



# Pacific Islands Area Conservation Solutions Through Strategic Partnerships

**Fiscal Year (FY) 2021  
PIA Conservation Solutions Through  
Strategic Partnerships  
National Funding Opportunity (NFO)**

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**No. USDA-NRCS-PIA-MULTI-21-NOFO0001062**



## Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

### SUMMARY INFORMATION

**Federal Awarding Agency Name:** U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – Pacific Islands Area (PIA)

**Notice of Funding Opportunity Title:** Pacific Islands Area Fiscal Year 2021 Conservation Solutions Through Strategic Partnerships Announcement for Funding

**Notice of Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-NRCS-PIA-MULTI-21-NOFO0001062

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA):** This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance numbers:

10.902 Soil and Water Conservation  
10.912 Environmental Quality Incentives Program  
10.917 Agricultural Management Assistance  
10.924 Conservation Stewardship Program

### Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is seeking proposals from parties and potential partners to execute conservation solutions in the Pacific Islands Area (i.e., Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)). Key conservation priorities are outlined in section A.

Proposals will be accepted from non-profit organizations having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education), nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education), state or territorial governments, city governments, county governments, public and state-controlled institutions of higher education, and private institutions of higher learning. NRCS anticipates that the total amount awarded under this announcement in Federal fiscal year 2021 will be approximately \$1,000,000. NRCS will accept applications under this notice for single year or multi-year proposals, not to exceed five (5) years.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for projects as well as the evaluation criteria (see section E) that will be used to evaluate proposals. Proposals will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. If incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals are eliminated from competition, notification of elimination will be sent to the applicant.

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

## **Key Dates**

Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on April 26, 2021. For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.

Questions regarding this notice of funding opportunity (NFO) may be submitted until April 7, 2021, via email to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact (see section H.) with the Opportunity Number in the subject line. Responses to questions posed will be posted on Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the application due date.

A webinar for applicants is scheduled for March 10, 2021, at 2 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time. Information on how to participate in the webinar will be posted to the NRCS PIA website (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/events/pia/newsroom/events/?eventDate=3-2021>).

The agency anticipates making selections by May 21, 2021, and expects to execute awards by September 15, 2021.

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

The estimated funding floor for this opportunity is \$60,000, and the estimated funding ceiling is \$500,000. The funding floor means the minimum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. The ceiling is the maximum agreement funding amount for the Federal share per agreement awarded. These numbers refer to the total agreement amount, not any specific budget period.

## **Federal Financial Assistance Training**

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

## Table of Contents

A.	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....	5
B.	FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION .....	6
	1. Available Funding.....	6
	2. Type of Award.....	6
C.	ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION .....	7
	1. Eligible Applicants .....	7
	2. Other.....	7
	3. Cost Sharing or Matching.....	8
D.	APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION .....	8
	1. Information for New Users of Grants.gov.....	8
	2. Electronic Application Package .....	11
	3. Content and Form of Application Submission .....	12
	4. Submission Dates and Times and Correspondence.....	17
	5. Intergovernmental Review .....	18
	6. Funding Restrictions.....	18
	7. Indirect costs limitations .....	19
E.	APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION.....	20
	1. Review and Selection Process.....	20
	2. Merit/Technical Criteria .....	21
	3. Administrative and Risk Criteria.....	22
	4. Awards Over the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (if applicable) .....	23
	5. Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates .....	24
F.	FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION.....	24
	1. Federal Award Notices.....	24
	2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	24
	3. Reporting.....	25
G.	FEDERAL AWARDED AGENCY CONTACT .....	25
H.	OTHER INFORMATION .....	26

## A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are:

- CFDA No. 10.902: Soil and Water Conservation: 16 USC 590a-590f, 590q
- CFDA No. 10.912: Environmental Quality Incentives Program: 16 USC 3839aa et seq.
- CFDA No. 10.917: Agricultural Management Assistance: 7 USC 1524(b)
- CFDA No. 10.924: Conservation Stewardship Program: 16 USC 3839aa-21 et seq.

