a later date on the websites. They are currently available in today's handout section in the meeting. And the FAQ document currently posted to Grants.gov will be updated to include all the Q&A from today's webinar including questions that we do not get to cover in the next hour.

Joseph Heller:

At this time, we will answer any questions submitted in the question and answer box. And not answered during the course of this presentation. As a reminder, USDA staff is unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal. All questions and responses from today's presentation will be added to the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Project frequently asked questions document and posted online at Grants.gov and Farmers.gov/urban. The recording of this presentation with closed captioning will also be posted on the website Farmers.gov/urban and Grants.gov for anytime viewing. We plan to have both posted within a week and possibly sooner. If we are unable to get to your questions, please send it to the email account UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov. So now, at this time, we will answer questions you have put into the dialogue box.

Does this grant include nonprofits?

Michele Devaney: I will go back to the slide. Local governments are the only eligible applicants. Here is a definition.

Joseph Heller: With that we have a few questions of very related to this topic. Are councils of government eligible?

Michele Devaney: Yes. You can see in the middle of this definition on the slide, council of government is included in the definition of local governments.

Joseph Heller: Can a municipality submit more than one application?

Michele Devaney: Yes.

Joseph Heller: Just looking to see if there are other questions related to this particular topic so we can stay on the slide. Regional Planning Agencies eligible under the local government definition?

Michele Devaney: It is possible, I'll have to wait on that and answer on the Q&A. It could be considered as a special district.

Joseph Heller: I will highlight that one. Whomever asked that question, you may want to email us with more details about how that is set up within local government. Again, that email address urbanagriculture@usda.gov Is equipment allowed to be purchased? Let's bring up the slide.

What does the program fund?

Annie Ceccarini: The purchase a special purpose equipment is allowable however, projects that lease or rent special-purpose equipment will receive higher consideration. Special-purpose equipment meets equipment used only for research, medical, scientific or other technical activities. General purpose equipment is not allowable. That is not limited to research medical for other typical activities examples would be including office equipment, furnishings, telephone network, etc.

Joseph Heller: I will go on to the next question. Must the project include all four priorities?

Annie Ceccarini: Projects including all four priorities will receive higher consideration.

Joseph Heller: I'm going to try to summarize this question. It states we mentioned to reduce food waste in landfills however, the question comes from location where they would like to know if this includes waste to energy facilities? Would that be eligible?

Michele Devaney: Could you repeat that?

Joseph Heller: Yes. I'll read as it was stated. You have mentioned to reduce food waste to landfills, a few times, can we assume this also includes reduced food waste to waste to energy facilities?

Annie Ceccarini: The criteria on the slide, currently on your screen, is in the statute. It doesn't extensively say that but yes, that could be implied.

Joseph Heller: Can a government agency apply as well and still be a partner on another applicant project?

Annie Ceccarini: Can you repeat that?

Joseph Heller: It appears as if they are asking, can a partner of the project also be an applicant to this grant? It appears if it's a separate application so their partnering with this organization. And they want to have their own application as well.

Michele Devaney: That's up to them to decide. If they each submitted an application, they will each be considered on their own merits. If it's the same project, they will not both be awarded.

Joseph Heller: Can an eligible entity submit more than one application?

Michele Devaney: Yes.

Joseph Heller: Can we use staff hours as matching funds for the project?

Michele Devaney: You can use staff hours as match that are incurred during the period of performance of the award. When the cooperative agreement is in effect, yes, but you cannot use staff hours to prepare this application and count that as match.

Joseph Heller: Can other grants that a municipality receives be used as the matching requirements?

Michele Devaney: If the funds are not Federal in nature and if it's relevant to the project. They need to use the matching funds for staff that are participating in the project and doing activities related to the project.

Joseph Heller: Can costs prior to a funded project be used as the match?

Michele Devaney: No. Match that will be eligible would be the specific time during the period of performance of the award. If you don't get your signed agreement back until September 15, and it has a start date of September 15, you can only count your matching starting on September 15.

Joseph Heller: Does the match need to be submitted? Going to try to understand this question. Is the match needed by the date we submit the application? I'm assuming they're saying it may not have commitments up until that time.

Michele Devaney: Match must be committed by whomever the source may be. You don't have to have the funds in your bank account.

