



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Applicant Webinar

June 30, 2026

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



Welcome

Jerry Raynor, Director NRCS Financial Assistance Program Division



RCPP Classic & AFA NFOs Hit the Street

- Up to \$310 million for 2026 RCPP Classic & AFA
- Up to \$30 million for projects with Indian tribes
- Maximum project funding is \$10 million
- Minimum project funding amount for is \$250,000
- NRCS can make up to 15 AFA awards
- Short turnaround obligations
- NRCS must receive proposals by 4:59 p.m. ET on August 24, 2026



Key Difference from Previous NFOs

- Reduced max federal share per project to \$10M to encourage more manageable, partnership-ready projects.
- Raised de minimis indirect cost rate to 15% to align with USDA mutual-interest agreement terms.
- Streamlined and clarified narrative questions to focus on outcomes and improve proposal evaluation.
- Expanded flexibility for Certified Entities to use ACEP certification for RCPP easements for AFAs only..
- Implemented a streamlined Consolidated Agreement process to jointly execute PPAs and SAs and reduce administrative burden.
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)- Drone purchase/use not allowed with federal funding.



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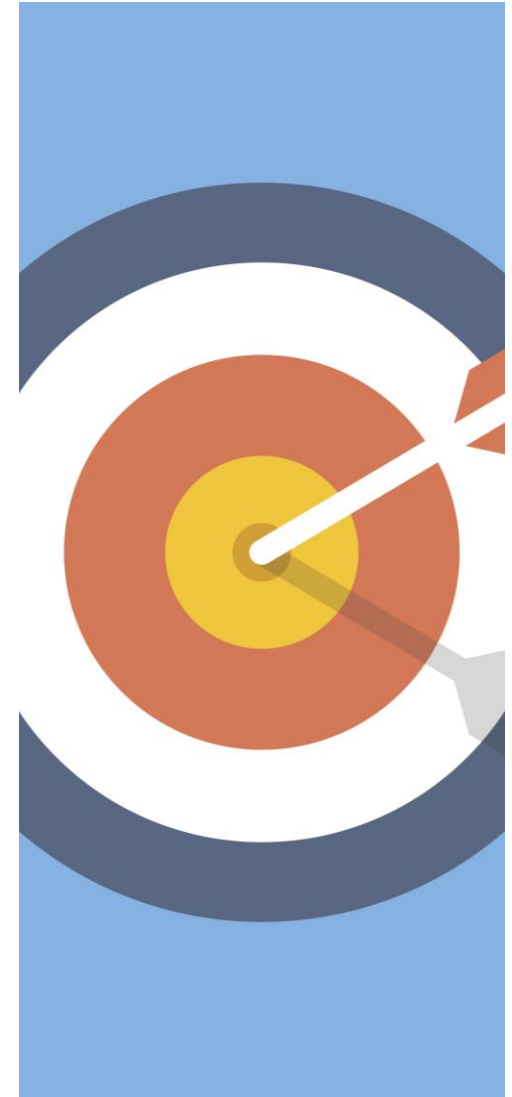
How to Submit Great RCPP Proposals

Erik Beardsley, FAPD Projects Branch

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RCPP Intent

- Solve problems for producers using conservation activities and easements
- Augment NRCS funds and expertise with partner resources
- Report Outcomes – What happened because we did the project
 - Healthier more productive soils
 - Cleaner water in rivers
 - Wildlife returning to the landscape



RCPP Authorities = Covered Programs

RCPP Activity Type	Covered Program Authorities	Purpose/Notes
Land Management	EQIP & CSP Practices ACEP-ALE/WRE – restoration PL-566 – land treatment	Treatments to restore or improve the land
Rental	CRP	Temporary & based on foregone income
US-Held Easement	ACEP-ALE/WRE & HFRP – easement acquisition	Permanent protection of the land
Entity-Held Easement	ACEP-ALE/WRE & HFRP – easement acquisition	Permanent protection of the land
Watershed Project	PL-566	Infrastructure project requiring an approved watershed <u>plan & design</u>



RCPP Fund Use & Limits

RCPP \$ **CAN** be used to:

- Financially assist treatment of resource concerns on land controlled by eligible producers.
- Pay partner costs to provide technical assistance activities in support of producer contracts.
- Pay partner costs to manage the project and report outcomes.