The objective of this Notice of Funding Opportunity is to:

1. Increase conservation delivery capacity of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and emerging partners by increasing the number of partner staff implementing or supporting conservation delivery for:
  - a. NRCS Service Centers serving American Samoa or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
  - b. Any NRCS Service Center areas in the Pacific Islands Area
  - c. Improving Farm Bill contract completion
  - d. Improving Farm Bill contracted practice implementation
2. Increase adoption and implementation of soil health plans on cropland by:
  - a. Organizing interactive feedback, education, and outreach events to engage customer interest in soil health management systems and plans
  - b. Building local conservation delivery capacity of certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) to develop soil health management plans, as *per* [Soil Health Management Plan Criteria Practice/Activity Code \(116\)](#)
3. Evaluate carbon and nitrogen cycles in local cropping systems to assess impacts of established conservation practices on soil organic matter and soil carbon
4. Support innovative projects and programs that amplify outcomes for:
  - a. Economics of Soil Health
  - b. Soil Carbon Amendments (as per NRCS Conservation Practice Standard) (Soil Carbon Amendment – Code 808; included under Other Related Documents of the NFO)
  - c. Watershed Function
5. Accelerate results through strategic partnerships that:

- a. Support PIA's Targeted Conservation Delivery Strategy
- b. Support PIA's Strategic Plan Initiatives

All work must be done in accordance with NRCS manuals, handbooks, bulletins, and instructions. These can be accessed on the eDirectives website:

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/Default.aspx>.

Development and implementation of conservation plans are to be in accordance with NRCS General Manual Title 180, Part 409 Conservation Planning Policy, and the NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook, Title 180, Part 600.

Technical and administrative services to support management of Farm Bill applications and contracts are to be in accordance with the NRCS General Manual Title 440, Part 402 Business Tools, and the NRCS Conservation and Program Contracting Manual, Title 440, Part 530.

All proposals must include and detail plans for meeting with the local District Conservationist and Soil and Water Conservation District(s). Proposals that rely on partnerships must include detail plans for meeting with working groups, partners, and stakeholders to review and obtain feedback, input, and support.

## **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

### **1. Available Funding**

#### **a. Estimated Funding**

The total amount of Federal funding the agency expects to award through this opportunity is \$1,000,000.

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

Projects may be between one (1) and five (5) years in duration. Applicants should plan their projects based on an estimated project start date of September 15, 2021.

#### **c. Number of Awards**

The agency expects to make up to seven (7) awards.

### **2. Type of Award**

#### **a. Type of Federal Award**

The agency plans to award cooperative agreements pursuant to this opportunity. The agency will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement and will undertake activities such as the following:

- i. Authority to suspend work if specifications or work statements are not met
- ii. Review and approval of one stage of work before another may begin
- iii. Review and approval of substantive provisions of proposed subawards or contracts beyond existing Federal policy

- iv. Agency and recipient collaboration or joint participation
- v. Project monitoring to permit specified kinds of direction or redirection of the work because of interrelationships with and impacts on other projects
- vi. Highly prescriptive agency requirements that limit recipient discretion
- vii. Review and approval of key personnel
- viii. Direct agency operational involvement or participation during the activity

**b. Procurement Contracts**

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

**c. Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications**

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

## **C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

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

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

- a. City governments
- b. County governments
- c. Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
- d. Nonprofits that do not have a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS (other than institutions of higher education)
- e. Private institutions of higher education
- f. Public and State/Territorial-controlled institutions of higher education
- g. State and Territorial governments

### **2. Other**

Any award made pursuant to this NFO will be made to a single entity. Applicants that apply as “partnerships” or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship

between the applicant and the “partner” parties. In most cases, it must be reflected in the award as an awardee/subawardee relationship.

An applicant organization may submit more than one (1) application.

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

### **3. Cost Sharing or Matching**

There is not a specific match requirement for this NFO. However, applications will be evaluated in part on the relative contribution of non-Federal resources to the project. Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash, services, materials, equipment, or third-party in-kind contributions.

Refer to section D of this NFO for information about any required submittals related to match or cost-share requirements. Refer to section E for a description of how voluntary match will be evaluated. While the pace of cost-sharing/matching may vary throughout the award period, the agency will actively monitor cost-sharing/matching levels as it receives payment requests to ensure the total cost sharing/matching requirement is met by the award period of performance end date. Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions is located at 2 CFR 200.306.

