



Natural Resources Conservation Service

On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials



Notice of Funding Opportunity
USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIGOFT-26-NOFO0001447
Fiscal Year 2026

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A. BASIC INFORMATION

1. Federal Awarding Agency Name

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

2. Notice of Funding Opportunity Title

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials for fiscal year (FY) 2026

3. Announcement Type

Initial Announcement

4. Notice of Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIGOFT-26-NOFO0001447

5. Assistance Listing

This notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) is included under 10.941, searchable at: <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

6. Funding Details

The amount of Federal funding expected to be available for award is \$50 million. However, the agency retains the discretion to award a larger or lesser amount.

The agency expects to make between twenty and thirty awards.

The agency expects the amount of each award to range from a minimum of \$250,000 to a maximum of \$5,000,000.

Applicants should propose projects between three and five years in duration. Plan projects based on an estimated project start date of September 2026.

7. Key Dates

Application deadline: Submit through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on July 27, 2026.

A webinar for On-Farm Trials applicants is scheduled for June 17, 2026, at 3 p.m. Eastern Time. Information on how to participate in the Microsoft Teams webinar can be obtained through the following link:

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/d5892e45-05fb-40de-999b-a431e3871963@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>

The agency anticipates making selections by 4th quarter of calendar year 2026 and expects to execute awards by 4th quarter of calendar year 2026. These dates are estimates and are subject to change.

8. Executive Summary

NRCS is announcing the availability of CIG On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials (On-Farm Trials). Through On Farm Trials projects, awardees recruit producers and provide

them with technical assistance and incentive payments to stimulate the adoption and evaluation of innovative conservation approaches. For 2026, applications will be accepted from eligible entities for projects addressing at least one of the following priorities: irrigation management technologies, new and innovative grazing land management solutions, nutrient management, and soil health demonstration trial (SHD). Up to \$50 million is available for On-Farm Trials in 2026. On-Farm Trials projects may be between 3 and 5 years in duration.

9. Contact Information

For [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) issues, contact [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

For all other questions, email the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center (FPAC-BC) Grants and Agreements Division (GAD):

Email: NRCSCIG@usda.gov

Subject line of email: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIGOFT-26-NOFO0001447

Name: Leah Hermens, Natural Resources Specialist, Natural Resource Conservation Service

The agency may provide clarifying information but will not address questions about the merits of a specific proposal. Responses to any questions answered during the funding opportunity solicitation will be posted on the [NRCS CIG website](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

Subscribe to receive correspondence issued by GAD. Topics may highlight award-management issues, announce implementation of new policies or procedures, provide guides and tools to apply for awards, etc. To subscribe, visit the visit https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAFARMERS/subscriber/new?topic_id=USDAFARMERS_4170

B. ELIGIBILITY

1. Eligible Applicants

The following entity types are eligible to apply:

- For-profit organizations other than small businesses
- Native American tribal governments (federally recognized)
- Native American tribal organizations (other than federally recognized tribal governments)
- nonprofits 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)
- private institutions of higher education
- public and state-controlled institutions of higher education
- small businesses

The following applicants are considered ineligible:

- Foreign organizations and foreign public entities
- “Partnerships” or other similar groupings (i.e., application must be submitted by a single entity; a partner may serve as a subrecipient).
- Individuals

For-profit entities are eligible for On-Farm Trials if their primary business is related to agriculture. Nonprofit entities are eligible for On-Farm Trials if they have experience working with agricultural producers. Governmental organizations that are not Federal entities are eligible.

Eligible entities must have access to a network of producers that they can recruit as participants to facilitate implementing On-Farm Trials of conservation practices and systems on private lands and meet the participation goals outlined in the proposal. NRCS will not assist with producer recruitment for On-Farm Trials projects.

2. Other Eligibility Considerations

Application Eligibility Considerations

- Applications must meet submission requirements in section E.
- For new users of Grants.gov, see section E.2 of this document for information about steps required before submitting an application through Grants.gov.

Note: If the agency determines more than one version or substantially the same application has been submitted, the agency will only consider the last application submitted prior to the established deadline for the competition.

- An applicant organization may submit more than one application for different projects or for proposing different approaches.

Awards Eligibility Considerations

- The agency will make awards only
 - ♦ to a single entity,
 - ♦ for projects selected following the competitive review process (see F), and
 - ♦ to entities that
 - meet the eligibility criteria (see section B) by the application deadline (see A.6.),
 - are not debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from receiving Federal awards ([2 CFR 200.206\(d\)](#)),
 - have an active System for Award Management (SAM) registration ([2 CFR part 25](#)), and
 - the agency does not determine poses an unacceptable risk related to proper management of a Federal award ([2 CFR 200.206](#)).
- Awards are not Farm Bill incentive contracts and therefore are not limited by the payment limitation in [16 USC Chapter 58](#).

Project Participant and Agricultural Producers Eligibility Considerations

- Any producer receiving an On-Farm Trials incentive payment must meet the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) eligibility requirements listed in [7 CFR § 1466.6\(b\)\(1\) through \(3\)](#):
 - Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions ([7 CFR § 12](#)).
 - Be a person, legal entity, joint operation, Indian tribe, or native corporation engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or having an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation as defined in [7 CFR § 1400](#).
 - Have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed contract period.
- Any producer receiving a payment through participation in a funded project is subject to the adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation. In addition, the producer must have an AGI that does not exceed \$900,000. If provided an award, the recipient must work with NRCS to confirm that producers receiving payments for Federal funding meet the eligibility and AGI requirements. The eligibility check must be complete for each producer prior to him or her receiving an incentive payment. Section [1704 \(a\)\(3\) of the 2018 Farm Bill](#) states that the Secretary may waive the AGI limit on a case-by-case basis if the Secretary determines that environmentally sensitive land of special significance would be protected as a result of a waiver. Awardees may request waivers once their project commences.

