



United States Department of Agriculture

Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities

*Building Markets and Investing in
America's Climate-Smart Farmers,
Ranchers & Forest Owners to
Strengthen U.S. Rural and
Agricultural Communities*



Fiscal Year (FY) 2022
Partnerships for Climate-Smart
Commodities

National Funding Opportunity (NFO)
Number: USDA-NRCS-COMM-22-
NOFO0001139

Assistance Listing No. 10.937

Before We Get Started

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- **Meeting recording.** This event is being recorded. You may access the recording with the same link you used to join the meeting today or on our website at www.usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities .
- **Q&A & Chat Disabled.** To ensure a clean public recording, the Q&A and chat functions have been disabled for this webinar. Please submit questions to climate-smart-commodities@usda.gov

Overview of Today's Presentation

1. Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary (10 min)
2. Program Description & Federal Award Info. (10 min)
3. Eligibility Information (10 min)
4. Application & Submission Information (10 min)
5. Content & Form of Application Submission – Project Narrative (15 min)
6. Content & Form of Application Submission – Other Application Materials (20 min)
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Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary



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Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary (cont.)

- Up to approximately \$1 billion will be made available for the **Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities** projects through this funding opportunity, which will build markets and invest in America's climate-smart farmers, ranchers and forest owners to strengthen U.S. rural and agricultural communities



Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities

- Through the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, USDA will support the production and marketing of climate-smart commodities through a set of pilot projects that provide voluntary incentives through partners to producers and landowners, including early adopters, to:
 - a. implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands,
 - b. measure/quantify, monitor and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits associated with those practices, and
 - c. develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

Proposals

- Proposals must provide
 - a plan to pilot implementation of climate-smart agriculture and/or forestry practices on a large-scale, including meaningful involvement of small or historically underserved producers, consistent with spirit of the Justice40 initiative;
 - a quantification, monitoring, reporting, and verification plan; and
 - a plan to develop markets and promote climate-smart commodities generated as a result of project activities.

Partners and Projects

- Grant agreements under this funding opportunity will be with a single entity, i.e., “partner”
- However, USDA encourages multiple partners to coordinate on projects
- A range of public and private entities are eligible to apply, which is described in Section C of the funding opportunity
- Funding will be provided through two funding pools
- USDA intends to fund a diverse set of projects and will not discriminate based on size of the project



First Funding Pool

- Proposals in the **first funding pool** (requests for amounts from \$5 million to \$100 million per proposal) will be
 - large-scale pilot projects that emphasize the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and include direct, meaningful benefits to a representative cross-section of production agriculture, including small and/or historically underserved producers

Second Funding Pool

- Proposals in the **second funding pool** (requests for amounts from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999 per proposal) are limited to particularly innovative pilot projects with an emphasis on
 - enrollment of small and/or underserved producers and/or
 - monitoring, reporting, and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions

Markets for Climate-Smart Commodities

- All projects must be tied to the development of markets and promotion of climate-smart commodities
 - For the purposes of this funding opportunity, a “climate-smart commodity” is an agricultural commodity that is produced using agricultural (farming, ranching, or forestry) practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon
 - Markets for climate-smart commodities may include
 - companies or processors sourcing climate-smart commodities to meet internal targets or other supply chain goals,
 - biofuel and renewable energy markets,
 - companies seeking to sell branded consumer products, or
 - other opportunities that could provide a premium or additional revenue for participating producers and land owners.

Incentives for Producers

- Sufficient incentives to encourage producer participation, as well as, generation of verifiable greenhouse gas reductions and carbon sequestration are critical to project success and will be considered in the evaluation criteria.

Key Dates

Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on:

- April 8, 2022 for the first funding pool
(proposals from \$5 million to \$100 million)
- May 27, 2022 for the second funding pool
(proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999).

The agency anticipates making selections by Summer 2022. For new users of Grants.gov, see Section D of the funding opportunity for information about steps required before submitting an application via Grants.gov.

Technical Issues

- For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.
- Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.



Federal Financial Assistance Training

- The funding available through this Funding Opportunity is Federal financial assistance.
- Grants 101 Training is highly recommended for those seeking knowledge about Federal financial assistance.
- The training is free and available to the public via <https://www.cfo.gov/grants-training/> .

Content Inquiries

- For inquiries specific to the content of the Funding Opportunity requirements, contact the federal awarding agency contact (at end of funding opportunity)
- Please limit questions to those regarding specific information contained in this Funding Opportunity (such as dates, page numbers, clarification of discrepancies, etc.)
- Questions related to eligibility or the merits of a specific proposal will not be addressed
- Information on available webinars and other supporting information for this funding opportunity will be posted at: <https://www.usda.gov/climate-solutions/climate-smart-commodities>



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Program Description & Federal Award Information



Fiscal Year (FY) 2022
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Legislative Authority

- The authority for this funding opportunity is the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714 et seq)
- This funding opportunity leverages the authorities under Section 5 of the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act at 15 U.S.C. 714c with particular emphasis on the following subsection:

“(e) increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities (other than tobacco) by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic markets or by developing or aiding in the development of new and additional markets, marketing facilities, and uses for such commodities.”

Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Details

- In response to the climate crisis, USDA is pursuing actions within the agriculture sector to support the production of climate-smart commodities
- For the purposes of this funding opportunity, a “climate-smart commodity” is defined as an agricultural commodity that is produced using agricultural (farming, ranching, or forestry) practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon
- Adoption of these practices can produce other associated environmental benefits



Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Details (cont.)

- Through Partnerships, USDA will support a set of pilot projects that provide voluntary incentives through partners to producers and landowners, including early adopters, to:
 - implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands;
 - Measure/quantify, monitor and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas benefits associated with those practices; and
 - develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

Goals of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities

- As demonstrated in Executive Order (EO) 14008, tackling the climate crisis at home and abroad will require a whole-of-government approach, and agriculture and forestry play an important role in that strategy
- USDA's 90-day progress report on our Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) strategy emphasized that a successful CSAF strategy relies on a multi-pronged approach
- Projects funded through the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities will play an important role in that approach and will contribute to meeting the U.S. commitments to address climate change



Intended Overarching Outcomes

The Partnerships aim to achieve the following outcomes through a variety of pilot projects:

- Increased markets (supply and demand) for climate-smart commodities;
- Increased adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) practices and systems that reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and/or increase carbon sequestration from the agricultural sector;
- Demonstration of scalable and low-cost measurement/quantification, monitoring, reporting, and verification (MMRV) systems;
- Increased innovation and consistency in measuring/quantifying farm-level GHG benefits;

Intended Overarching Outcomes (cont.)

- Testing and evaluation of efficient traceability through supply chains from production of commodity to delivery to the consumer;
- Improved understanding and communication of economic and adaptation benefits, as well as ancillary environmental benefits;
- Equitable administration that includes small and underserved producers as well as early adopters (i.e., producers who have already used some climate-smart approaches);
- Understanding of marketability advantages for a variety of farm types;
- Empowerment of farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to drive CSAF markets and practice adoption; and
- Development of additional public-private partnerships to foster and develop CSAF markets.

Intended Market Expansion Outcomes

The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities seek to address the need for new and expanded markets for CSAF commodities, including helping:

- Standardize the definition of a CSAF commodity;
- Improve the quality and ability to verify GHG emissions reductions and carbon sequestration benefits associated with commodities produced using CSAF practices to inform future measurement and quantification standards;



Intended Market Expansion Outcomes (cont.)

- Reduce the potential for double counting of benefits;
- Reduce transaction costs;
- Increase understanding and awareness of climate-smart commodities among small and underserved producers and expand their participation;
- Increase the efficiency of supply chain traceability;
- Reduce the risk of market entry; and
- Increase the competitive advantage of U.S. farmers, ranchers and forest landowners domestically and internationally.

Project Boundaries

- The primary focus of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities pilot projects must be on-farm production of climate-smart commodities
- Commodities must be produced using verifiable and quantifiable climate-smart practices (farming, ranching, or forestry)
- Climate-smart forest products are included, and applicants may propose and justify innovative forestry projects that generate climate-smart forestry commodities

Project Boundaries (cont.)

- Projects must focus on verifiable on-farm (or forest) GHG emissions and carbon sequestration benefits
- Federal funding under this funding opportunity must not be used for renting or purchasing land in the form of an easement or other device
- Other reductions associated with processing, transportation, etc., throughout the agriculture and forestry supply chains are not the focus of this funding opportunity

Project Boundaries (cont.)

- Partners with agreements under this funding opportunity must ensure that payments are not provided to a producer or land owner for the same production practice or system implementation on the same land for which the producer or land owner has already received, or is contracted to receive, funding through another USDA program
- Enhancements to existing practices may be funded as part of these pilot projects

Project Boundaries (cont.)

- Specific ownership of GHG benefits shall be proposed by applicants (e.g., how GHG benefit ownership will be transferred through different parts of the supply chain)
- These chain-of-custody ownership clauses could be included, for example, in
 - a) contracts between producers and project developers, and
 - b) contracts between project developers and commodity purchasers

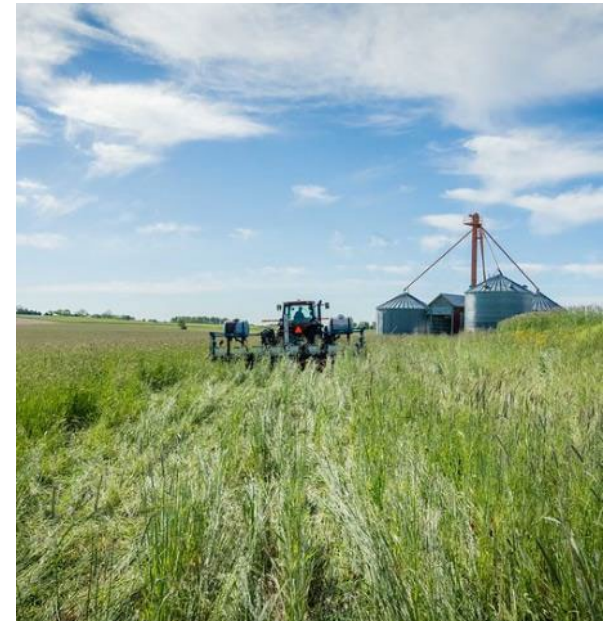


Practices

- Highly competitive projects will include agricultural and forestry practices or combinations of practices, and/or practice enhancements that provide GHG benefits and/or carbon sequestration
- Notes:
 - All practices must demonstrate GHG benefits
 - Practices and enhancements to existing practices are not limited to those under existing USDA practice standards
 - However, compliance and reporting activities will likely be more complex for practices without existing standards
 - Projects may include digesters only in limited circumstances, with additional documentation; see the Project Narrative section

Practices (cont.)