RCPP \$ **CANNOT** be used to:

- ✗ Fund research.
- ✗ Fund ongoing-positions.
- ✗ Fund farm start-up costs.
- ✗ Pay producer incentives to induce participation or augment conservation activity implementation payments.
- ✗ Pay partner indirect costs/overhead.



Flavors of RCPP Opportunities

Classic

- NRCS reimburses producers directly for FA activities.
- NRCS often delivers most of the TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- Partner's primary role is to provide outreach, measure impact, and deliver partner contributions to amplify NRCS funding.

AFA

- Partner installs practices for producers or reimburses producers for FA activities.
- Partner delivers all project TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- NRCS support limited to non-delegable tasks such as confirming the eligibility of producers and land, AGI verification, and compliance with NEPA/HEL/WC.



RCPP AFA — Reimbursement Only

- Provides maximum program control but requires strong financial management capacity.
 - Lead partner carry costs until reimbursement.
- Lead partner pays contractors, or sub-awardees first.
- NRCS reimburses only after:
 - A milestone is met
 - A deliverable is completed
 - A documented expense has been paid by the partner





II. PAYMENTS

NRCS shall approve RCPP Supplemental Agreement payments where the following conditions are satisfied:

Partner is compliant with all reporting and administrative requirements of this supplemental agreement;

Partner provides satisfactory / verifiable documentation of completion of each fully or partial technical or financial assistance deliverable and evidence supporting requested payment consistent with approved valuation method for that deliverable as documented in SA Attachment 1.

NRCS determines that work fully satisfies program eligibility and technical adequacy criteria for the project and practice, and the delivery is consistent with contract requirements.

Payments(s) shall be based on actual extent installed and calculated on a line item/deliverable basis. Each payment shall be limited to the lesser of the unexpended balance in line item/deliverable or the product of the actual extent installed times the lesser of the actual unit cost calculated from installed extent and costs, or the per unit cost at the time of contracting.

Note: Negotiated payment methods may include but are not limited to verifiable records of actual expenses such as canceled checks, paid bills, payroll records, timesheets, and subaward documents. Generally, labor costs charges to this award must be based upon salaries actually earned and the time actually worked on this award calculated to exclude administrative overhead. Exception to such "actual cost" methods are allowed ONLY when approved negotiated payment methods clearly document typical expenses associated with a task, and accounting records support delivery of specific quantities of a task for which such an approved negotiated payment method is in place.