## **D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

### **1. Information for New Users of Grants.gov**

#### **a. Overview**

While a Grants.gov account is not required to download an NFO and related documents, it is required to submit an application. If your organization has never submitted an application via Grants.gov, please be aware that there are several steps you must take to register your organization before you can submit an application. **Completing those steps takes a significant amount of time.**

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

#### **b. Register to Apply through Grants.gov**

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

Organizations must complete all steps to register (steps i. through v. below). Complete organization instructions are included on Grants.gov here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.

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

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

c. Steps to Register:

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

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

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

Track Role Status: To track your role request, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>

- d. *Electronic Signature.* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize people who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role. **This step (step c.v. above) is often missed and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**
- e. *Workspace.* Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each NFO, you can create individual instances of a workspace. An applicant can start an application in Workspace and return to work on it later within Workspace.
- f. *Apply for an Opportunity.* Below is an overview of applying on Grants.gov. For complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to:  
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>
- i. *Create a Workspace:* Creating a workspace allows you to complete an application online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
  - ii. *Complete a Workspace:* Add participants to the workspace to work on the application together, complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the status of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.
    - *Adobe Reader:* If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage,

network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

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

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

- **Mandatory Fields in Forms:** In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.
  - **Complete SF-424 Fields First:** The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS Number. Once it is completed, the information will transfer (i.e., prepopulate) to the other forms.
- iii. **Submit a Workspace:** An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.
- iv. **Track a Workspace Submission:** After successfully submitting a workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted workspace.

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

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

## **2. Electronic Application Package**

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

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

### **Address to Request Application Package**

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

### 3. Content and Form of Application Submission

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

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

Be clear and concise in the preparation of an application, however, applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project.

#### a. Project Narrative

Each page must be numbered and have one-inch margins. The text of the project narrative must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Courier) with no smaller than 12-point font. The project narrative must not exceed ten (10) pages. This page limitation applies to the project narrative only. The Project Narrative includes a Project Summary (two (2) page maximum) and a Project Description (eight (8) page maximum).

Project Summary (two-page maximum): Provide a description of the project including the information below:

1. Project title (preference is not more than 10 words)
2. Applicant name
3. Project director/contact name and contact information (mailing address, phone number, and email)
4. Objective in Section A of this NFO that is addressed by the project
5. Project objectives (project purpose and list of goals)
6. Project geographic area/location (where activities will take place; this can be an island, NRCS service area, Conservation District, watershed, or designated area – For this, provide project area parameters. Additionally, project area can include a land use (crop, pasture/range, forest, wildlife, confined livestock) or other modifier such as crop type or resource concern).
7. Duration of project (in years and/or months)
8. Amount of federal funds requested
9. Amount of non-federal match funding committed. Only amount needs to be specified here. Provide details of match sources and match documentation in the budget narrative. Refer to section d. Budget Narrative.
10. Project proposed activities
11. A list of organizations, entities, agencies, and/or individuals that will partner with applicant in implementing the activities of the proposal. Provide details about partners roles and qualification under Project Management in the Project Description.
12. Project deliverables and benefits

Project Description (eight-page maximum): Describe the following:

- i. Proposal background - Issue or problem, particularly as it impacts the project geographic area and those who will be affected and benefit from the proposed project.
- ii. Project objectives – Specific qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, of the project’s purpose and goals. How and by whom will the impact be measured?
- iii. Project method – Approaches/activities to be employed, including those that will be performed by participating partners (specify the partner as well as the approach(es)/activity(ies)).
- iv. Project action plan and timeline –Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. It is anticipated that projects will be able to start on or before September 15, 2021, so proposals should have flexible start dates with timeline shown relative to the execution of an agreement.

Include near the start of your project a meeting with NRCS staff to introduce partners and staff, go over the project, and decide on logistic arrangements dealing with coordination and communication (i.e., project kick-off conference).