- Cover crops
- Low-till or no-till
- Nutrient management
- Enhanced efficiency fertilizers
- Manure management
- Feed management to reduce enteric emissions
- Climate-smart pasture practices
- Agroforestry and afforestation on working lands
- Afforestation/reforestation and sustainable forest management
- Planting for high carbon sequestration rate
- Maintaining and improving forest soil quality
- Alternate wetting & drying on rice fields
- Increase on-site carbon storage through Forest Stand Management
- Soil amendments, like biochar
- Buffers, wetland & grassland management & tree planting on working lands



FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

- Estimated Funding
 - The Federal funding agency expects to award a total of approximately \$1 billion through this opportunity
- Start Dates and Performance Periods
 - Projects may be between 1 and 5 years in duration, with up to two years of no- cost extensions considered on a case-by-case basis
 - Anticipated start dates are Summer 2022

Note: Projects must demonstrate project results on the ground within one year of the project start date.

Number of Awards

- USDA welcomes proposals from a range of funding sizes from \$250,000 to \$100 million; therefore, the number of awards under this announcement is difficult to predict
- With this in mind, the agency expects to make approximately 30-50 awards, depending on proposals received

Type of Federal Award

- USDA plans to award grant agreements pursuant to this opportunity. USDA will provide general oversight of the grant and reporting requirements
- However, in general, any on the ground technical assistance will need to be provided by the recipient (except for Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Compliance (WC) determinations)
- Recipients may only enroll agricultural producers and land owners who are compliant with HEL and WC requirements as described under 7 CFR part 12

Eligibility of Renewal or Supplemental Project Applications

- USDA does reserve the right to renew or supplement awards under this Funding Opportunity in the future with additional federal funding without further competition



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Eligibility Information



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Eligible Applicants

- Applicants and applications must meet eligibility criteria by the application deadline to be considered for an award
- Applicant entities identified in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted, or excluded from receiving Federal contracts and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable

Eligible Applicants (cont.)

- This opportunity is open only to domestic applicants
- The primary applicant must also demonstrate an existing relationship with and/or prior experience working with producers or landowners
- Additionally, at minimum one project partner must have existing experience working with underserved producers or landowners
- This information will be used when evaluating the application in the equity criteria



Eligible Applicants (cont.)

- County, city or township governments
- Special district governments
- State governments
- Small businesses
- For-profit organizations other than small businesses
- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized and other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status (other than institutions of higher education)
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status (other than institutions of higher education)
- Private institutions of higher education
- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education.

Eligible Applicants (cont.)

- The primary applicant/recipient must be an entity (not an individual)
- Individuals may also be eligible as subrecipients but may not be the primary applicant/recipient
- Commodity organizations, technical service provider organizations (including university extension), farming cooperatives, organizations representing historically underrepresented communities, local producers, micro-producers, forestry organizations and others are encouraged to apply



Other Eligibility Information

- Any award made pursuant to this Funding Opportunity will be made to a single entity.
- Applicants that apply as “partnerships” or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the “partner” parties.
- In all but exceptional cases, this must be reflected in the award as an awardee/sub-awardee relationship.
- An applicant organization **may** submit more than one application for different projects or propose different approaches to a particular project in separate applications.

Other Eligibility Information (cont.)

- In the case of applications submitted as revisions or corrections to a previously submitted application under this Funding Opportunity, the agency will consider the last application submitted prior to the established deadline.
- Awards made pursuant to this Funding Opportunity are not subject to any payment limitations.
- However, any agricultural producers or land owners receiving a payment through participation in a project awarded under this Funding Opportunity must meet the eligibility requirements of 7 CFR Part 12 and 7 CFR Part 1400 and have control of the land involved for the term of the proposed award period.

Cost Sharing or Matching

- There is not a specific match requirement for this Funding Opportunity.
- However, applications will be evaluated, in part, on the relative contribution of non-Federal resources to the project.
- Cost sharing may be achieved with contributions of cash, services, materials, equipment, or third-party in-kind contributions.



Cost Sharing or Matching (cont.)

- USDA values the importance of partners contributing to projects; the magnitude and quality of matching funds will be a part of the evaluation criteria.
- However, this will be considered through the lens of equity so that the ability to secure a non-Federal match is not a barrier to participation.
- Refer to Section D of the Funding Opportunity for information about any required submittals related to match or cost-share requirements.
- Refer to Section E for a description of how a voluntary match will be evaluated.

Cost Sharing or Matching (cont.)

