



United States Department of Agriculture



Farm Bill

RCPP

CIG

November 13, 2019



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2018 Farm Bill – Agriculture Improvement Act

- **Conservation title of the farm bill makes 7% of projected funding mandatory spending, \$60 billion, available for conservation**
- **10% of authorized conservation funds must be used to protect drinking water sources**
- **RCPP Standalone program with \$300 million annually**
- **Emphasis on project outcomes**
- **Customer service provisions**



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RCPP Background



The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our ability to address natural resource concerns.

- Impact - effective and compelling solutions that address one or more natural resource priorities
- Partner Contributions - combination of cash and in-kind value-added contributions to leverage NRCS's RCPP investments. Partner contributions at least equal the NRCS investment
- Innovation - integrate multiple conservation approaches or implement innovative conservation approaches or technologies
- Partnership and Project Management - experience, expertise, and capacity to manage the partnership and project, provide outreach to producers, and quantify the environmental (and when possible, economic and social) outcomes of an RCPP project



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2019 Funding Announcement



- **Consistent with the forthcoming Interim Final Rule**
- **Makes available \$300 million**
 - 50% dedicated to CCA projects and 50% to state/multistate projects
- **Maximum of \$10 million, minimum of \$250k**
- **Application period is 90 days – Ends December 3**
- **No pre-proposal phase to application process**
- **Applications entered into the RCPP Portal**



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CIG Conservation Innovation Grants

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are competitive grants that drive public and private sector innovation in resource conservation through inspired creative problem-solving.

- **National and State CIG - Public and private grantees develop the tools, technologies, and strategies to support next-generation conservation efforts on working lands and develop market-based solutions to resource challenges. Grantees must match the CIG investment at least one to one.**
- **On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials – Newly authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill, On-Farm Trials supports more widespread adoption of innovative approaches, practices and systems on working lands.**



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CIG in Massachusetts



Saving Water with Online Irrigation Technology

Growers using traditional cranberry irrigation systems have to turn their systems on and off manually, which wastes time, money and water. With support from a CIG award, the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association worked with growers to install automated sprinkler systems that conserve water and reduce costs. These systems have sensors among the cranberry vines that monitor temperature and other weather conditions. Growers can monitor and control the systems online. These systems can save more than 9,000 gallons of water per acre on a frost night. During the study period, the systems reduced water application times by two hours per application. For a typical growing season, 280,000 gallons of water per acre can be conserved by using this system.





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Lead Partner Eligibility

The lead partner submits the application and negotiates and executes the RCPP partnership agreement with NRCS

It is the lead partner that is responsible for ensuring completion of project deliverables.

Lead partners may be:

Ag Producer Association

State or Unit of Local Government

Indian Tribe

Farmer Cooperative

Water, Irrigation or Rural Water District Association

Municipal Water or Wastewater Treatment Entity

Institution of Higher Education

Conservation District

Etc.



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Contributing Partners



RCPP projects may also include direct or in-kind contributions from “contributing partners”

Non-lead eligible partners from the list may provide contributions

Third-party individuals or organizations (including non-USDA Federal agencies) that would not qualify as an eligible party can also provide contributions



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Producers/Landowners Eligibility

Ag producers and landowners receiving RCPP funding must be in compliance with Farm Bill eligibility including:

Highly Erodible Land (HEL)

Wetland Conservation Provisions (WC)

Adjusted Gross Income (can apply for a waiver)

**NOTE: Any cost share provided to a producer/landowner
CANNOT be counted as partner contribution (match)**



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RCPP Project Funding



RCPP Funding is in two categories with a 70/30 split:

1. Financial Assistance (FA) – at least 70% of RCPP funds requested must be FA and are held by NRCS for eligible producer contracts.

2. Technical Assistance (TA) - up to 30% of RCPP funds requested may be TA and may be retained by NRCS split between NRCS and the partner to support project implementation.

*** Application budgets must be consistent with this split to be considered for funding.**



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RCPP Project Funding

The 30% Technical Assistance is broken down as follows:

1. Implementation TA = 23% (fixed percentage), of that:
 - 5% = NRCS TA (fixed percentage and non-negotiable)
 - 18% = Implementation TA to partner (fixed percentage and subject to post selection negotiations)
2. Enhancement TA = 7% (maximum allowed and negotiable).