For projects that increase conservation delivery capacity by increasing the number of partner staff implementing or supporting conservation delivery in conjunction with NRCS, note and reflect in your timeline that it will take up to 6 weeks from the time you notify NRCS that a hire has been made and on-boarding paperwork is submitted (longer if the employee has security issues) for the employee to obtain access to NRCS’ office and computer system.

- v. Project Management – How the project will be organized and managed? Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
- vi. Project deliverables/products – Specify deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor progress and make payment.

Examples:

For projects that increase conservation delivery capacity by increasing the number of partner staff implementing or supporting conservation delivery, deliverables would include the number of conservation plans written, the number of conservation practices certified, etc.

For projects that amplify outcomes for Soil Health, Carbon Farming or Watershed Function, deliverable could include the number of soil

health plans, technical material that lead to increase application such as reports, technical materials, publications, etc.

For projects that accelerate results through strategic partnerships, deliverables could include development of a long-range plan based targeted conservation delivery proposal.

Include a project success story as a deliverable.

- vii. References, bibliographies, and citations, if included, should be added as an attachment to the other attachment form so they will not be counted toward the eight-page maximum.

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

- b. **Application Form:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance) See Instructions for Completing SF 424 located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov.
- c. **Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs.** Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, Column 1 should reflect the agency funds, and Column 2 should reflect the applicant's matching funds. This form is the summary budget for the project and should include the full project totals on pages one and two. See Instructions for Completing SF 424A located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov. Refer to Section D of this opportunity for information regarding indirect costs.
- d. **Budget Narrative.**
  - i. In a separate document titled "Budget Narrative," explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency's approval and estimate its cost. The pages included as the budget narrative do not count toward the page limit. Refer to the budget narrative guidance located in the Related Documents tab of this opportunity on Grants.gov for assistance in the preparation of this information.

Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. The budget narrative must show the amounts and sources of match or cost share (including both cash and in-kind contributions).

For third-party contributions, a letter is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the contributor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the contribution is made, (4) the dollar amount of the contribution, and (5) a statement that the contributor will pay the contribution no later than the end of the award period. The agency may conduct reference checks to ensure that organizations identified are supportive and involved with the project. Cost sharing/match letters should be addressed to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact in section G. of this NFO and uploaded under Other Attachments in Grants.gov.

ii. As required in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System. Therefore, any U.S. states, local governments, and non-profit organizations applying under this opportunity must include one of the following statements in its budget narrative:

a) "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

b) "My organization was not required to submit a Single Audit report last year."

iii. All applicants are hereby notified of the following:

- Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award. (Accepting the 10 percent *de minimis* rate as a condition of award constitutes establishing an approved rate.)
- Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award.

- Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.
  
- e. **Grants.gov Lobbying Form, Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 2 CFR Part 418, Appendix A- Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying, you must also complete and submit the SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities located at 2 CFR 418, Appendix B. See 2 CFR, Subpart 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.
  
- f. **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)**(if applicable). If charging indirect costs (including for cost share), upload the current rate agreement (this includes a 10% de minimis rate agreement already in place) under Other Attachments in the Grants.gov Opportunity Application Package. See Section D for information regarding indirect costs.
  
- g. **Post Award Documentation.** If indirect costs are included in the project budget and a 10% de minimis rate agreement is desired, the rate agreement will be executed at the time of award, as appropriate.
  
- h. **Unique entity identifier/DUNS and System for Award Management (SAM).**Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier (DUNS number) in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the agency is ready to make an award, it may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

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

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

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

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

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

#### **4. Submission Dates and Times and Correspondence**

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov. Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time (ET) on April 26, 2021. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late (an application is considered on time at 11:59.59 pm ET, but it is late at 12:00 am ET). Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

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

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

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

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

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

## **5. Intergovernmental Review**

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

## **6. Funding Restrictions**

Funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the agency in advance of incurring such costs:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project.
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award, including time spent applying for this opportunity.
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and 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.
- g. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces, the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces, and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.
- h. Management fees and profit. Any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related direct and indirect costs only.
- i. Meals: Meals may be charged to an award only if they are necessary for the performance of the project. For instance, meals (normally only lunch) that are a necessary part of the costs of meetings and conferences (i.e., required attendance and continuity of a meeting), the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of information, are allowable, as are costs of transportation, rental of facilities, speakers’ fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences. Note: Meals consumed while in official travel status do not fall in this category. They are considered to be per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization’s established travel

policies subject to statutory limitations or in accordance with Federal travel policies.

