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## USDA Seeks Applications for \$10 Million in Conservation Innovation Grants

Funding is available in three focus areas, including grazing lands, organic systems and soil health

**WASHINGTON, Dec. 18, 2017** – USDA is offering grants for innovative ideas for conservation strategies and technologies. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to invest \$10 million in the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, funding innovative conservation projects in three focus areas: grazing lands, organic systems and soil health. **Grant proposals are due Feb. 26, 2018.**

"Conservation Innovation Grants play a critical role in developing and implementing new methods to help our customers across the country, and here in Nevada, conserve natural resources, strengthen their local communities, and improve their bottom lines," said Gary Roeder, NRCS acting state conservationist in Nevada. "Today's announcement supports our efforts to help producers build economically-strong and resilient farms and ranches by providing producers tools to utilize across their working farmlands."

The NRCS uses CIG to work with partners to accelerate transfer and adoption of promising technologies and approaches that address some of the nation's most pressing natural resource concerns. This year, NRCS is focusing funding in these areas:

- **Grazing Lands:** Helping livestock producers make grazing management decisions, encouraging prescribed burning as a grazing management practice, and improving access to conservation planning tools used for developing grazing management plans.
- **Organic Agriculture Systems:** Helping organic producers develop innovative cropping and tillage systems, edge-of-field monitoring, crop rotations, and intercropping systems.
- **Soil Health:** Supporting both cropping and grazing systems, in a variety of climatic zones, that incorporate soil health management systems for addressing specific resource concerns like nutrients and availability. Evaluating multiple soil health assessment methods to assist in the development of new soil health indicators and thresholds.

"Every sector of American agriculture has its unique conservation challenges," said Roeder. "CIG enables USDA to help support new, innovative tools and techniques which have helped U.S. agriculture become the powerhouse we see today, leading the world in both production efficiency and conservation delivery. We encourage groups and individuals to take advantage of this grant opportunity."

Potential applicants should review the announcement of program funding available at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), which includes application materials and submission procedures. All U.S.-based entities and individuals are invited to apply, with the sole exception of Federal agencies. Up to 20 percent of CIG funds will be set aside for proposals from historically underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers or groups serving these customers.

NRCS is hosting a webinar for potential CIG applicants on **Jan. 11, 2018, at 4 p.m. Eastern**. Information on how to join the webinar can be found on the [NRCS CIG webpage](#).

CIG is authorized and funded under the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#). Projects can last up to three years. The maximum award amount for any project this year is \$2 million.

Since 2004, NRCS has invested nearly \$286.7 million in more than 700 projects focused on providing farmers and ranchers new techniques, data and decision-making tools for improving natural resources conservation on their land.

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