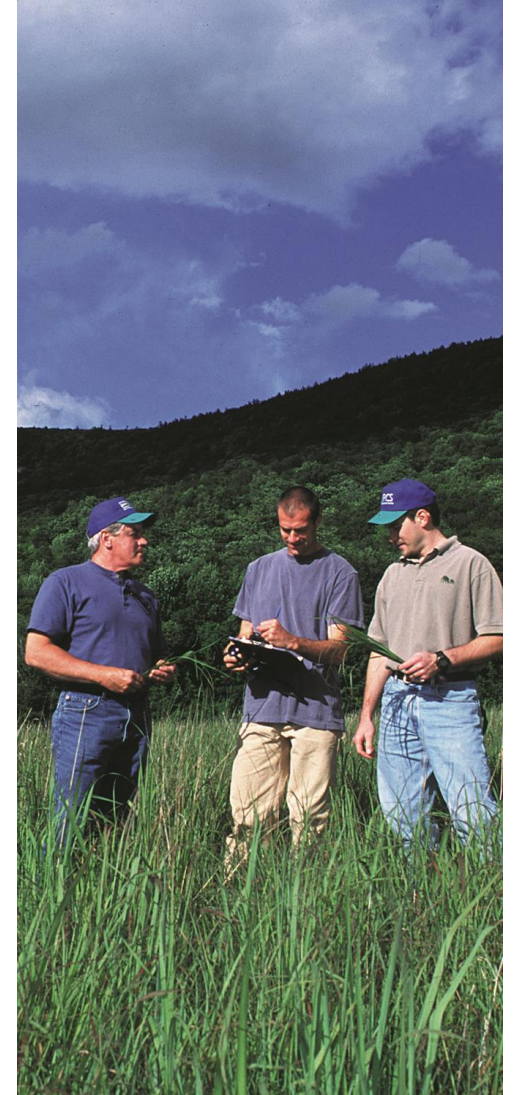
Partner Contributions Are Not Match

- Match is only required **for non-federal share of easement purchases and watershed plan implementation**
 - It counts as project contribution.
- Strong “contributions” occur because the project creates their need.
 - Versus “cool things” that will occur in the project area anyway.
- Contributions could be financial assistance/technical expertise to support producer contracts; project management and outcomes reporting.
- What is the basis for the estimated contribution values?
- How will the actual costs of the contributions be tracked and reported annually?



Contribution Power = Successful RCPP Projects

- Strong Partnerships Include:
 - Organizations that **have working relationships** with producers and support groups.
 - Organizations with **funding** to support activities not covered by RCPP funds.
 - Partners **familiar** with NRCS Resource Concerns and Practices
 - Partners with agriculture and conservation **technical skills**.
 - Organizations with **experience and capacity** to manage federally funded projects.



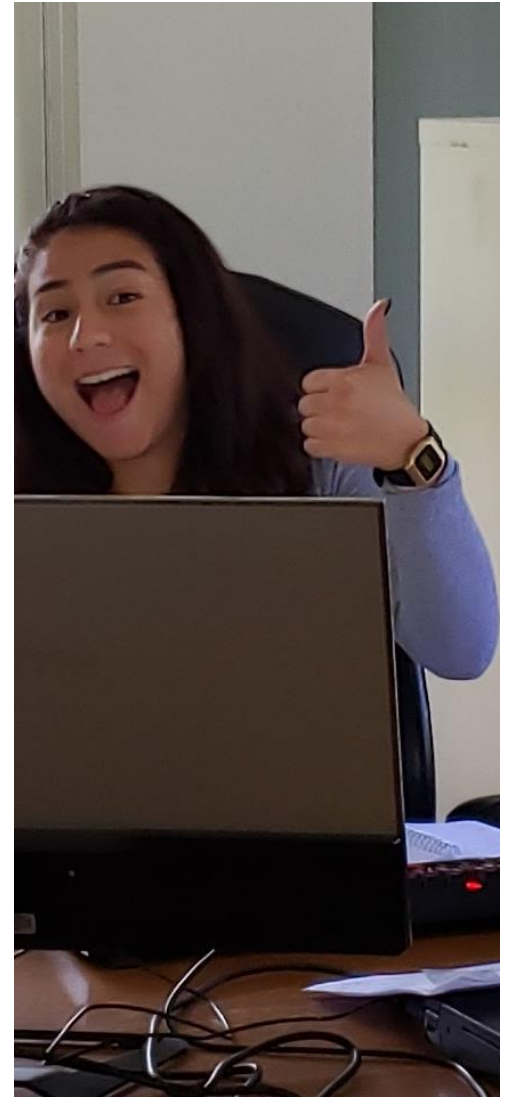
RCPP Classic Payment Schedule Flexibilities

- Can have RCPP Project specific Payment Schedules (higher rates NTE 100% of NRCS typical cost)
- Not realistic to create a payment scenario for everything.
 - Pick the closest scenario – including adopting scenarios from other states
- Work with State Payment Schedule Team
 - Payment Schedule development policy and timelines