- j. Costs normally charged as indirect costs may not be charged as direct costs without proper justification and agency approval. Proper justification includes documentation that the costs meet the criteria for allowability (see 2 CFR 200.403). Examples of such costs include rent, utilities, depreciation on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.
- k. Salaries that are not commensurate with level of work: All costs must be reasonable to be allowable (CFR 200.403), and 2 CFR 200.404 defines a reasonable cost as one if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. Salaries determined not to be reasonable compared to the level of work will be unallowable.

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

#### **7. Indirect costs limitations:**

- a. A non-profit organization or institution of higher education awarded a cooperative agreement will be limited to a 10 percent indirect cost rate in accordance with the agency's annual appropriations act. The 10 percent indirect cost rate applies to both federal and non-federal funds. Other types of entities are not subject to this statutory limitation.
- b. To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; or 2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the de minimis rate.
- c. Applicants not subject to a statutory limitation, which have a current NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. A recipient may voluntarily reduce or waive recovery of indirect costs at its sole discretion and must not be encouraged or coerced in any way to do so by the agency. A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. Indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA. However, if an applicant with a current NICRA is subject to the statutory limitation, indirect costs must be calculated as follows. First, multiply the NICRA rate by the base stated in the NICRA to arrive at Amount A. Next, multiply the statutory limit of 10 percent by the total of all direct costs to

arrive at Amount B. The lower of Amount A and B is the amount of indirect cost to include on the budget.

- d. Entities that are eligible for the *de minimis* rate who already have a *de minimis* rate agreement must use the rate and base specified in the agreement, which is modified total direct costs (MTDC) as defined by 2 CFR 200.68 and also excluding the amount of each subaward exceeding \$25,000. Note that MTDC excludes certain costs from the base to which the rate is applied. A copy of the applicant's *de minimis* rate agreement must be provided with the application. If a recipient is eligible to use the *de minimis* rate, but does not have a *de minimis* rate agreement, use an indirect cost rate of no more than 10 percent of MTDC when preparing the budget. If selected for award, a *de minimis* rate agreement will be executed along with the award.
- e. If voluntarily reduced or waived, the recipient may choose to apply any unrecovered indirect costs as part of their cost share or match. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount which could have been charged to the Federal award under the recipient's approved negotiated indirect cost rate (2 CFR 200.306(c)).
- f. Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization they may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.

## **E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **1. Review and Selection Process**

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

Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by a technical review board nominated by the approving official. Risk reviews will be conducted by the FPAC Business Center,

Grants and Agreements Division. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the NRCS Pacific Islands Area Director.

## **2. Merit/Technical Criteria**

Proposals that successfully pass this initial vetting are evaluated against the following technical review criteria. It is recommended that applicants use these criteria as a guide during proposal development.

### **Project Design (30 points)**

- The extent to which the project provides benefit to NRCS and its successful completion will help NRCS Pacific Islands Area's Strategic Plan and Targeted Conservation Delivery Strategy
- The project will effectively address the identified conservation objective
- The project is described clearly and completely; each activity has a clear purpose and is linked to the project purpose
- The project's design and implementation strategy is based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology
- The project area has an appropriate scale for the resource concern(s) and goals identified
- The action plan and timeline is clear and realistic and the activities flow logically
- The budget is adequately explained and justified; costs are necessary and reasonable to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives

### **Impact (15 points)**

- A compelling conservation need is described with clear project goals and objectives
- The proposal includes measurable and achievable project outcomes
- The project clearly describes the process for gathering information on project impact
- The project generates substantial conservation benefit as well as a substantial type and number of deliverables sufficient to result in a measurable outcome

### **Partner Involvement and Contribution (15 points)**

- The proposal is supported by a robust partnership that includes a diversity of entities and organizations sufficient in size and composition to achieve the proposed conservation benefits
- The partners have a history of collaboration and engagement with agricultural producers and private landowners to ensure high levels of participation
- The proposal includes a robust strategy for partner-led outreach and education to agricultural producers and private landowners

Targeting for Historically Underserved Producers (5 points)

- The proposal meaningfully encourages or includes participation of historically underserved producers and landowners, including socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource and veteran farmers and ranchers, or includes partner organization(s) working with or representing such groups

Leverage (10 points) \*optional

While there is not a specific match amount required, applications providing contribution of non-Federal resources will receive one (1) point, up to a maximum of ten (10) points, for every 10% of agreement funding provided as contribution.