3. Cost Sharing

There is no cost sharing requirement for this opportunity. If cost-share is included in an application, it will not be considered during the competitive review process.

C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

On-Farm Trials is authorized under [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8](#) and is authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority to administer EQIP, including CIG, to the Chief of the NRCS.

Unmanned aircraft systems is an unallowable expense.

1. Overview

The purpose of On-Farm Trials is to stimulate the adoption and subsequent evaluation of innovative conservation approaches in partnership with agricultural producers. For 2026, NRCS is implementing On-Farm Trials through eligible entities that will in turn work collaboratively with NRCS and agricultural producers to implement innovative approaches on private lands. On-Farm Trials supports implementing innovative approaches that have a positive conservation impact but which, for any number of reasons, producers have not yet widely adopted.

On-Farm Trials funding is designed to provide technical assistance and incentive payments to producers to help compensate for risks associated with implementing new

conservation practices, systems, and approaches. Evaluation is a key component of On-Farm Trials to ensure that the environmental, economic and conservation impacts of implementing innovative approaches are understood and can be used to inform future NRCS programs, policies, and scientific activities.

On-Farm Trials projects are structured according to the following activities:

- Awardees recruit eligible producers (must be more than one) to participate in their On-Farm Trials project.
- Awardees provide participating producers with technical assistance and incentive payments to facilitate adopting the selected conservation practice (or practices).
- Awardees conduct an evaluation on the outcomes of implementing the practice.

Project activities take place on the land of the eligible producers receiving the incentive payments. The number of participating producers varies among On-Farm Trials projects, often reflecting the expense and complexity of the innovative approaches being implemented. Producer participants for past projects range from four to over a hundred. Single demonstration sites are not appropriate for On-Farm Trials. Projects need a sufficient number of sites for meaningful data collection and evaluation.

NRCS intends to use the results of On-Farm Trials project evaluations and analyses to explore developing new or modifying existing guidance documents, technical tools, conservation practice standards, and NRCS business practices.

The Soil Health Demonstration (SHD) component of On-Farm Trials (see item C(5)(d)) focuses exclusively on implementing conservation practices and systems that improve soil health. SHD awardees must agree to follow consistent soil health assessment protocols to evaluate the effects of practice and system implementation.

Proposed projects must be performed in the United States or U.S. territories.

2. Incentive Payments

On-Farm Trials awards **must include** incentive payments (derived from the NRCS award funding) disbursed to agricultural producers on whose land project activities are being carried out. While On-Farm Trials incentives provided to producers can be a combination of cash and equipment/supplies, all projects must include some cash payments directly to producers. These payments compensate producers for adopting and evaluating new conservation approaches. Incentive payments may be comprised of foregone income, land rental, conservation implementation-related equipment, construction costs, evaluation costs, or other considerations necessary to facilitate effective execution of an On-Farm Trial. Any land rental, equipment rental, or depreciation costs must be adequately justified. Incentive payments **must** be paid **directly** to agricultural producers from entities receiving On-Farm Trials awards. Producers do **not** enter into contracts with NRCS.

On-Farm Trials applications must include the overall amount of incentive payments the eligible entity intends to offer, the amount of incentive payments an individual producer

may receive, and details on the composition of the incentive payments (e.g., cash vs. equipment/supplies/technical assistance).

The following provisions apply to On-Farm Trials funding:

- NRCS requires that eligible entities work with NRCS staff to ensure that all producers receiving On-Farm Trials incentives are EQIP eligible and in compliance with the Farm Bill's AGI limitation and highly erodible land and wetlands conservation provisions prior to disbursement of incentives. Non-EQIP eligible producers are allowed to participate in On-Farm Trials projects by providing data, but any direct benefits dispersed can only be given to EQIP eligible participating producers.
- Section [1704 \(a\)\(3\)](#) of the 2018 Farm Bill ([7 U.S.C. 1308-3a\(b\)\(3\)](#)) states the Secretary may waive the AGI limit on a case-by-case basis, if the Secretary determines that environmentally sensitive land of special significance would be protected as a result of such a waiver. On-Farm Trials awardees may request AGI waivers for producer payments once their project commences.
- Entities receiving On-Farm Trials awards are required to submit producer information and amounts of incentive payments made to individuals annually. This is required by the On-Farm Trials statute and will be a requirement of the award.
- On-Farm Trials incentive payments do not count toward a producer's EQIP payment limitation under the 2018 Farm Bill ([7 U.S.C. 1308-3a](#)).

Section [1240B](#) of the Food Security Act of 1985, [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-2](#), prohibits duplicative payments. Entities receiving an On-Farm Trials award are responsible for ensuring that incentive payments are not provided to a producer for a conservation practice, system, or approach for which the producer has already received, or is contracted to receive, funding through another NRCS or USDA program. If awarded, the recipient must self-certify that payments to producers using Federal funds are not duplicative.

3. Technical Assistance

On-Farm Trials applicants must include the portion of the proposed award amount that will be applied to technical assistance. Technical assistance refers to all activities required to implement innovative conservation approaches on farm or ranch land. Technical assistance activities include conservation planning, design and engineering, quality assurance and verification.

