

Conservation Innovation Grants

Natural Resources Conservation Service



Investment in Innovation

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are competitive grants that drive public and private sector innovation in resource conservation. CIG projects inspire creative problem-solving—boosting production on farms, ranches, and private forests through improvements in water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat.

Program at a Glance

National and State CIG – Public and private grantees develop the tools, technologies, and strategies to support next-generation conservation efforts on working lands and develop market-based solutions to resource challenges. Grantees must match the CIG investment at least one to one.

On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials – Newly authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill, On-Farm Trials supports more widespread adoption of innovative approaches, practices, and systems on working lands. On-Farm Trials projects feature collaboration between NRCS and partners to implement on-the-ground conservation activities and then evaluate their impact. Incentive payments are provided to producers to offset the risk of implementing innovative approaches. The Soil Health Demo Trial (SHD) component of On-Farm Trials focuses exclusively on implementation of conservation practices and systems that improve soil health. Eligible entities receiving SHD awards agree to follow consistent soil health assessment protocols to evaluate the impacts of practice and system implementation.

Who is Eligible?

CIG applications are accepted from state or local governments, federally-recognized American Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, Pacific Islands Area).



CIG funds innovative, on-the-ground conservation projects, including pilot projects and field demonstrations. Proposed projects must conform to the description of innovative conservation projects or activities published in the annual funding notice. With its focus on innovation, CIG does not fund projects supporting technologies and approaches commonly used in the geographic area covered by the application, including those already eligible for funding through EQIP.

The maximum CIG award is set annually by the NRCS Chief and historically has been either \$1 million or \$2 million. An applicant's CIG funding request must be matched at least 1:1 with non-federal funding. Matching funds can be any combination of cash and in-kind contributions. The grantee is also responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project. NRCS will provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

CIG History

Conservation Innovation Grants are competitive grants that stimulate the development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands.

First authorized by
2002 Farm Bill

Funding source:
Environmental Quality
Incentives Program

Annual national CIG
funding average:
\$20 million

Total national CIGs
awarded since 2004:
711

Total national CIG
funding since 2004:
\$286.7 million

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Historically Underserved Farmers, Ranchers and Forest Landowners

NRCS recognizes the need to provide special consideration to historically-underserved agricultural producers and forest landowners and strives to ensure that they benefit from innovative technologies and approaches. Each year, up to 10 percent of national CIG funds are set aside for applicants who are historically underserved (beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, military veteran farmers and ranchers, or American Indian tribes) or community-based organizations that include or represent these groups.

How to Apply

National CIG: A CIG funding notice is announced each year. Funds for single- or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, will be awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. Projects may be watershed-based, regional, multi-state, or nationwide in scope. The natural resource concerns eligible for funding through CIG are identified in the funding announcement and may change annually to focus on new and emerging, high priority natural resource concerns.

Applications are evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice. The peer panel recommendations are reviewed by an NRCS Grants Review Board that makes funding recommendations to the NRCS Chief. The NRCS Chief makes the final award selections.

State CIG: The CIG state component emphasizes projects that benefit a limited geographical area. Participating states announce their funding availability for CIG competitions through their state NRCS offices.

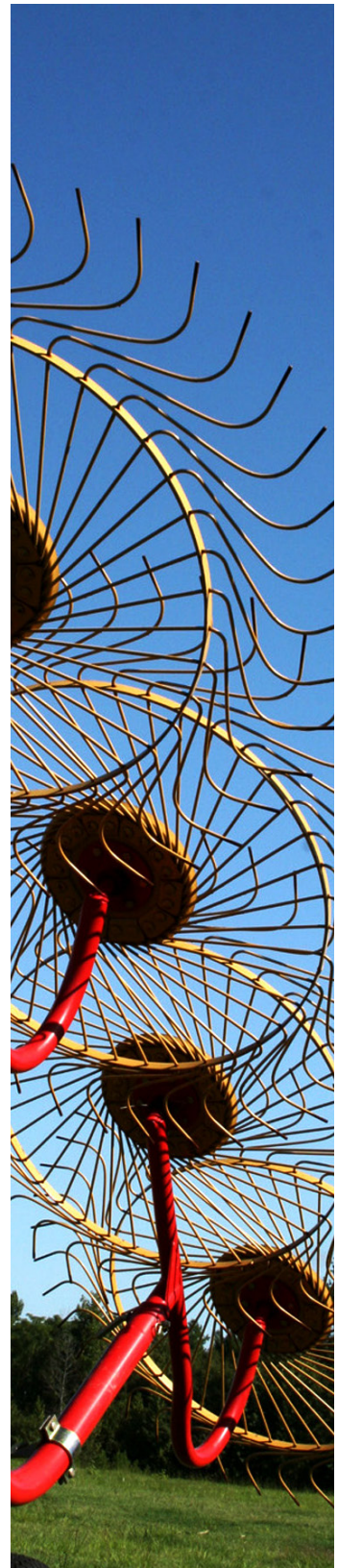
More Information

Once funds for CIG become available, a funding notice is posted on **grants.gov**, the federal e-Grants portal. The funding notice is also posted on the NRCS website: **nrcs.usda.gov**. The funding notice details CIG requirements and the information required from applicants.

Complete applications must be submitted through **grants.gov** and e-mailed to the NRCS National Office at **nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov**.

For more information, visit **nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill** or **farmers.gov**.

Find your local USDA Service Center at **farmers.gov/service-locator**.



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