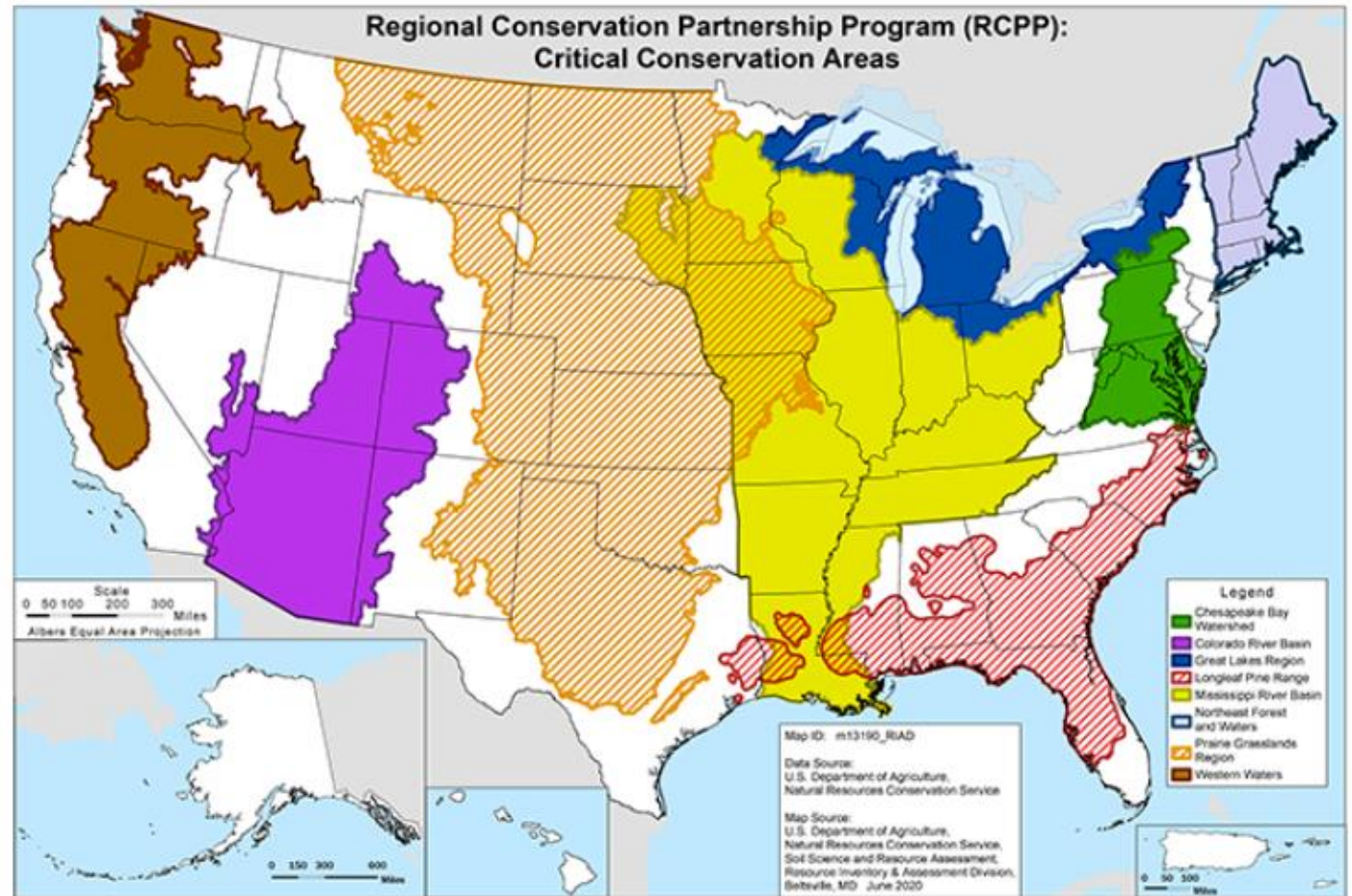
RCPP AFA Payment ~~Schedule~~ Flexibilities

- AFA does not use payment schedules.
 - Partner defines how they will contract with eligible producers and use FA to reimburse producers for implementing conservation work up to the *actual cost.
 - Or partner installs or contracts installation of conservation practices benefitting eligible producers NTE *actual cost.
- * Reasonably comparable to NRCS 100% rate for equivalent work (i.e., passes STC red face test).