The On-Farm Trials technical evaluation criteria in section F of this notice makes clear that NRCS gives preference to partner entities that are able to wholly supply the technical assistance needed for On-Farm Trials projects, either on their own or through working with technical service providers or other qualified entities and individuals.

Proposals must identify the individuals or entities providing technical assistance services and describe their qualifications. If these individuals or entities are not certified technical service providers or NRCS-certified conservation planners, applications must provide sufficient evidence that the individuals or entities are qualified to carry out implementation activities.

4. NRCS Responsibilities

Successful On-Farm Trials projects require collaboration and partnership between awarded entities and NRCS. NRCS designates a technical contact to serve as the main technical liaison between NRCS and the awardee.

NRCS provides technical oversight to each On-Farm Trials project. NRCS will work with awardees to ensure that participating producers are EQIP eligible and in compliance with the Farm Bill's AGI, highly erodible lands, and wetlands conservation provisions. In addition, NRCS is responsible for ensuring that On-Farm Trials projects and activities comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and other Federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

NRCS may work with awarded partners to refine On-Farm Trials evaluation methodologies and will review project results for possible inclusion into NRCS publications and technical documents.

5. 2026 On-Farm Priorities

Each year, NRCS identifies priority topics for On-Farm Trials. For FY 2026, On-Farm Trials applications must address one of the four priorities described in this section. Proposal activities may address more than one priority, but each proposal must clearly identify a primary priority. The primary priority selected by an applicant will determine which expert peer panel will review the application. NRCS welcomes and encourages the submission of projects focused on precision agriculture that address any of the priorities below.

a. Irrigation Water Management Technologies

NRCS seeks On-Farm Trials proposals to evaluate innovative water management systems that enhance a producer's ability to monitor irrigation needs effectively, manage irrigation practices efficiently, and increase water savings by using precision technologies. Innovative irrigation systems should focus on balancing producer needs with conservation benefits. Examples of innovative irrigation water management technologies include:

- (1) Tools that measure plant distress, soil moisture, or that use indigenous irrigation scheduling techniques and automate irrigation through regular reporting to a centralized system.

- (2) Technologies that combine as-applied irrigation, drainage, and atmospheric data with crop growth models and soil data using cloud-based systems and devices, allowing producers to assess irrigation needs remotely or from a handheld device.
- (3) Innovative approaches that address obstacles to adopting irrigation water management systems that use water more efficiently. These obstacles may include substantial upfront costs of system installation, accessibility of systems (i.e., availability for purchase at mainstream retailers), ease of installation, and the need for system customization.
- (4) Cost effective and low maintenance sensor technologies that monitor pertinent crop root zone variables (e.g., electrical, physical, and chemical) to inform irrigation decisions and automate variable rate irrigation in soilless agricultural systems (e.g., hydroponics, aeroponics, and aquaponics).
- (5) Technologies that incorporate reusing agricultural waste streams, irrigation or drainage water into the timing, volume, and application rate of irrigated water to enhance the sustainability of irrigation.

b. Nutrient Management

NRCS seeks On-Farm Trials proposals focused on improving Nutrient Use Efficiency (NUE) using site-specific, risk-informed conservation systems. We invite submissions addressing innovative techniques, technologies, and strategies that demonstrate measurable conservation outcomes related to nutrient loss reduction.

Examples of innovative approaches under this priority include:

- (1) Use of real-time, in-season nutrient management technologies, sensors, remote sensing, or modeling to guide in-field nutrient decisions, or that provides visual representations, machine learning or automated analysis of trends and impacts for future crop nutrient management.
- (2) Use of site-specific nutrient risk assessment tools or methods that identify and manage field-level nutrient runoff and leaching risk such as decision support systems that integrate soil, hydrology, and weather data; edge-of-field monitoring integration; approaches that prioritize high-risk sites for targeted nutrient interventions; or preplanning tools or support systems that utilize imagery and other data sources to analyze nutrient loss pathways and risk inherent to the site conditions.
- (3) Use of site-specific integrated 4R Nutrient Management with recovery systems such as bioreactors, anaerobic digesters, or multi-state drainage systems to mitigate nutrient losses. 4R Nutrient Management refers to applying nutrients at the right time, right rate, right place, and right source to maximize crop intake and minimize adverse environmental impacts.
- (4) Demonstration of digestate management and nutrient recycling best management practices for 4R Nutrient Management assessing environmental

- and agronomic tradeoffs, to include heavy metals, pathogens, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and perfluoro octane sulfonate (PFOS).
- (5) Use of Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizers and advanced nitrogen/phosphorus management strategies and new technologies to realize nutrient loss reductions when utilizing slow-release fertilizers, nitrification inhibitors, controlled-release formulations, nanotechnologies, or bio stimulants or to demonstrate improved crop uptake measured as crop recovery, agronomic efficiency or innovative methodologies beyond yield.
 - (6) Use of in-season diagnostic tools for nutrient optimization such as soil/tissue testing, visual assessments, or decision tools to fine-tune applications or prevent under- or over- application of nutrients during the growing season.
 - (7) Use of in-field sensor technology for nutrient and water status monitoring such as leaf sensors, canopy reflectance tools, or other precision technologies that assess nitrogen status, water stress, or micronutrient deficiencies.

c. Grazing Lands

NRCS seeks On-Farm Trials proposals to facilitate adopting new tools, technologies, and strategies that assist with improving and managing grazing lands in the United States at the ranch, farm, or urban interface scale. Desired projects will focus on innovative livestock grazing management practices used in conjunction with monitoring tools to promote resilient and responsive grazing land management systems. These systems meet ecological and economic sustainability goals, such as maintaining and improving grazing lands and wildlife habitat, improving plant health and natural vitality, improving forage quality, increasing soil health, reducing soil erosion and compaction, improving water quality and watershed health, controlling invasive plants, and reducing wildfire risk. They also optimize producer profitability and minimize risks.