Joseph Heller: And whoever asked that question, if we didn't answer it correctly, please send again through urbanurbanagriculture@usda.gov. Does the project have to be two years long or could it be a portion of that period?

Annie Ceccarini: Project needs to be two years in duration.

Joseph Heller: If the totaled project expenses exceed the \$100,000 sorry, \$120,000 can they submit for the maximum allowable cost?

Annie Ceccarini: Repeat that.

Joseph Heller: I'm not sure whether getting hundred \$120,000. It appears as what they are asking if their total budget exceeds the \$90,000. They are only requesting the \$90,000. Is that still allowable?

Michele Devaney: Yes. The range of \$45,000 or \$90,000 only refers to the Federal funds.

Joseph Heller: I'm going to ask this question about eligibility although we have already answered it. There several questions asking if farmers are eligible for this program?

Annie Ceccarini: No. Let's go back to that slide. Just so that people are aware.

Joseph Heller: Is marketing such as branding, market campaign, events and things that are similar such as education allowed for funding?

Michele Devaney: If they are necessary. To achieve the scope and objectives of the cooperative agreement, yes. They cannot be used solely to promote the local government.

Joseph Heller: Due to COVID-19, coordinating these efforts would be challenging. Will this application deadline be postponed?

Michele Devaney: At this time is not a planned extension. These have to be in place before September 30th, 2020.

Joseph Heller: Are the forms such as the SF-424 included in the 15-page limits?

Michele Devaney: No. The 15-page limit refers only to the Proposal Narrative. You can find those details in the 17-page NFO. The SF-424 forms and other letters are not included in the 15-page limit.

Joseph Heller: Would it be possible for a city government to apply as a fiscal sponsor for a noneligible entity?

Michele Devaney: No. They could only be a fiscal sponsor to another eligible entity. I can rephrase that. An eligible entity such as a local government can only act as a fiscal agent to another local government entity. A local government could not apply for this and be a fiscal agent and provide an award to a nonprofit.

Joseph Heller: Does a 25% funding have to come from a third party?

Michele Devaney: No. It can come from the applicant themselves or the third party.

Joseph Heller: The applicant is expected to need a state permit. Would that be reimbursed if the state permit is required, can this be covered by this program?

Michele Devaney: Please wait for the Q&A on that. There other programs that do not allow for permitting but I believe it's due to the program statute. I will answer that on the Q&A which will be posted to Farmers.gov/urban as well as Grants.gov.

Joseph Heller: Would we be allowed to use consulting costs for a composting consultant in our application for funding?

Michele Devaney: Yes. That can be considered under contractual.

Joseph Heller: Can a loan such as a zero-interest loan be used as match?

Michele Devaney: I will wait for the Q&A on that one as well.

Joseph Heller: Will project funds be awarded in advance of the completion of the project?

Michele Devaney: I'm not sure what they mean by that. In advance. No. You do not have to wait until the reviews are up to get reimbursed for costs you have incurred. Is that the question? Yes. It can be on a schedule or could be more frequent.

Joseph Heller: Can a local government such as a city apply for the urban ag implementation projects as well as community composting food waste reduction agreements?

Annie Ceccarini: Yes.

Joseph Heller: Would a neighborhood business improvement district qualify as a local government agency?

Michele Devaney: It depends on how they are established. It could be under local government; it might not be. I guess you'd have to check in to how they are established.

Joseph Heller: A municipality currently has an existing municipal composting facility for leaves, wood waste and compost. We want to expand this to divert discarded food from the landfill since it takes up in a significant portion of our landfill volume according to a recent waste study. With this project be eligible?

Annie Ceccarini: We cannot comment on the specific scope of a project.

I saw another question about volunteer services and how you calculate the rate.

The rate for third-party volunteer services must be consistent with those paid for similar work by the non-Federal entity.

Joseph Heller: Is this a yearly grant? Do you anticipate this being available next year or in future years?

Annie Ceccarini: We are not able to comment on that right now. We have our FY 2020 budget and will be making these awards by September 30th of this year.

Joseph Heller: Can for-profits or small businesses apply with a local government?

Annie Ceccarini: No. The applicant and awardee could only be the local government. They can be partners.

Joseph Heller: Can this be used to develop strategies, feasibility studies?

Annie Ceccarini: Yes, if that was a key component to your pilot project.

Joseph Heller: Is a joint powers authority eligible?