- While the pace of cost sharing/matching may vary throughout the award period, the agency will actively monitor cost sharing/matching levels as it receives payment requests to ensure the total cost sharing/matching requirement is met by the award period of performance end date.
- Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions are located at 2 CFR 200.306.



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Application & Submission Information



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Information for New Users of Grants.gov

- While a Grants.gov account is not required to download a Funding Opportunity and related documents, it is required to submit an application
- If your organization has never submitted an application via Grants.gov, please be aware that there are several steps you must take to register your organization before you can submit an application
- Completing those steps can take a significant amount of time, so plan accordingly



Register to Apply through Grants.gov

- Carefully review the registration steps and gather information requested prior to beginning the registration process to **avoid last-minute searches for required information**
- For assistance with the registration process, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov
- Organizations must complete **all** steps to register.
- Complete organization instructions are included on Grants.gov here:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html> .

Register to Apply through Grants.gov (cont.)

- Although creating a Grants.gov account online can take only minutes, **SAM registrations may take several weeks.**
- Therefore, organizations should begin the process early to ensure they have sufficient time to complete registration and meet required application submission deadlines.
- **Important Note:** SAM.gov will be unavailable for about 1 week at the beginning of April so any applicants not already registered should do so soon.



Steps to Register

- Obtain a DUNS Number or UEI
- Register with SAM
- Create a Grants.gov Account
- Add an Organization Applicant Profile to a Grants.gov Account
- Establish EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles

Electronic Signature

- When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature.
- Please be aware that the EBiz POC and the person with AOR Role cannot be the same individual; they **must** be different people.
- The EBiz POC must authorize people who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role.

***This step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.

Workspace

- Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application.
- For each Funding Opportunity, you can create individual instances of a workspace.
- An applicant can start an application in Workspace and return to work on it later within Workspace.

Apply for an Opportunity

- An overview of applying on Grants.gov is available in the funding opportunity.
- For complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

Electronic Application Package

- Applicants interested in submitting an application in response to this Funding Opportunity must submit it via Grants.gov; the agency will **not** accept applications submitted via email or any other method.
- Applicants are urged to submit early to the Grants.gov system.
- For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov
- Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.
- All information necessary to apply for this opportunity is included in the Grants.gov opportunity announcement.



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Content & Form of Application Submission: Project Narrative



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Content and Form of Application Submission

- The agency may choose not to consider
 - applications that fail to comply with the required content, format, and page limits, or
 - those that are incomplete.

Project Narrative Format

- 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 15 pages.
- This page limitation applies to the project narrative only.
- Other application materials, such as budget details/narratives, resumes of staff, and support letters are not counted against this 15-page limit.

Project Narrative

- Proposals in the first funding pool must include all of the following:
 - Executive Summary of Pilot Project
 - Plan to Pilot CSAF practices on Large Scale
 - MMRV Plan
 - Plan to Develop and Expand Markets for Climate-Smart Commodities
- Proposals in the second funding pool are limited to particularly innovative pilot projects with a focus on:
 - enrollment of small and/or underserved producers, and/or
 - monitoring, reporting, and verification activities at minority serving institutions.

Proposals in the second funding pool are also encouraged to include plans for all of the elements listed above for the first funding pool.

However, USDA recognizes that projects of this size may face limitations in the capacity to execute on all elements and will take these limitations into account during project evaluation

Executive Summary of Pilot Project

- Includes at minimum a high level description of the project, the issues it is seeking to address and how the project will contribute to the goals in this funding opportunity, including:
 - Contact Information
 - List of Project Partners
 - List of underserved/minority-focused project partners
 - Compelling need for the project
 - Approach to minimize transaction costs associated with project activities
 - Geographic Focus
 - Approach to reduce producer barriers to implementing CSAF practices for the purpose of marketing climate-smart commodities
 - Project management capacity of partners, including a description of existing relationship with and/or prior experience working with producers or landowners, promoting climate-smart activities and marketing climate-smart commodities.

Plan to Pilot CSAF Practices

- A description of CSAF practices to be deployed,
- Plan to recruit producers and landowners, including estimated scale of the project (e.g., number of landowners, acres targeted, head of livestock, etc.)
- Plan to provide technical assistance, outreach, and training, including who will be conducting these activities, qualifications and projected timeline,
- Plan to provide financial assistance for producers/landowners to implement CSAF practices, and
- Plan to enroll underserved and small producers, including estimated number of underserved and small producers participating and associated dollar amounts anticipated to go directly to producers, in the form of technical and financial assistance.



Digesters

- Under the first funding pool
 - Projects may include digesters as part of broader project
 - Planning for, materials for, & construction of digesters **not** funded
- Under the second funding pool
 - May be funded as a part of a project to help fund proving out technologies and building infrastructure on farm
 - Large digesters with high capital costs should plan to leverage other innovative financing as part of their applications
 - Small-scale digesters that can build off manure management strategies and community digesters where one system serves multiple farms may be included
 - Funding for the digester(s) when combined with other sources may not exceed the cost of the digester(s)
 - Applications requesting funding for digesters as part of the project **MUST** complete Appendix D and Appendix E



MMRV Plan

- Approach to greenhouse gas benefit quantification, including methodology approach consistent with the section titled “Quantification Requirements“
- Approach to monitoring of practice implementation, including the anticipated number of farms and acres reached through project activities,
- Approach to reporting and tracking of greenhouse gas benefits including the anticipated GHG benefits per farm, per project, per commodity produced, per dollar expended, and the anticipated longevity of GHG benefits,
- Approach to verification of greenhouse gas benefits, and
- Agreement to participate in the Partnerships Network (see entry below in “Considerations for Successful Projects”).