Innovative practices and decision support tools that assist grazers with improving grazing land health while promoting conservation will also be considered in this priority area.

Projects should focus on developing Grazing Management Plans that address resource concerns following guidance in [CPS 528](#) that incorporates innovative technologies and approaches, such as:

- (1) Evaluating low-cost, field-ready technologies including data analytics platforms, diagnostic sensors, herding and fencing innovations, herd tracking, vegetation monitoring, and forage health and availability assessments to support grazing land health and ecosystem service outcomes.
- (2) Evaluating innovative methods that address prescriptive or targeted livestock management strategies that reduce wildfire risk and decrease invasive plant populations at the ranch, farm, or urban interface scale.

- (3) Evaluating innovative methods that address and improve critical riparian and wetland habitat areas, minimize drought impacts, maintain and improve soil health and build resiliency at the farm or ranch scale.
- (4) Evaluating methods that couple forage and animal production systems that can accurately establish preferred timing, duration, and frequency of animal use with implemented restoration practices to meet grazing management plan goals and objectives, including enhancing newly restored grazing lands.
- (5) Evaluating strategically matched grazing animals to their environments, including heat tolerant livestock, bison, sheep, goats etc., to reduce resource use and maintain or enhance plant species and other ecosystem services derived from grazing lands.
- (6) Evaluating projects that leverage science-based tools and software to monitor, assess, and report conservation outcomes from grazing systems; integrating real-time feedback and practical, scalable technologies to enhance land health, optimize resource use, and deliver measurable conservation benefits.

d. Soil Health Demonstration Trials

Soil Health Demonstration (SHD) Trials support On-Farm demonstrations of Soil Health Management Systems (SHMS) and production systems being transitioned to a SHMS. A SHMS is a collection of management practices that focus on improving soil health by addressing the soil health management principles of 1.) minimizing disturbance, 2.) maximizing soil cover, 3.) maximizing the number and variety of plant species, and 4.) maximizing the presence of living roots. SHD proposals must indicate which of the four soil health management principles the prospective project would address. Applicants are strongly encouraged to address all four principles.

When the four soil health management principles are implemented together and adapted to a given production system, the principles and practices are synergistic, regenerating, building, and maintaining soil health and providing critical ecosystem services. The objective of the SHD Trial is to identify, document, and evaluate regionally successful approaches and outcomes of fully implemented or transitioning SHMS in varied production systems.

All SHD proposals should include baseline data, controls, and standard assessment methods, including information about the farm, geographic identification (through maps and geocoordinates) of each SHD Trial sample site, and important information on the farming practices, tillage types, depths, number of passes, crops grown, crop yields, irrigation water quality test data, fertilization types, amounts, application methods, pest control, cover crops, soil health lab test data, and other management inputs requested by NRCS. See the Soil Health Demonstration Trials Soils Template posted on the [CIG website](#) for the full dataset that will be required for collection and submission. NRCS will consider this information during the proposal evaluation process (see more details in the “SHD Evaluations and Study” section A(7)). All cover crops used must be identified by scientific name, common name, and variety (when

relevant). SHD applications must also identify at least one of the following national SHD sub priorities. Applicants are encouraged to address multiple national sub priorities, to the extent practicable.

The SHD sub priorities are as follows:

- (1) Evaluate the effects of bio stimulant products, including Biofertilizers, Microbial Inoculants and Biological Amendments, on short-term and mid-term soil health outcomes.
- (2) Evaluate use of hydrogels and water retention polymers, including hydrogel seed or root coatings and/or soil additives, on short-term and mid-term soil health outcomes.
- (3) Evaluate the use of nanotechnology such as nano-capsulated fertilizers and pesticides for timely release, nano-materials with the ability to adsorb and degrade pollutants, and nano-sensors for real-time monitoring of soil-crop-atmosphere parameters in the achievement of soil health outcomes in various agricultural contexts.
- (4) Improve soil health management systems implemented on rangeland, cropland, or in agroforestry applications in regions impacted by drought and water limitations, including conversion to dry land farming.
- (5) Implement and evaluate remote or proximal sensing, artificial intelligence, and/or automated/robotic machinery in synergy with other technologies and approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance soil resources associated with high functioning soil systems (such as range, pasture, and forest lands) while sustaining productivity.
- (6) Design SHMS for high disturbance production systems, such as potatoes, onions, sugar beets, and other root crops.
- (7) Incorporation and evaluation of Tribal, indigenous, or traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous stewardship methods in soil health management systems in rangeland, cropland, pasture, and/or forestland.

6. On-Farm Trials Evaluations

Under all four priorities On-Farm Trials projects consist of two major components: (1) on-farm implementation of innovative conservation approaches, and (2) evaluation of the impacts. The evaluation component includes assessment of the environmental, economic and conservation impacts of implementing innovations. Awardees must work closely with participating producers to ensure that sufficient data are collected to analyze these impacts, and they must ensure that producer privacy is maintained throughout the project and dissemination of project results.