- The percentage of the overall project cost that will come from non-federal partner resources
- The partner contributions are value-added and bring unique and qualified expertise or resources to the project to enhance project outcomes (e.g., cash vs. in-kind, FA vs. TA, TA skills and expertise)
- The proposed contribution deliverables, contribution commitment letters, and valuation methods demonstrate a clear and compelling relationship to project deliverables and outcomes
- The contribution deliverables and valuation methods are clearly documented

Management (25 points)

- The timeline is realistic, reflecting the time, tasks, and expenses needed to carry out project planning, implementation, and evaluation needs
- The lead partner has experience managing similar conservation projects, executing deliverables, and successfully getting conservation on the ground
- Project staff has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out the project

### **3. Administrative and Risk Criteria**

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

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

The awarding agency will check SAM to ensure the applicant is not suspended or debarred, which would preclude receiving an award. In addition, prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313 and 2 CFR 200.205(a)).

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

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

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

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

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

of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR 200.205, Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

## **5. Anticipated Selection Announcement and Federal Award Dates**

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by May 21, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 15, 2021.

## **F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

### **1. Federal Award Notices**

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

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

### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

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

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

In addition, a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106 review and consultation by an NRCS State or area office with consulting parties (such as the pertinent State Historic Preservation Officer and federally recognized Indian Tribes) may be required prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact cultural resources. NHPA Section 106, its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800), and other related authorities, require Federal

agencies to determine if a project has the potential to cause an effect to historic properties and, if so, if they are adverse and how the effects may be addressed. The NHPA review and compliance in accordance with section 106 of NHPA and implementing regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 must be completed by NRCS and applicants may be required to pay for any cultural resource surveys needed for NRCS to assess project effects. More information on the applicant's role in the NHPA Section 106 process can be found on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation website at <https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/section-106-applicant-toolkit>.

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

### **3. Reporting**

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

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

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

## **G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT**

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

Name: Melanie Krizmanich

Grants Management Specialist  
FPAC Business Center  
Mailing Address: Patriots Plaza III, 11-149A, 355 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20319  
Phone Number: (202) 572-5805  
Email: [Melanie.Krizmanich@usda.gov](mailto:Melanie.Krizmanich@usda.gov) with a copy to [FPAC.BC.GAD@USDA.GOV](mailto:FPAC.BC.GAD@USDA.GOV)

## H. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Questions regarding this opportunity must be submitted to the Federal Awarding Agency Contact identified above via email with the NFO number in the subject line. Questions must be submitted by April 7, 2021. A summary of questions and answers will be posted to the Related Documents tab of this NFO in Grants.gov approximately two weeks before the application due date.
2. For technical issues with Grants.gov, please contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.
3. **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**  
Applications are considered confidential information. Applications are not shared with individuals or entities seeking public disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without the consent of the applicant. More specifically, Executive Order 12600 and USDA FOIA regulation 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart A requires the awarding agency to provide notice to applicants that a third party has requested copies of their business information, and requires the awarding agency to consult with applicants regarding the releasing their records.
4. **Government Obligation**  
The Federal Government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of this opportunity. Only authorized federal officials can bind the Federal Government to the expenditure of funds.
5. **Details about NRCS in the Pacific Islands Area**  
Details about NRCS in the Pacific Islands Area can be found at:
  - i. NRCS PIA Strategic Plan:  
[https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/pia/about/?cid=nrcs142p2\\_037642](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/pia/about/?cid=nrcs142p2_037642)
  - ii. NRCS PIA Website:  
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/pia/home/>

## **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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