

VIEW GRANT OPPORTUNITY

USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPPAFA-24-NOFO0001355

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Alternative Funding

Arrangements (AFA) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2024

Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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General Information

Document Type:	Grants Notice	Version:	Synopsis 3
Funding Opportunity Number:	USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPPAFA-24-NOFO0001355	Posted Date:	Apr 03, 2024
Funding Opportunity Title:	Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2024	Last Updated Date:	Jul 02, 2024
Opportunity Category:	Discretionary	Original Closing Date for Applications:	Jul 02, 2024 NRCS must receive proposals by 4:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 2, 2024.
Opportunity Category Explanation:		Current Closing Date for Applications:	Jul 02, 2024 NRCS must receive proposals by 4:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 2, 2024.
Funding Instrument Type:	Other	Archive Date:	Aug 01, 2024
		Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$ 1,500,000,000
		Award Ceiling:	\$25,000,000
		Award Floor:	\$250,000



Category of Funding: Agriculture
Activity: Environment
Natural Resources

Category Explanation:

Expected Number of Awards:

Assistance: 10.932 -- Regional

Listings: Conservation
Partnership Program

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: Yes

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants: Public and State controlled institutions of higher education
Small businesses
Private institutions of higher education
County governments
Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities
Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
City or township governments
State governments
Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
Special district governments
Independent school districts
Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
For profit organizations other than small businesses

Additional Information on Eligibility: Entities that are classified as one of the following organizational types can serve as an eligible RCPP partner: a. an agricultural or silvicultural producer association or other group of producers; b. a state or unit of local government; c. an Indian tribe; d. a farmer cooperative; e. a water district, irrigation district, acequia, rural

water district or association, or other organization with specific water delivery authority to agricultural producers;f. a municipal water or wastewater treatment entity;g. an institution of higher education;h. an organization, business, or entity with an established history of working cooperatively with producers (as determined by NRCS) to address:• local conservation priorities related to agricultural production, wildlife habitat development, or nonindustrial private forest land management; or• critical watershed-scale soil erosion, water quality, sediment reduction, or other natural resource issues;i. an entity, such as an Indian tribe, state government, local government, or a non-governmental organization, that has a farmland or grassland protection program that purchases agricultural land easements, as defined in 7 CFR § 1468.3; j. a conservation district.

Additional Information

Agency Natural Resources Conservation Service

Name:

Description: **Federal Awarding Agency Name:** U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)

Funding Opportunity Title: Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2024

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPPAFA-24-NOFO0001355

Assistance Listing: 10.932, Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Due Date: NRCS must receive proposals by 4:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 2, 2024.

Note: The RCPP AFA and Classic FY 2024 notices of funding opportunity (NFO) will run concurrently. For information on Classic proposals please see USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPP-24-NOFO0001354.

The RCPP promotes the coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through the RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that provide solutions to conservation challenges thereby measurably improving the resource concerns they seek to address. RCPP promotes

collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and various communities, which is paramount to achieving equity in NRCS programs and services.

Using guidance contained in this notice, partners propose projects that generate conservation benefits by addressing specific natural resource concerns in a state or multistate area or by addressing one or more priority resource concerns within an NRCS-designated critical conservation area (CCA). NRCS and partners collaborate to design, promote, and implement RCPP projects on agricultural and nonindustrial private forest land. Through RCPP, NRCS may provide both financial assistance (FA) and technical assistance (TA) funds to project partners and agricultural producers for implementing projects. RCPP proposals are evaluated through a competitive proposal process based on three criteria: impact, partner contributions, and partnership and management.

Up to \$1.5 billion is available for RCPP projects through this announcement and the FY 2024 Classic announcement, which includes \$300 million of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) funding and \$1.2 billion of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding. Proposals will be accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and U.S. territories in the Pacific Island Areas (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). NRCS will prioritize using IRA funds for projects that will implement climate-smart agriculture and forestry conservation activities as described in section F.3.a. of this announcement.

Up to \$100 million is being made available specifically for NRCS to enter into programmatic partnership agreements with Indian tribes. This set aside will be shared by this announcement and the FY 2024 Classic announcement. Any unused funds may be available for other partnership agreements.

RCPP AFAs are intended to support project structures and approaches that cannot be carried out as effectively through the RCPP Classic NFO. RCPP AFA applicants must describe the innovative nature of the conservation approach they are proposing to justify potential funding through an RCPP AFA NFO rather than an RCPP Classic NFO. Moreover, applicants should consider the additional administrative and technical assistance responsibilities that accompany receipt of an RCPP AFA award.

The 2018 Farm Bill provides the following examples of project types that might be implemented through RCPP AFA:

- projects that use innovative approaches to leverage the Federal investment in conservation;

- projects that deploy a pay-for-performance conservation approach; and
- projects that seek large-scale infrastructure investments that generate conservation benefits for agricultural producers and nonindustrial private forest owners.

Although RCPP AFA provides flexibilities to partners, these projects share the overarching focus of RCPP, which is to engage with producers and landowners to implement conservation practices, systems, and approaches on (or for the benefit of) agricultural and nonindustrial private forest lands.

NRCS can make up to 15 awards through this funding opportunity through Farm Bill funding. This limit does not apply to projects funded through the Inflation Reduction Act.

Submissions: Proposals must be submitted through the [RCPP portal](#). See section E of this announcement for information on using the RCPP portal to submit proposals. Access to the RCPP portal requires a level 2 eAuthentication credential or a Login.gov credential. Obtaining a new Login.gov credential involves multiple steps and can take several days to complete. Instructions are posted on the How to Apply to RCPP web page listed below.

For More Information: Applicants are expected to contact the appropriate state conservationists and state RCPP coordinators prior to submitting a proposal. NRCS will use a state conservation questionnaire to record the results of these conversations. Proposals without a completed questionnaire may have their score and ranking reduced.

A list of state RCPP coordinators (as of the date of this announcement's posting) is on the [NRCS How to Apply to RCPP](#) web page.

Applicants can also email the RCPP inbox (rcpp@usda.gov) with any questions about the announcement. The [NRCS RCPP website](#) is also a great source of current information about the program.

Interested applicants are encouraged to participate in one or more of the webinars below to learn about the program and how to apply.

2024 RCPP NFO Applicant Outreach Webinar

This webinar will provide general information for applicants submitting proposals for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The same material will be covered at both webinars followed by a question-and-answer section. Please refer to the RCPP website for more information. [Regional Conservation Partnership Program | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

- **April 23, 2024, RCPP Applicant Outreach Webinar**
Registration Link – 2pm to 4pm EDT -

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/e2f45f75-7ea4-410b-b1c9-567537cd2454@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>

- **May 30, 2024, RCPP Applicant Outreach Webinar**

Registration Link – 2pm to 4pm EDT -

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/226dcb51-0b57-43b1-b340-95e535238713@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>

NRCS will schedule additional webinars on RCPP easements and providing outreach to tribal applicants. Information on all webinars will be posted to the [RCPP how to apply page](#).

Link to Additional Information: [See Related Documents tab](#)

Grantor Contact Information: If you have difficulty accessing the full announcement electronically, please contact:

Information: Partners with proposal related questions are encouraged to contact the appropriate NRCS state RCPP coordinator. The RCPP How to Apply web page maintains a list of NRCS state RCPP coordinators, which is updated for each funding opportunity.

Potential applicants may also contact national RCPP staff by email at rcpp@usda.gov with any general program or policy questions.

[National RCPP staff](#)

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