Applications must describe the proposed evaluation approach, including collecting baseline data and using controls and methods for assessing economic and conservation impacts.

Applicants must describe their capability and capacity for carrying out On-Farm Trials evaluations. Applicants are encouraged to partner with organizations and individuals that have experience in carrying out environmental, economic and conservation evaluations. Evaluation methods and approaches are subject to negotiation prior to execution of the On-Farm Trials agreement. Applicants must identify in their budget documents the amount of On-Farm Trials funding proposed for evaluation expenses.

7. Soil Health Demonstration Evaluations and Study

Projects funded under the SHD priority must meet additional protocol, data collection, and evaluation requirements. Similar to the broader On-Farm Trials program, SHD projects must include a robust environmental and economic evaluation of implementing soil health management systems and practices.

At a minimum, evaluations should include the following: (1) a short term (within crop season) assessment of the effectiveness of soil amendments and soil health management practices (e.g., cover crop adoption) on soil health, crop health, vigor and yield, change in irrigation amounts applied (if applicable), changes in soil health indicators based on soil lab test data, and other quantitative or qualitative data, as well as cost vs. benefit analysis; (2) a long term (life of the award) assessment including items listed in the “short term assessment”; and (3) overall recommendations to NRCS about the adoption of soil amendments and their effects on crop production, soil health, cost vs. benefit, and other noteworthy findings.

The necessity of using common evaluation protocols and methods for assessing changes in soil health outcomes is unique to SHD. Eligible entities must:

- Use recommended NRCS standards in field and laboratory methods for soil health indicator measurements, as defined in [TN 470-SH-01](#) Choosing a Laboratory for Soil Health Testing, [TN 470-SH-07](#) Guidance on Field Grab Sampling for Soil Health Testing, and [TN 470-SH-16](#) Soil Health Testing to Support Conservation Planning. This does not preclude inclusion of additional measurements beyond the identified NRCS minimum data collection requirements. Awardees must collaborate with NRCS soil health experts to ensure consistency in field and laboratory methods. The awardee will enter all soil test data into an NRCS-provided data system prior to the end of the award.
- For measuring soil health outcomes in the field, use recommended assessments for appropriate land uses found in [TN 470-SH-10](#) Cropland In-Field Soil Health Assessment Guide, [TN 470-SH-11](#) Rangeland In-Field Soil Health Assessment Guide, [TN 470-SH-12](#) Determining and Managing for Soil Health in Pasture, [TN 470-SH-08](#) Forestland In-Field Soil Health Assessment Guide.
- Work with an NRCS soil scientist to verify the soil map unit(s) and component(s) on which the trial site is located.

- Collect all current and historic management information from participating producers (e.g. grazing management, tillage, crop rotation, nutrient, harvest period, and other input applications), and enter it into an NRCS-provided data system. A 5-year or longer management history is required to better capture long-term soil health impacts.
- Collect all environmental, economic and conservation outcome data to include profitability (cost of production, current yield, and historic yield where available), and enter it into an NRCS-provided data system. When available, include data such as effects of systems on infiltration rates, ground water recharge, plant available water, runoff, water quality, flooding, pest resilience, weather resilience, air quality, etc.
- At a minimum, develop summary information on why management changes were adopted, as well as challenges and benefits of the changes.
- To facilitate broader adoption, provide details on how project results will be shared with producer communities, such as through on-farm field days and other activities. Implementing mentor groups to facilitate changing production systems is highly encouraged. Projects should be designed to assist with implementation and coordination so that opportunities for idea exchange occur between producers or service providers that have implementation experience and participants who are experiencing change.
- Develop regionally relevant, production-specific SHMS templates for future producers, especially in cases where a novel approach is used to address specific resource concerns or challenging conditions.

The standard SHD dataset requirements and methods are available on the [CIG Applicants web page](#) under “More Information for CIG On-Farm Trials Soil Health Demonstration Applicants.”

Entities receiving an On-Farm Trials SHD award are required to submit their full data set through a data system that will be provided by NRCS. It is incumbent upon SHD awarded partners to inform participating producers that geospatial, soil, conservation practice, and other information will be provided to NRCS and maintained in a confidential Federal database from which aggregated findings will be made available to the public without personally identifiable information. No database information will be shared with the public without a producer’s consent. However, names of participating producers and any incentive payments received are subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

D. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT

1. Pre-Applications and Letters of Intent

This NOFO does not require pre-applications or letters of intent. Do not submit a pre-application or a letter of intent.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Notes:

- Form instructions and any available templates are provided in the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide available in the Related Documents tab of the Grants.gov application package on Grants.gov. Instructions provided in this NOFO will reference applicable guidance in the [FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide](#).
- To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain the documents identified in the following table.

Document	Instructions
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	see section V.2.*
Project Narrative	see section V.3.*
Project Abstract	see section V.4.*
Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)	see section V.5.*
Budget Narrative Budget Table	see section V.6.*
Other Attachments Form - Current and Pending Support - GADSUM9, Applicant Contact(s) Information	see section V.7.* see section V.7.1* see section V.7.2*
Attachments - Subawards, as applicable - Letters of Support, optional - Conflict of Interest, as applicable	see section V.8.* see section V.8.1* see section V.8.2* see D.2.j of this NOFO
Grants.gov Lobbying Form	see section VI.9.*
Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)	see section VI.10.*
*Applicable section of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide	

a. Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

See section V.2. of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

b. Project Narrative Attachment Form

The following instructions are in addition to the instructions included in section V.3. of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

The project narrative is subject to the attachment requirements noted in section III.2.1 of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

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 18 pages. This page limitation applies to the project narrative only. Please create your project narrative using the following sections in the order listed below and provide the requested information in each section.