RCPP Funding Pools

- State/Multi-State
 - Can include any RCPP resource concern or conservation benefit.
- Critical Conservation Areas
 - Project and producer contracts or easements under this project must address at least one CCA-specific priority resource concern.
 - A single proposal cannot include multiple CCAs.
 - See the [RCPP website](#) for more information.



Tips for Strong RCPP Partner Proposals

- Identifies problems affecting eligible producers that can be addressed with conservation on the ground.
 - Producer demand (e.g., unmet EQIP demand, regulatory relief, environmental impacts on production)
- Contributes technical assistance that supports getting eligible producer-benefitting conservation on the ground.
- Contributes funds to lessen producer cost share or pay for things RCPP funds can't be used for.
- Discusses measured benchmark conditions and target outcome values that will be quantified and reported.
- **Classic lead partner met with STC**, understands how project will impact local office workload, extent partnership can support producer planning and contract implementation.
- Describes project management roles within partnership and how contributions will support achieving project objectives and outcomes goals.
- **AFA lead partner met with STC**, has working knowledge of NRCS resource concerns, practice standards, planning procedures, producer eligibility and environmental compliance requirements.
 - Describes start-to-finish FA/TA delivery model of conservation standards by qualified staff/contractors and timeline for providing NRCS with environmental compliance and producer eligibility data.
- **AFA lead partner** clearly describes capability and capacity to manage project and implement FA/TA delivery on a reimbursable basis.

How to Apply

- Applicants must submit proposals through the [RCPP portal](#).
- RCPP portal requires a level 2 eAuthentication credential or a Login.gov credential.
- Obtaining a new Login.gov credential involves multiple steps and can take several days to complete.
- Instructions are posted on the [How to Apply to RCPP](#) web page.
- The steps will vary depending on whether an applicant has an existing credential or needs to obtain or upgrade an existing credential.
- Applicants expected to contact appropriate state conservationist and state RCPP Coordinator before submitting a proposal.

Do These Things Early!

Proposal Evaluation and Selection Processes

- **RCPP Classic: State SME panel scores proposals**
 - National RCPP Team evaluates for NFO eligibility and agency priorities
- **RCPP AFA: national SME panel scores and evaluates proposals for NFO eligibility and agency priorities**
 - Branch Chief develops a draft award slate of recommendations
- **Selection: Slate of recommendations reviewed by Deputy Chief for Programs (DCP) and Financial Assistance Programs Division (FAPD) Director and deliver to the Chief for awards selection**
- **Award selections announcement expected within 60 days of submission deadline**
- **Consolidated agreement obligations by late November 2026**

Proposal Evaluation

Agency Priority Topics for FY 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunities

- Projects based on **land management activities** encompassing various areas like soil health, water quality, healthy range and pasturelands, and wildlife habitat with an aim to improve land health, enhance resource management, and promote sustainable agriculture and long-term protection of agricultural, grassland and forestland viability.
- **Soil health** projects using practices that focus on minimizing soil disturbance, maximizing soil cover, increasing natural vitality, and maintaining living roots throughout the year. Such NRCS practices often include cover cropping, crop rotation, reduced tillage, surface residue management, grazing management and long-term protection of grasslands through entity held easement activities.
- **Farmer focused** projects with **contributions** that will provide financial assistance and/or technical expertise for **planning and practice designs to support producer contracts**.
- **Precision agricultural (PA)** projects that use PA technologies to target conservation efforts based on specific field conditions, potentially reducing costs and improving resource efficiency. Such may include using PA technologies in conjunction with conservation practices to ensure optimal land preparation with reduced erosion, enhanced nutrient and pesticide application rates and timing.
- Projects **led by Indian Tribes**. NRCS is reserving \$30 million for PPAs with Indian Tribes. Any unused funds will return to the general funding pool.



For More Information

Please visit: [How to Apply](#)

For a list of State RCPP Coordinators please visit the [How to Apply](#) page and go to the section called "Resources for Submitting a Proposal".

National RCPP Team: RCPP@usda.gov





Questions ?



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