Additional Notes

- Applicants must describe how they will track GHG benefits through the supply chain.
- This funding opportunity is focused on projects that generate climate-smart commodities, and not on projects that focus on generating carbon offsets.
- Projects may investigate systems that track GHG benefits associated with both climate-smart commodities and carbon offsets.
- Applicants may consider approaches where the climate-smart activities could generate carbon offsets; however, applicants should ensure there is not double-counting of climate benefits entering commodity supply chains and the benefits being used to generate carbon offsets.

Additional Notes (cont.)

- Applicants must define how GHG benefit ownership will be transferred through different parts of the supply chain; and double counting will be avoided.
- Applicants will also have to attest that producers and land owners will not be involved in multiple USDA programs that fund the same practice on the same land.
- Federal funds under this funding opportunity may not be used to pay for implementation of the same practice on the same land, but funding may be used to enhance a practice or to further incentivize the climate-smart commodity generated, especially with respect to early adopters

Plan to Develop and Expand Markets for Climate-Smart Commodities

- Any partnerships designed to market resulting climate-smart commodities,
- A plan to track climate-smart commodities through the supply chain, if appropriate,
- Estimated economic benefits for participating producers including market returns, and
- Post-project potential, including anticipated ability to scale project activities, likelihood of long-term viability beyond project period, and ability to inform future USDA actions to encourage climate-smart commodities.



Considerations for Successful Projects

- All projects must be tied to the development of markets and promotion of climate-smart commodities.
- Markets for climate-smart commodities may include companies or processors sourcing climate-smart commodities to meet internal targets or other supply chain goals, biofuel and renewable energy markets, companies seeking to sell branded consumer products, or other opportunities that could provide a premium or additional revenue for participating producers and land owners.
- Sufficient incentives to encourage producer participation, as well as, generation of verifiable greenhouse gas reductions and carbon sequestration are critical to project success and will be considered in the evaluation criteria.

Quantification Requirements

- USDA encourages deployment of innovative, cost-effective methods for the quantification of greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration benefits in these pilots.
- Alongside such innovative approaches, the Carbon Management Evaluation Tool (COMET) should be used where applicable. COMET is an USDA online management system that provides landowners and conservation planners with an easy-to-use, web-based tool to evaluate potential carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas reductions from adopting production practices.



Quantification Requirements (cont.)

- The methodologies used in the suite of COMET tools are documented in USDA's entity-scale methods, "Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Agriculture and Forestry: Methods for Entity-Scale Inventory" ("Entity Scale Methods"), and are based on peer-reviewed science.
- At present, USDA uses COMET-Planner to quantify the greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration benefits for a number of climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices.
- To help ensure comparability of project results, funded projects also should use COMET-Planner, where applicable, to determine common estimates of the GHG impacts of activities.

Quantification Requirements (cont.)

- Projects are encouraged to use USDA's Entity Scale Methods when GHG benefit estimates are not available in COMET-Planner.
- Applicants are also encouraged to use innovative quantification methodologies in addition to those mentioned above
- The outcomes of the alternative methods should be compared against the Entity-Scale Methods and/or COMET-Planner, as appropriate.
- Alternate methodologies should be documented transparently, be based in peer-reviewed literature whenever possible, be replicable by third parties, and be available for other projects to implement.

Monitoring & Verification Requirements

- USDA is not prescribing monitoring and verification methodologies, and is seeking proposals that include innovative, rigorous and cost-effective approaches.
- Innovation in approaches to monitoring and verification will help to facilitate the deployment of climate smart agriculture and forestry at scale and provide information critical to adapting quantification models in the future.
- Proposed monitoring and verification approaches should ensure the integrity of the GHG benefits and resulting climate-smart commodities, while also ensuring that transaction costs are not a barrier to participation.
- Additional requirements for quantification, monitoring and verification may be provided at the time of award.

Partnerships Network

- A representative from each awarded project must be designated as a member of the “USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Learning Network” (Partnerships Network).
- Participation involves up to two virtual meetings and two in-person meetings a year during the project duration, subject to change.
- The Partnerships Network will be co-chaired by the Office of the Chief Economist and FPAC.

Partnerships Network (cont.)

- The Partnerships Network will inform synthesis reports to be assembled by USDA on a range of topics related to the implementation of Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities projects, including:
 - Lessons-learned as projects are implemented;
 - Options for providing technical assistance;
 - Procedures for measurement/quantification, monitoring, reporting, and verifying GHG benefits;
 - Options for tracing climate-smart commodities through the supply chain;
 - Mechanisms for reducing costs of implementation;

Partnerships Network (cont.)

