



Funder Research Report: Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Mission

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides Conservation Innovation Grants. This grant program aims “to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.” CIG addresses the Nation’s most pressing environmental concerns by leading the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches to NRCS references and the private sector.

Grants for 2009

National Competition

- **Natural Resource Concerns:** Allocates up to \$5 million for proposals addressing water resources, soil resources, atmospheric resources, grazing land, forest health, and wildlife habitat.
- **Technology:** Allocates up to \$6 million for proposals addressing energy efficiency, water management, nutrient management, air quality, and technology transfer to target groups.
- **Grant Leveraging:** Allocates up to \$4 million to “pilot the leveraging of CIG grants projects that provide further grants that align with the purposes of CIG.” These purposes include private forestland, small watershed, irrigation water, and grazing land management.
- **Chesapeake Bay Watershed:** Allocates up to \$5 million addressing one or more of the above concerns within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

State Competition

- Funding opportunities are on a smaller scale and state-specific. Therefore, they are announced by each state individually on the NRCS website.
- No states have yet released information for fiscal year 2009.

A few numbers...

NRCS anticipates that CIG will provide \$20 million in fiscal year 2009.

State-level funding has provided over \$17 million for 311 projects.

In 2004, the Iowa Cattlemen’s Association, Iowa Soybean Association, and Fayette County Extension office were the first groups in Iowa to receive CIG funds.

Eligibility

CIG funds are awarded to non-Federal agencies, tribes, and individuals. Funds are not for research projects, but rather for established methods of on-site conservation, pilot projects, and field demonstrations. Applicants must match funds and meet EQIP eligibility requirements.

Application Process

Explicit directions are available online at the NRCS’s website, going so far as to describe the review process and structure of the review board. Applications can be submitted electronically or by mail. Applicants can download samples of successful grant proposals as well as funding allocations from previous years.

Recommendation

I recommend the NRCS CIG program if your team’s scenario is related to natural resources and particularly modern resource management. This includes water, air, forests, and farms. CIG is very focused on market-based approaches to conservation issues and project implementation, rather than research. Beyond the scope of on-the-ground conservation, I would not recommend the CIG program as a funding source.