(1) Cover page

Applications that fail to provide a cover page will be rejected in the first stage of screening.

In one page, provide the following information.

- (a) The applicant entity name.
- (b) The project title.
- (c) The project duration in years.
- (d) The Federal funding amount requested.
- (e) The applicant's technical contact name, phone number, and email (usually the primary investigator, project director, or similar).
- (f) The applicant's administrative contact name, phone number, and email (usually the person responsible for invoicing and other administrative actions).
- (g) The geographic location of the project (list the states).
- (h) The national priority that is addressed by the project. List **only one** of the following priorities: irrigation management technologies; grazing lands; nutrient management; or SHD trial. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, you must select one primary priority for your application.
- (i) State whether the project team has submitted this proposal to any other active funding opportunities. If yes, please list.
- (j) The number of participating producers that will receive incentives (this can be estimated).
- (k) Project synopsis. Provide a brief description of the project (three to five sentences) that can be used in a public announcement if the project is funded. State the practice or technology that will be implemented through the On-Farm Trials, the estimated number of producers on whose land the practice will be implemented, as well as the cropping systems or agricultural

operation type targeted for participation and the key partners, if relevant.

(2) Background

Provide a short history of the development of the conservation approach or technology presented (cite significant publications as appropriate). Describe any challenges to broad adoption of the approach by agricultural producers.

(3) Purpose and goals

Describe the purpose and overarching goals of this project.

(4) Objectives

Describe the project's objectives and how it supports achieving the project goal using specific, measurable, and time-dependent targets.

(5) Design and methods

Describe the methodology of the On-Farm Trials, including any tools or processes that will be used to implement it. Identify the individuals or entities providing technical assistance services and describe their qualifications.

(6) Evaluation

Describe the methodology used to evaluate this project and quantify results, including proposed methods to evaluate the environmental and economic results of the On-Farm Trials. Describe the individuals and entities scheduled to carry out the evaluation. For applicants of the SHD trials priority only, describe how the applicant and any partners intend to address and complete the NRCS minimum soil health data requirements required of all SHD applicants. Include the scale at which the evaluation will be conducted (e.g., farm scale or regional scale).

(7) Incentive payments and producer involvement

Estimate the number of EQIP eligible producers proposed to participate in the On-Farm Trials. Describe whether these producers have been identified, and if not yet identified, clearly articulate the process that will be used to identify participating producers. Describe the composition and structure of the incentives that participating producers will receive. Include the amount of incentive payments that an individual producer may receive and provide details on the composition of the incentive payments (e.g., cash vs. equipment/supplies/technical assistance).

(8) Project outcomes and benefits

Identify the expected benefits and outcomes of the project and forecast the lasting impact of project results. Identify project beneficiaries and how their agricultural operations will be affected by the project's conservation activities.

(9) Project accomplishments and deliverables

Provide a list of project deliverables that can be measured or presented so that both NRCS and the awarded partner know the project is complete. Incorporate associated milestones and subtasks. Describe what will be done, when it will be done, and how it will be measured.

Key deliverables should include producer recruitment (the number of producers involved in on-farm trials and state location), the delivery of technical assistance for the implementation of the specific conservation practice(s), data collection, project evaluation, and products or events (e.g., field days, guides, support tools, etc.).

Do **not** include tables in this section. The information in this section must be written in plain text format. If you would like to include a table or chart that depicts the project timeline, please upload it under Other Attachments (listed as an Optional Form) in the Grants.gov Opportunity Application Package. Any such attachments do not replace the need for the requested information to be described in full detail in this section.

In addition to project-specific deliverables, CIG grantees are responsible for

- (a) participating in at least one event (e.g., conference or workshop) during the grant period where the grantee presents on the activities of the project;
- (b) providing a closing event (this could be a webinar, field day, training event, etc., used to disseminate project results); and
- (c) submitting a final project overview describing the results of the On-Farm Trials.

(10) Communications

Describe plans for communicating project results to producers and stakeholders.

(11) Geographic location and size of project area

Identify the geographic location and the estimated size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types, demographics) of the project area. If project activities are carried out in multiple states, describe which project elements will take place in each state.

(12) Project management

Describe how the project will be organized and managed. List the project partners and describe their role in the project. Provide brief descriptions of key technical personnel qualifications, their experience managing Federal awards, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Do not include a resume or curriculum vitae.

(13) Assessment of environmental impacts

Describe any physical, chemical, or biological impacts to the environment from the activities of this project. Beneficial and adverse impacts are to be considered, highlighting and quantifying the natural environmental resources affected directly, indirectly, or cumulatively.

Every funded CIG project with anticipated physical, chemical, or biological impacts on the environment or ground-disturbing activity is subject to the National Environmental Protection Act, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. See section F2 of this announcement for more information.

The following items should be included at the end of the project narrative document, but do not count toward the above stated 18-page limit.

(14) References (if applicable)

Enter a formatted list of any academic references used to support this proposal.

(15) Declaration of Previous CIGs (if applicable)

If the applicant has previously received an award (either at the national or state levels), list the following for each award and give a short summary of the completed project's outcomes.