Michele Devaney: I'm not sure what a joint powers authority's is that would have to be clarified to see how they are established.

Joseph Heller: If the application comes from a county government, can a composting facility be on private lands?

Michele Devaney: That question I can leave for the FAQs. There are issues with that. Off the top of my head I will say no. The beneficiaries need to be the same as the applicant. There be some concerns about equipment.

Joseph Heller: Is a state university eligible as a partner?

Annie Ceccarini: As a partner? Yes. State university can be a partner.

Joseph Heller: Do all partners have to submit EIN, etc.?

Michele Devaney: You will not be able to apply in Grants.gov without that information.

Joseph Heller: What about the partners? Do they need to submit that or only the applicants?

Michele Devaney: Only the applicants. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements. The non-eligible entities, individual universities, they can be partners and they don't need to submit any of that information.

Joseph Heller: Can the compost generated be sold or does it have to be available for free?

Annie Ceccarini: This is related to program income. We will answer in the FAQs.

Joseph Heller: Will the rental of equipment be eligible?

Michele Devaney: Yes.

Joseph Heller: In line with this question, someone is asking about the equipment cost and if we could repeat those. If we could go to the slide about equipment costs. Are there limits on the costs they can spend on equipment?

Michele Devaney: The fourth criteria in here references the economic efficiency of the project.

Joseph Heller: Is a local fire district an acceptable applicant?

Michele Devaney: Yes, assuming they are local under local government.

Joseph Heller: Can a project have multiple sites?

Michele Devaney: Yes.

Joseph Heller: Are their established rates for in-kind personnel including staff and volunteers?

Annie Ceccarini: The rates for third-party volunteer services must be consistent with those paid for similar work by the non-Federal entities. What would you pay those volunteers for the work they are doing? That's what you would use towards your match. It should be consistent with those pay for similar work in the labor market. Will add this to that FAQ document and reference the cost sharing and matching regulation.

Joseph Heller: There are a few questions asking how or why this is only limited to the eligible entities. Would you explain the statute and how we offer this please?

Michele Devaney: What I can say is, that's what the statute says, only local governments are eligible to apply when the statute was generated by Congress.

Joseph Heller: I think that answers the question. Can the city be used as a third-party as part of this agreement?

Michele Devaney: They are asking if they can pay a contractor to provide services they are supposed to provide to residents, is that how you are reading that?

Joseph Heller: Yes. There asking they can take the funds and use it to pay someone else to do the service. Perhaps you can clarify a little bit more.

Michele Devaney: We can say contractual costs which are expenses associated with purchasing goods or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of procurement relationship is allowable.

Joseph Heller: How do you define community composting? Is there any consideration for size and scale? I guess the question is, is there any limit for maximum to the size of these projects?

Annie Ceccarini: At this time there is no limit in size. What we can say is a Notice of Funding Opportunity, this is the first year this program is being offered as a funding opportunity. Please, if you have questions or comments look in

the Notice of Funding Opportunity and send those to urbanagriculture@usda.gov so we can record your comments.

- Joseph Heller: Fringe is an allowable cost but it should be separated out from personnel both on the SF 424 and budget narrative?
- Michele Devaney: It should be shown as a percentage according to your organization policy.
- Joseph Heller: I have gotten towards the bottom unless I missed a few that we didn't answer.
- Michele Devaney: I see a couple quick ones. How much funding is been dispersed overall for this program? The agency expects to award the \$900,000.
- Joseph Heller: Can you explain the NICRA slide again?
- Michele Devaney: Regarding the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), there is a lot of detailed information on page 12 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Just as an overall summary. You must have an existing non-expired or an existing cost rate agreement. If you do not have one of those and you're requesting indirect costs, and your eligible for the de minimis rates, what you can do is plan your budget with a 10% indirect cost fee. You'll be required to execute if you are selected at the cost rate agreement at that 10% rate.
- Joseph Heller: Does a budget narrative count as part of the 15-page limit?
- Michele Devaney: No.
- Annie Ceccarini: We can answer about equipment. It's a single item that has a per-unit cost. Of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of more than one year, it's considered equipment.
- Joseph Heller: Annie, Michelle, I will step away. Terry D'Addio will continue as moderator. Terry is with Natural Resources Conservation Service, Natural Resources Specialist in the Division of Outreach and Partnerships. I want to thank everyone for joining us. Now I turn it over to Terry.
- Terry D'Addio: There are a number of other questions I want to remind everyone that given the time constraint, we cannot answer all the questions here. We will be answering them in the Q&A documents that will be on Farmers.gov/urban and Grants.gov.
- Can benefits be included in staffing costs?
- Michele Devaney: I just answer that one. Yes. In the budget narrative and show what percentage they are.
- I see a lot of procurement type questions. Procurements since these are local governments, I will read straight that those are subject to uniform guidance under the regulations of 2 CFR 200.318.