- A forum for discussion and learning regarding approaches to CSAF program implementation
- Synthesis of outcomes and successes; and
- Opportunities for USDA and others to inform future approaches to generating new and expanded markets for climate-smart commodities.

Information Collection

- If your proposal will include information collection from non-Federal sources, ensure the collection meets the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act.
- Surveys of individuals or entities are generally prohibited without prior approval from the Office of Management and Budget.
- For additional guidance about allowable and unallowable activities, please visit the following website:
<https://pra.digital.gov/do-i-need-clearance/>



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Content & Form of Application Submission: Other Application Materials



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Commodities

National Funding Opportunity (NFO)
Number: USDA-NRCS-COMM-22-
NOFO0001139

Assistance Listing No. 10.937

Application Form & Budget Information

- The following forms are both required:
 - Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance)
 - Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs



Budget Narrative

- In a separate document titled “Budget Narrative,” explain and justify all requested budget items/costs.
- Detail how the totals on the SF-424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities.
- For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency’s approval and estimate its cost.
- Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. The budget narrative must show the amounts and sources of match or cost share (including both cash and in-kind contributions).

Indirect costs limitations

- To be eligible to recover any indirect cost under a Federal award, recipients must either
 - 1) have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with a Federal agency that has not expired; or
 - 2) qualify for use of the de minimis rate authorized by 2 CFR 200.414(f). A State, local, or tribal governmental department or agency unit that receives more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding is not eligible for the de minimis rate.
- Applicants that have a current NICRA must calculate indirect costs using the rate and base specified in their NICRA. Information on reducing or waiving indirect cost is available in the funding opportunity. A copy of the applicant's current NICRA must be provided with the application. Indirect costs may not be recovered under an expired NICRA.
- Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

Single Audit

- As required in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F Audit Requirements, all U.S. states, local governments, Federally recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System: <https://facides.census.gov/>



Grants.gov Lobbying Form, Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

- Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award.
- Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 2 CFR Part 418, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying.
- If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying, you must also complete and submit the SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities located at 2 CFR 418, Appendix B. See 2 CFR 418.110 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

Disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest

- Applicants must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the performance of its 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.

Disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest (cont.)

- 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.

Post Award Documentation

- Post award documentation may be required in addition to what is described elsewhere in this funding opportunity.



Unique entity identifier (UEI) & System for Award Management (SAM)

- Each applicant is required to:
 - (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application;
 - (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and
 - (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

UEI & SAM (cont.)

- The agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and,
- if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the agency is ready to make an award, it may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.
- Entities must obtain a DUNS or UEI and register in SAM prior to registering with Grants.gov. A description of each is below. Entities are strongly encouraged to apply early for their SAM registration.

UEI & SAM (cont.)

- SAM Registration: To register, go to: <https://www.sam.gov> . The Federal Service Desk is available for registration assistance and can be contacted via the Help tab at the website listed above.
- Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding DUNS/UEI or SAM issues.
- The Government intends to replace the D-U-N-S® number with a “new, non-proprietary identifier” requested in, and assigned by SAM.gov. This new identifier is being called the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), or the Entity ID. See Planned UEI Updates in Grant Application Forms for UEI updates.

Support Letter & Resume

- Support Letters – The applicant organization must provide letters of support from all project partners identified in the project narrative. Additional letters of support from organizations or individuals not directly involved in the project, which demonstrate past success of the applicant's activities may also be provided.
- A resume for the lead project administrator is also required.

Submission Dates and Times

- Applicants must submit applications via [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov). Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time (ET) on
 - April 8, 2022 for the first funding pool (applications \$5 million to \$100 million)
 - May 27, 2022 for the second funding pool (applications \$250,000 to \$4,999,999)
- An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late (an application is considered on time at 11:59.59 pm ET, but it is late at 12:00 am ET).
- Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

Submission Correspondence

- Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant's Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) attempting to submit the application.
- The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process; be patient and give the system time to process the application.
- If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any issues. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Section D. 2. for Grants.gov contact information.

Submission Correspondence (cont.)

- For applications successfully transmitted to Grants.gov before the deadline: The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive:
 - an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov
 - an email with the official date/time stamp (this stamp is used to determine if the application was received prior to the deadline) and Grants.gov
 - When the agency successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will also provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the applicant.

Funding

- Funding will be provided on a reimbursable basis based on benchmarks for each project.
- Advances may be considered in limited circumstances particularly for small and underserved entities consistent with 2 CFR 200.



Funding Restrictions

- Funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs **unless otherwise permitted by law and approved in writing by the agency in advance** of incurring such costs:
 - Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project.
 - Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the award, including time spent applying for this opportunity.
 - Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and amendments thereto.
 - Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives.
 - Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities.

Funding Restrictions (cont.)

- Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee.
- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land, and for improvements to land, buildings, or equipment which materially increase their value or useful life. See 2 CFR 200.439 for additional information.
- Management fees and profit. Any funds awarded to for-profit entities must be used for reimbursement of award related direct and indirect costs only.
- Meals may be charged to an award only if they are necessary for the performance of the project.

Funding Restrictions (cont.)