- Project title,
- Agreement number (Federal Award Identifying Number),
- Award funding amount,
- Year of award expiration, and
- If the project is ongoing, provide the anticipated outcomes. Each description should be no more than a half page.

c. Project Abstract

See section V.4 of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

d. Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)

See section V.5. of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

e. Budget Narrative

The following instructions are in addition to those included in section V.6 of the FPAC-

BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

The Budget Narrative is subject to the attachment requirements noted in section III.2.1 of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

In a document titled “Budget Narrative,” list and justify the budget line-item totals sorted by the budget categories listed in SF-424A (refer to the budget narrative guidance located at <https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/budget-narrative-guidelines.pdf>). Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities.

A budget narrative should outline project details sufficiently enough to allow reviewers to evaluate the integrity of the proposed spending. Budgets should include specific information about the amount and structure of incentive payments to participating producers. The budget narrative must be in text format, with a narrative associated with each cost. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the reviewers can readily understand what expenses are incurred to support the project each year. Tables should not be embedded into the budget narrative. A sample budget narrative can be found in Appendix A.

Subawards should conform to the terms and conditions of the Federal award from which they flow.

Indirect Costs Limitations. By statute, On-Farm Trials funds may not be used to pay for administrative (indirect) expenses of an eligible entity. Indirect costs may not be charged to an On-Farm Trials award. Indirect costs are not allowable.

f. Budget Table

In an Excel document file titled “Budget Table,” list line-items and amounts from the budget narrative (refer to Appendix B, Budget Table Template). As outlined in the budget table template, please provide a breakdown of the cost per year. The yearly breakdown can be an estimate. **The budget table does not replace the need for line-item descriptions and amounts to be included in the budget narrative.** The budget table serves as a reference and calculation check for the amounts listed in the budget narrative.

g. Other Attachments

Information on other attachments is in section V.7. of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

- Current and Pending Support. See section V.7.1 of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide for link to available template and instructions.
- GADSUM9, Applicant Contact Information. See section V.7.2 of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide for link to available template and instructions.

h. Attachments

Information on attachments is in section V.8. of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

- Subawards. If the organization intends to have subawards, see section V.8.1 of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.
- Letters of Support. Letters of support are not required but are welcomed.
Letters of support are provided by individuals or entities who want to express their enthusiasm for the project. Letters of support can also be written by partners or subawardees to confirm their intent to participate in the project.
The agency may conduct reference checks to ensure that organizations identified are supportive of the project.
- Conflicts of Interest. For further information, see D.2.j.

i. Grants.gov Lobbying Form

For instructions on the Grants.gov lobbying form, see section V.9 of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

j. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

For instructions on disclosing lobbying activities, see section V.10. of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

k. Disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest

[2 CFR 400.2](#) states that applicants must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the performance of their employees in the selection, award, and administration of Federal awards. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a Federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict of interest would arise when the employee, officer or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties referenced, has a financial or other interest in, or a tangible personal benefit from, an applicant considered for a Federal award. The standards of conduct must provide for disciplinary actions to be applied for violations of such standards by officers, employees, or agents of the applicant.

If the applicant has a parent, affiliate, or subsidiary organization that is not a state, local government, or Indian tribe, the applicant must also maintain written standards of conduct covering organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflict of interest means that because of the relationships with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, the applicant is unable or appears to be unable to be impartial in conducting a Federal award action involving a related organization.

Applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflicts of interest to the USDA awarding agency or pass-through entity. Include the name of the individual, the name of the entity with which the individual has a conflict, the nature of the financial or other interest, the value of the interest, and a description of how the interest relates to the application. Upload disclosures under Other Attachments (listed separately under Optional Forms) in Grants.gov. **If no conflict exists, no submission is required.**

I. Post Submission and Post Award Documentation

During the administrative review process (refer to section F.3 of this NOFO), 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, and revised documents).

E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINE

1. Grants.gov Applications

- Applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).
- Grants.gov provides a single online site for applicants to locate all funding opportunities and apply for available grants.
- All forms needed to submit an application are available through the funding opportunity on Grants.gov.

2. Grants.gov Requirements and General Guidance

Grants.gov has requirements (e.g., registration and software) that **must** be met before being able to submit an application using Grants.gov. Refer to section II.1. of the FPAC-BC Grants.gov Application Guide.

- Applications must be received by Grants.gov by 11:59.59 pm Eastern Time (ET) on the established due date (see section A.6 of this NOFO). An application is considered late at 12:00 am ET and will be rejected.
- If the Apply button in the opportunity is not active (greyed out), see [Unlock the Mystery of the Gray “Apply” Button: Four Scenarios](https://www.grants.gov/community-blog/2018/04/26/unlock-the-mystery-of-the-gray-apply-button-four-scenarios) on the Grants.gov Community Blog web page (wordpress.com).
- Grants.gov automatically records proof of submission through an electronic date and time stamp when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov.
- Grants.gov will send an email to the authorized organizational representative (AOR) submitting an application when:
 - an error prevents the transmission of the application,
 - an application is successfully received by Grants.gov, or
 - the agency retrieves and downloads the application from Grants.gov and download of submissions.
- When experiencing trouble with submitting an application to Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be accepted for the competitive review process if they

- are received by the established deadline,
- meet eligibility criteria,
- contain the applicable documents identified in section D.2, and
- are compliant with the provisions of this notice.

Incomplete, non-compliant, and/or applications not meeting the formatting criteria will be eliminated from competition.

Applicants that do not meet the criteria will be ineligible for consideration. The agency will send notification of elimination to applicants not meeting the above criteria.