Terry D'Addio: Is there any scenario where USDA would want to grant larger than \$90,000 come if you don't get enough application? If so, what would we need to provide to be eligible for more funds?

Annie Ceccarini: At this time, we are not considering project budgets over \$90,000.

Terry D'Addio: I hope I'm not repeating. During the presentation, a \$5,000 limit is mentioned on equipment during the Q&A unless it was special purpose equipment limited to medical, science, and research activities. Would an on-site machine costing over \$5000 be allowed?

Michele Devaney: I can clarify that one more time. Material, supplies, and other costs related to the development and testing strategies to generate compost and reduce food waste are allowable. The per-unit cost of each supply item must be below \$5,000. Any item of \$5,000 or above with a useful life of more than one year is considered equipment. General-purpose equipment is not allowable. Special-purpose equipment means equipment which is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. There are no budget limits for special-purpose equipment.

Terry D'Addio: Can partners be changed after the project begins?

Annie Ceccarini: I believe there's an amendment to the agreement or change the scope of the project once it's been awarded and that would be something in the General Terms and Conditions of the award.

Terry D'Addio: There's a question, the full announcement on Grants.gov, applicant should plan for projects to start on September 15, 2020. How is that supposed to work if awards are not made until September 30?

Michele Devaney: The timeframe is in that September 15th to September 30th area. Awards must be in place by September 15th. It's our hope that they'll be in place and signed by September 30. We hope they'll be in place by the 15th.

Terry D'Addio: Can State funding from the Farm Bill be used as a match?

Michele Devaney: No.

Terry D'Addio: When does grant money have to be spent by?

Michele Devaney: It's two years after. If your project starts on September 15, 2020, it would go to September 15th, 2022 and the last date you can incur cost to get reimbursed would be September 15, 2022. Same with match, you have to have all of your match by September 15, 2022.

Terry D'Addio: Where will the frequently asked questions be located on Farmers.gov?

Annie Ceccarini: There is a version posted currently. If you went to farmers.gov/urban right now, you can scroll down the page on the right-hand side it says community compost and food waste reduction projects. There is an

accordion you click on the +. Drops down and says FAQ document. That's where you can find it.

- Terry D'Addio: I'm looking at some of the questions, trying to see them all. This is a question about reviewers. There's been a couple questions related to that. Will reviewers only review proposals within their geographic area?
- Annie Ceccarini: I can answer that. Reviewers will be conducted by those comprised of employees who represent different agencies, subject area and geographic locations.
- Terry D'Addio: Will projects be chosen on any geographic diversity or region-specific criteria?
- Michele Devaney: If you look at the evaluation criteria, both in the Notice of Funding opportunity on page 13 which I read aloud, there's nothing in there about geographic preference.
- Annie Ceccarini: Awards will be made in no fewer than 10 states. Think about geographically and it will be 10 awards, 10 different states.
- Terry D'Addio: Could you define agricultural producers as outlined in priority two?
- Michele Devaney: Let me see if I can find priority two.
- Terry D'Addio: We want to remind if we can't answer the question and we need to do more research, the question will be added to the FAQ document that will be updated.
- Michele Devaney: I think that's what we will do in reference to agriculture producers. We can provide a Farm Bill definition according to those statutes.
- Terry D'Addio: Okay. There was a message that projects should start in October and that they will start when the final document is signed. Does this need to be a new project or can it fund an existing project plan to launch a project and have it run for two years?
- Annie Ceccarini: These are all new projects. This is a new funding opportunity. The project must be two years in duration.
- Terry D'Addio: Does the \$90,000 cover two years or is it \$90,000 each year?
- Annie Ceccarini: The amount you request will cover it for the two-year duration. \$90,000 is the maximum amount you can ask for in Federal funds for two years. \$45,000 is the minimum request over the two years.
- Terry D'Addio: Would incorporating a gleaning program be appropriate under this grant?
- Annie Ceccarini: Yes. Gleaning is considered a food recovery effort and that would be covered.

