

## Fact Sheet: Conservation Innovation Grant Program for Reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions and Promoting Carbon Sequestration

December 2010

### NRCS Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals resulting in productive lands and healthy ecosystems.

Science and technology are critical to good conservation. NRCS experts from many disciplines come together to help landowners conserve natural resources in efficient, smart and sustainable ways. Whether developed in a laboratory or on the land, NRCS science and technology helps landowners make the right decisions for every natural resource. NRCS succeeds through partnerships, working closely with individual farmers and ranchers, landowners, local conservation districts, government agencies, Tribes, Earth Team volunteers and many other people and groups that care about the quality of America's natural resources.

NRCS works at the local level – in field offices at USDA Service Centers in nearly every county in the Nation. NRCS employees understand local resource concerns and work to develop conservation solutions that withstand the test of time.

### Grants Overview

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is a voluntary program administered by NRCS. The grants are intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies to agricultural production while leveraging the

Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection. Under CIG, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds are used to award competitive grants to non-Federal governmental or non-governmental organizations, federally-recognized Tribes, and individuals.

### Greenhouse Gas Grants

In fiscal year 2011, NRCS is making up to \$5 million available to support large-scale demonstration projects that will accelerate the adoption of new and innovative approaches to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promote carbon sequestration on private lands. In addition, NRCS will provide up to \$10 million in EQIP funds to support eligible producers who are working with grant recipients as they implement conservation practices associated with the selected GHG projects. NRCS will support projects that meet the following requirements:

- Promote the adoption of conservation systems and practices for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon;
- Quantify the impacts of conservation practices on GHG emissions and carbon sequestration;
- Demonstrate and further develop opportunities for marketing environmental credits associated with reducing GHG emissions and increasing carbon sequestration;
- Quantify the environmental benefits of these practices and work with GHG trading organizations to assist eligible



producers interested in selling their GHG emission-reduction credits; and

- Assess the market response to the availability of agricultural GHG credits.

## **How CIG Works**

Applications should describe the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address a natural resource conservation concern or concerns and the applicability to GHG emissions reductions and carbon sequestration.

Successful grantees will secure the participation of agricultural producers, determine baseline values of GHG emissions and/or carbon sequestration, verify the implementation and maintenance of GHG reduction and carbon sequestration practices, and determine GHG reduction benefits so that these benefits can be successfully registered in a commonly recognized carbon registry.

Successful grantees will contribute matching funds to implement innovative approaches and enhance the cost sharing of EQIP, stimulate the application of GHG reduction practices, promote carbon sequestration and identify new practices that NRCS could include as interim practices.

Applications will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice. Evaluated applications will be forwarded to an NRCS Grant Review Board. The Grant Review Board will make recommendations for project approval to the NRCS Chief. Final selections will be made by the Chief. Awards will be made through a grant agreement.

A minimum of 50 percent of the total project cost must come from non-Federal matching funds (cash and in-kind contributions) provided by the grantee. The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project. NRCS will provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

## **Eligibility**

CIG applications will be accepted from State or local units of government, Federally-recognized Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. Applications will be accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). Proposed projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers.

## **How to Apply for CIG**

A funding notice is available on the federal eGrants portal, [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). The funding notice is also accessible from the NRCS website at: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html)

The notice will specify the information required from applicants. Complete applications must be submitted to the NRCS National office at the address identified in the notice. Applications must be received by February 11, 2011.

## **For More Information**

If you need more information about CIG, please contact the National CIG Program Manager, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 6227-S, Washington, D.C., 20250, telephone: (202) 720-8071, fax: (202) 720-4839.

Additional resources are available at: [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov), and [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).