- Costs normally charged as indirect costs may not be charged as direct costs without proper justification and agency approval.
- Proper justification includes documentation that the costs meet the criteria for allowability (see 2 CFR 200.403).
 - Examples of such costs include rent, utilities, depreciation on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, and general administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.
- Salaries that are not commensurate with level of work.
- This list is not exhaustive. For additional information please refer to 2 CFR Part 200, subpart E, Cost Principals.

Application checklist



- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Project Narrative (refer to Funding Opportunity for detailed requirements)
- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- Budget Narrative (use guidance attached to Funding Opportunity)
- Grants.gov Lobbying Form
- Support Letters
- Resume of lead project Administrator
- Negotiated Indirect Costs Rate Agreements (if applicable)
- SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
- Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest (if applicable)



United States Department of Agriculture

Application Review Information



Fiscal Year (FY) 2022
Partnerships for Climate-Smart
Commodities

National Funding Opportunity (NFO)
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Review and Selection Process

- Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Incomplete, noncompliant, and/or applications not meeting the formatting criteria may be eliminated from competition. In that event, the agency will send notification of elimination to the applicant.
- The agency intends to select and award without conducting any discussions or allowing applicants to correct deficiencies or omissions in their applications.
- Consequently, applicants must ensure their applications are complete and accurate.

Review and Selection Process (cont.)

- However, while the agency intends to select without contacting applicants, it reserves the right to request applicants to revise their applications to correct deficiencies or omissions it identifies.
- If this occurs, the agency will conduct discussions with all applicants, identify deficiencies and omissions for all, and give applicants an opportunity to submit a revised application by a common cut-off date.
- The agency may also contact individual applicants to clarify certain components of their applications.

Review and Selection Process (cont.)

- Merit/technical reviews will be conducted by a technical review board nominated by the approving official.
- Risk reviews will be conducted by the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division.
- The approving official will make the final award decisions.
- The approving official for this opportunity is the FPAC Under Secretary.
- A multi-phase approval process may be utilized if determined necessary by the approving official.



Merit/Technical Criteria

- In general, all proposals will be evaluated at minimum on the following primary evaluation criteria and sub-criteria as drafted below.
- For applications in the first funding pool (\$5 million to \$100 million), projected benefits from GHG mitigation and carbon sequestration from ongoing or new on-farm practices associated with the production of climate-smart commodities will be weighted more heavily.
- For applications in the second funding pool (under \$5 million), equity and outreach criteria will be weighted more heavily.

Merit/Technical Criteria (cont.)

- Benefits Associated with the Production of Climate-Smart Commodities
 - **Projected benefits from GHG mitigation and carbon sequestration from ongoing or new on-farm practices associated with the production of climate-smart commodities** (weighted most heavily in first funding pool)
 - Anticipated GHG benefits associated with the production of climate-smart commodities per farm, per project, per commodity produced, per dollar expended
 - Anticipated longevity of GHG benefits associated with the project
 - (Non-GHG) Environmental co-benefits (e.g., water quality, soil quality, localized air pollution, wildlife habitat) of climate-smart commodity production
 - Climate adaptation benefits of climate-smart commodity production

Merit/Technical Criteria (cont.)

- CSAF Market Development for Climate-smart Commodities
 - Scalability
 - Likelihood of long-term viability beyond project period
 - Ability to inform future USDA actions to encourage climate-smart commodities
 - Ability to help producers realize greater market returns by overcoming barriers to adopting CSAF practices, including estimated market returns to participating producers.

Merit/Technical Criteria (cont.)

- **Equity/Environmental Justice (EJ)/Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) Reach**
(weighted most heavily in the second funding pool)
 - Economic benefits for producers, including underserved producers
 - Proposed number of underserved producers to be enrolled
 - Partnerships with EJ/MSI/equity/small farmer representation organizations



Merit/Technical Criteria (cont.)

- Project Management Proposal
 - Budget proposal
 - Estimated GHG benefits from the production of climate-smart commodities per dollar invested
 - Note: The size, complexity and diversity of operations reached will be considered in weighing this factor.
 - Innovative collaborations/partnerships among organizations
 - Prior experience/confidence in the team

Merit/Technical Criteria (cont.)

- Technical proposal
 - Measuring, monitoring, and reporting plan:
 - Project's contribution to advancing supply chain tracing and incentive structures,
 - Completeness and credibility of measurement/quantification, monitoring, tracking and verification approach
 - Innovation in approaches to quantification, monitoring and verification of GHG benefits associated with specific CSAF practices.
 - Project's direct benefit to producers, particularly small and historically underserved producers.

Merit/Technical Criteria (cont.)

- Technical proposal (cont.)
 - Approach to reducing transaction costs
 - Technical assistance plan
 - Producer reach/number of producers targeted to be enrolled
 - Consideration of how proposal fits into broad portfolio of funding opportunity (underserved, commodity type, etc.)



Merit/Technical Criteria (cont.)

- Diversity of applications, including geographic diversity and size and scale of projects, will be considered when making award decisions.
- USDA will select a variety of projects such that this emerging marketplace starts out with robust competition and options for producers.
- USDA is committed to equity and environmental justice in program delivery and explicitly seeks to ensure that all projects provide direct, meaningful benefits to a representative cross-section of production agriculture, including small and/or historically underserved producers, consistent with Justice40 and other related initiatives.