Terry D’Addio: If two local governments partner on a project, can work be completed in both regions?

Michele Devaney: I think we answered that one. Yes, one of the local governments can be in multiple locations.

Terry D’Addio: Can the funds be used for supporting a pilot or startup compost business that will operate on county property?

Annie Ceccarini: Individuals, for-profits and small businesses are not eligible for this funding opportunity.

Terry D’Addio: Can county government help start up a compost business? Can they use the funds to help start a business? It's a different way to ask the question. And how they are asking it through subgranting. Michelle, do you want to take that?

Michele Devaney: A local government is only allowed to subgrant to another eligible entity which would be a local government and not to a business.

There is one on here about the cooperative agreement with the level of substantial involvement. It’s on page 3 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity where it refers to cooperative agreements and activities that NRCS will undertake. We can repeat that in the FAQ. It's quite lengthy. There are three bullet points on there.

Terry D’Addio: Can we include municipal labor and equipment?

Michele Devaney: Yes. They can use their own personnel, say to construct a facility. That will be considered part of your match.

Terry D’Addio: Can grantees make partial subgrants to partners such as nonprofits and academic institutions?

Michele Devaney: The answer to that is no. You have to subgrant to another local government. Or other local government.

Terry D’Addio: Do they have to have both aspects involved in the project - compost and food waste reduction?

Annie Ceccarini: Let's go back to the priority. This is important. These are the four areas and compost is included in that as well as integrating other food waste strategies including food waste recovery. This is the type of project that will receive priority or higher consideration with scoring.

Terry D’Addio: Will we get the monies in advance of implementation?

Michele Devaney: That would depend on the level of risk of your organization, which would be determined by the agency after selection.

Terry D’Addio: I am a small residential compost collection business. I would partner with my local city government to apply for this grant, correct?

Michele Devaney: The local government would apply and would not be able to give the award to a for-profit business. If they were a partner and the city were to go through their procurement process and use them as a contractor, then yes. Annie, you can jump in here.

Annie Ceccarini: I think how Michele just described it is the correct response. If you are not an eligible entity and you would like to partner with an eligible entity which is the local governments, you will not be able to receive a subaward because you're not an eligible entity. However, you'd be able to partner with them and potentially have them contract with you to utilize your services.

I see another question here in regard to higher education. If a community college is considered to be a local government by the state is it eligible to apply? That question already exists on our FAQ document and the answer is no. It's not considered a unit of local government. It's an institution of higher education.

Michele Devaney: The notice of opportunity on page 8 outlines matching cost share and explains the requirements of the letter of support. You can read it. I'm not going to read. It refers to the name, address and telephone contributor, etc.

Terry D'Addio: Can this help fund a technical study?

Annie Ceccarini: If a technical study is in line with the purpose of CCFWR pilot project, then you should submit an application. We wouldn't be able to answer that unless we saw it specifically and reviewed your application.

Terry D'Addio: Are there any limits to the location of a project? Can a project include systems at two different sites?

Annie Ceccarini: Yes, a project can have multiple locations.

Terry D'Addio: If the project includes consulting services, do we need to submit digital copies of the scope of work?

Michele Devaney: Include consulting services under the contractual cost category of the SF 424A. We do need a description of the scope of work that will be done and the process for how the services will be procured in the Budget Narrative.

Terry D'Addio: We are pretty much done. I want to thank anyone for participating. I want to remind everyone you will be answering the question and they will be posted to [Farmers.gov/urban](https://farmers.gov/urban) and more information about the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is on the website. The FAQs will also be on [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov).

Is there anything else you would like to say before Jennifer closes us out?

Michele Devaney: I'm sure there are additional questions we did not get to. They'll be in the FAQ.

Terry D'Addio:

Go ahead Jennifer.

Jennifer Ryan:

Thank you. On behalf of the USDA and the National Resources conservation service, I want to say thank you to Joseph, Michelle, Annie and Terry for taking time out of their busy schedule to provide an excellent presentation about the urban cooperative agreement food waste reduction and composting opportunity. Thank you get one for attending today's webinar.