A merit/technical review will be conducted by a technical review board. Proposals will be evaluated using a three-part process:

- Technical peer review panels composed of subject matter experts will evaluate proposals against the merit/technical criteria.
- NRCS state conservationists in the states where On-Farm Trials work is proposed evaluate the relevant applications for agency stewardship and potential duplication of conservation effort and provide review comments.
- The approving official will make the final award selections. The approving official for this opportunity is the NRCS Chief.

Risk reviews will be conducted by GAD. The approving official will make the final award decisions. The approving official for this opportunity is the NRCS Chief.

2. Merit/Technical Criteria

On-Farm Trials technical peer review panels use the following criteria, on a 100-point scale, to evaluate applications:

Project Purpose, Innovation, and Scientific Approach (30 points)

- The project purpose is compelling and the rationale explicit for why On-Farm Trials of the innovative approach are needed.
- The design and implementation of the project, including the method for determining the structure of incentive payments, is sound and based on accepted scientific methodology.

Project Management (25 points)

- Project management staff has experience managing (or demonstrates the ability to manage) a Federal financial award and working on the ground with agricultural producers, or the requisite experience managing similar projects.
- The project team has the appropriate qualifications to provide all technical assistance required to implement innovative approaches with producers. The

proposal includes qualifications of identified entities and individuals providing technical assistance to producers.

- The budget is justified and reasonable, and expenses are allowable.

Evaluation Approach (20 points)

- A scientifically robust evaluation plan is described that incorporates the assessment of environmental, economic and conservation outcomes and benefits.
- There is a sufficient plan for developing communications products related to project outcomes, and a plan for disseminating project results to agricultural producers and stakeholders.

Project Outcomes (25 points)

- Project results are likely to lead to developing new or modifying existing guidance documents, technical tools, conservation practice standards, or NRCS business practices.
- Project results and evaluation are likely to result in more widespread adoption of the approach.

Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will receive a letter notifying them of the award decision.

3. Administrative Review and Risk Criteria

The following may be reviewed and verified prior to making an award.

- Applicant meets eligibility criteria.
- Application was submitted through Grants.gov by the established deadline.
- A risk review of applicant (see [2 CFR 200.206](#)) verified the following:
 - The applicant is not noted as suspended or debarred in SAM.
 - Information included in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) was reviewed and considered (see [41 U.S.C. § 2313](#) and 2 CFR § 200.206(a)). This applies to applications to be supported with a total Federal share greater than \$250,000.
 - Applicant is financially stable.
 - The applicant has an adequate financial management system to segregate and track Federal funds.
 - Applicant's history of Federal financial assistance award performance was reviewed.

- Proposed costs are allowable, allocable, and necessary.

Based on risk assessment, the agency may impose specific award conditions in accordance with [2 CFR 200.208](#).

G. FEDERAL AWARD NOTICES

Successful Project Notification: The agency will provide notice that an application has been selected before it issues the Federal award. The selection notification does **not** authorize the applicant to begin performance. If the applicant chooses to begin project activities, it does so at its own risk (the risk that costs may not be reimbursed).

Notice of Award: The Notice of Grant and Agreement Award (ADS-093) contains information identified in [2 CFR 200.211](#) and is signed by the authorized agency official. It is the only authorizing document and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized official for signature.

Unsuccessful Project Notification: The agency will provide notice to unsuccessful applicants through an email to the individual listed as the program director. This notification will occur following the processing of successful applications.

H. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS (ADMINISTRATIVE & NATIONAL POLICY)

All project funds will be used in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200](#) and the General Terms and Conditions, which are available at the following website:

<https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/about/grants-and-agreements/award-terms-and-conditions/index.html>. The award terms and conditions include, but are not limited to:

- Unallowable costs
- National policy requirements
 - The agency must work with the awardees on related matters before commencing activities if projects performed pursuant to this opportunity are subject to any of the following:
 - National Environmental Policy Act
 - National Historic Preservation Act
 - Endangered Species Act
- Build America Buy America for Construction
- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 compliance requirements
- Reporting requirements
 - Addresses financial and performance requirements and the reporting frequency, means of submission
 - Reporting of matters related to recipient integrity and performance
 - Reporting subaward and executive compensation information

- [2 CFR 180](#) (2 CFR 180.335 and 180.350, includes reporting requirements regarding debarment and suspension audit requirements)
- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to the extent permitted by law, will no longer make grants or otherwise fund programs or activities that improperly discriminate on the basis of race or sex, including discrimination in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. Instead, USDA will prioritize merit and efficiency. USDA recognizes programs and initiatives will have the greatest impact when these programs and initiatives put American farmers, ranchers, and foresters first by:
 - Solving the most pressing challenges they face,
 - Protecting America's food, fuel, and fiber supply to enhance national security,
 - Supporting production of healthy and safe food for consumers,
 - Expanding and developing domestic markets,
 - Training the next generation of agriculturalists, and
 - Fueling innovation to keep American farmers at the forefront of productivity.
- Patents, Inventions, and Copyrights

Allocation of rights to patents, inventions, and copyrights must be in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200](#). This regulation states that usually small businesses may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with [2 CFR Part 200](#), this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States usually must manufacture it domestically. Regarding copyright, the grant recipient may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed or acquired under an award. USDA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for Federal purposes and to authorize others to do so.

I. OTHER INFORMATION

1. 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 that the awarding agency 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.

2. 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.

3. Award Counterparts

Any award made pursuant to this NOFO **may be** executed in any number of counterparts, each of which will be deemed an original, but all of which together will constitute one and the same instrument.

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, 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, audiotope, 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 [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) 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.

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