Administrative and Risk Criteria

- Notice of selection after merit/technical evaluation does not guarantee that an applicant will receive an award. Following notification of selection for funding (see Section F), the FPAC Business Center, Grants and Agreements Division's staff conducts a final administrative and risk review of those applications.
- The administrative review includes, but is not limited to, a check to ensure that Funding Opportunity requirements were met (e.g., applicant meets eligibility criteria, application was submitted via Grants.gov by the established deadline), and proposed costs are allowable, allocable, and necessary.
- During this process, 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).

Administrative and Risk Criteria (cont.)

- In addition, to comply with the requirements at 2 CFR 200.206, the agency will follow, at a minimum, the risk review process described below (additional steps may be taken).
 - The awarding agency will check SAM to ensure the applicant is not suspended or debarred, which would preclude receiving an award.
 - In addition, prior to making a Federal award with a total Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000), the agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (the Federal Awardee Performance Integrity Information System, FAPIIS) (see 41 USC 2313 and 2 CFR 200.206(a)).

Standards to be Considered for Award

- Financial Stability
- Quality of Management Systems and Ability to meet Management Standards prescribed in 2 CFR Part 200
- History of Performance



United States Department of Agriculture

Federal Award Administration, Contact & Other Information



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Federal Award Notices

- The agency will provide notice that an application has been selected before it actually makes the Federal award.
- As such, the selection notification is not an authorization to begin performance. **Any pre-award costs incurred by the awardee will not be reimbursed.**
- The Notice of Grant and Agreement Award (ADS-093) signed by the authorized agency official is the only authorizing document and will be provided electronically to the entity's authorized official for signature.



General Terms and Conditions

- 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> .

AWARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

National Environmental Policy Act

- Projects will be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- Awardees must work with the local NRCS field office to complete an Environmental Evaluation (EE) related to projects activities.
- Based on the outcome of the EE, plans may need modification to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts. Additional evaluations may also be required.

National Historic Preservation Act

- Depending on the outcome of the NEPA EE require, a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106 review and consultation may also be required.
- More information on the applicant's role in the NHPA Section 106 process can be found on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation website at <https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/section-106-applicant-toolkit> .

Endangered Species Act

- Agency consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is also required for projects that may affect listed or proposed species or destroy or modify critical habitat.
- The ESA consultation in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA and implementing regulations at 50 CFR Part 402 must be completed by NRCS prior to the implementation of project activities that have the potential to impact species or habitat protected under the ESA.
- More information on the Section 7 consultation process can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/consultations-overview.html>.

Patents and Copyrights

- Allocation of rights to patents, inventions, and copyrights are governed by 2 CFR Part 200.
- This regulation provides that awardees normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support.
- 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 must normally manufacture it domestically.
- With regard to copyright, the grant recipient may copyright any work that is subject to copyright and was developed, or for which ownership was 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.

Section 508 Compliance

- All electronic information tools produced must meet the accessibility of Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) requirements as specified in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- The Act requires that EIT must allow federal employees and individuals of the public with disabilities comparable access to and use of information and data that is provided to federal employees and individuals of the public without disabilities.
- All EIT will have a Section 508 acceptance test and will be validated upon acceptance. All maintenance for EIT that requires upgrades, modifications, installations, and purchases will also adhere to the Section 508 standards.

Reporting

- The frequency of Financial Reporting using SF 425 will be outlined in the General Terms and Conditions: <https://www.fpacbc.usda.gov/about/grants-and-agreements/award-terms-and-conditions/index.html> .

Progress Reports

- Required after the first quarter and at least biannually thereafter.
- Reports should describe:
 - Producers and landowners participating, and demonstration of equitable enrollment, including enrollment of underserved and small producers.
 - Practices applied
 - Outreach and training
 - Financial assistance for producers/landowners to implement CSAF practices
 - Greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration benefits accrued and verified and other ancillary environmental benefits associated with the production of climate smart commodities

Progress Reports (cont'd)

- Marketing and outreach related to climate-smart commodities as a result of project activities including information on impacts related to a variety of farm sizes and types
- Technical assistance and resources provided, especially to help producers overcome barriers to adopting CSAF practices
- Partnerships developed and leveraged including public-private partnerships to foster and develop CSAF markets.
- Climate-smart commodity supply chain and demand impacts as well as other economic benefits
- Implementation of MMRV and supply chain traceability systems

Notes: Additional reporting and data sharing requirements may apply at time of award. Certain reporting elements will be required to be georeferenced. Spot checks may be required upon review of reporting documents or other USDA analyses. Refer to the Funding Opportunity for additional regulatory reporting requirements.

Grants.gov Questions

- For technical issues with Grants.gov, please contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov . Awarding agency staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.

FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT

- For questions regarding this opportunity, please contact the following individual with the Funding Opportunity number in the subject line:

Name: Crystal Blackburn

Grants Management Specialist

FPAC Business Center

Email: FPAC.BC.GAD@USDA.GOV with a copy to Climate-Smart-Commodities@usda.gov

More Information

Visit www.usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities

- Details about program
- Resources to support application