***If enhancement TA isn't requested by the partner, total TA maxes out at 23%.**

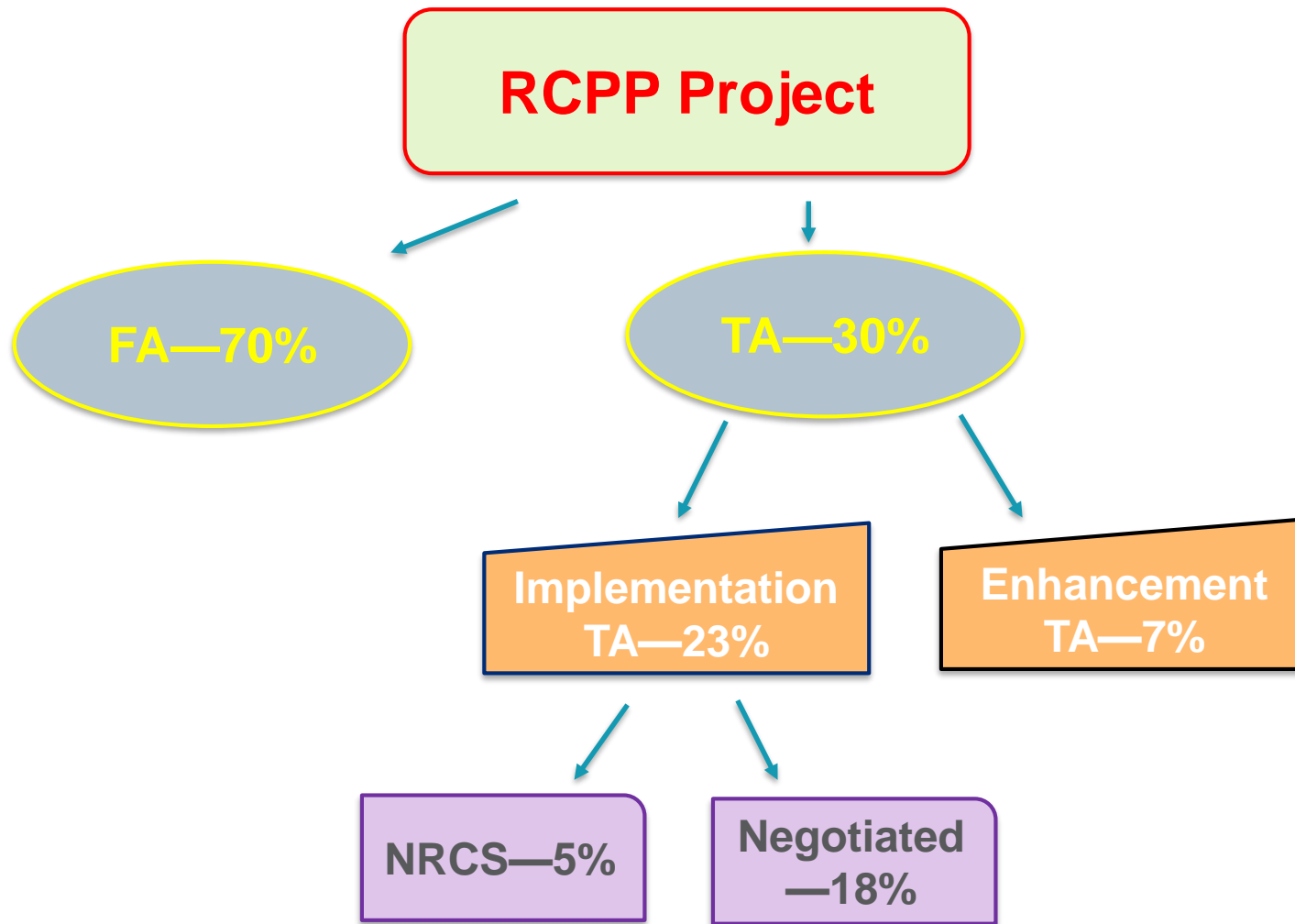


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RCPP Project Funding



RCPP Project Funding

- Proposal budgets must explicitly identify partner requests for implementation and enhancement TA.
- All TA awards are negotiated between the lead partner and NRCS
- Funding from non-USDA Federal agencies CAN be counted as partner contribution
- Outreach activities carried out by partners between the time of project selection and agreement execution CAN be counted toward partner contributions IF identified in the proposed budget
- Implementation TA and enhancement TA are reimbursable activities awarded through supplemental agreements following the execution of the partnership agreement.



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RCPP Project Funding



- **Administrative Costs (overhead/indirect costs) are prohibited from being reimbursed**
 - Examples include: rent and utilities, durable equipment and software acquisitions, space used by staff, copiers, phones, IT support, etc.
- **Administrative Costs CAN be counted as partner contributions**
- **Organizations with an active NICRA must use the rate identified in that agreement in determining indirect costs to be included as contributions (upload with application)**
- **Entities without a NICRA may use a 10% indirect cost rate**



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Project Application Content



1. **Basic Project and Information**
2. **List of Project Partners**
3. **Project Questionnaire – in the RCPP Portal**
4. **Project Outcomes – guidance document on the RCPP website**
5. **Deliverables and Contributions – two tables in the Portal**
6. **Contribution Commitment Letters – letters are required from each NON-LEAD partner or other third-party providing contributions, including cash and in-kind services**
7. **Project Map**
8. **Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) number**
9. **System for Award Management (SAM) number**



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Application Review Criteria

Ranking uses the 4 RCPP Pillar Principles:

Impact – 25%

Partner Contributions – 25%

Innovation – 20%

Partnerships and Management – 30%

- **All RCPP technical reviews occur at the State Level.**
- **NRCS STC will consult with the State Technical Committee on the RCPP review process.**
- **A NRCS leadership review board will evaluate the results of the state review and make recommendations for funding to the Chief.**



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RCPP Partnership Agreements

After a project application is selected to become an RCPP project, the lead STC will negotiate with the LEAD partner to define the final scope and partner responsibilities.

The RCPP partnership agreement serves as the agreement guiding the project. There is no funding obligated through the partnership agreement. It includes lead partner deliverables, timelines, and expectations for future RCPP awards.

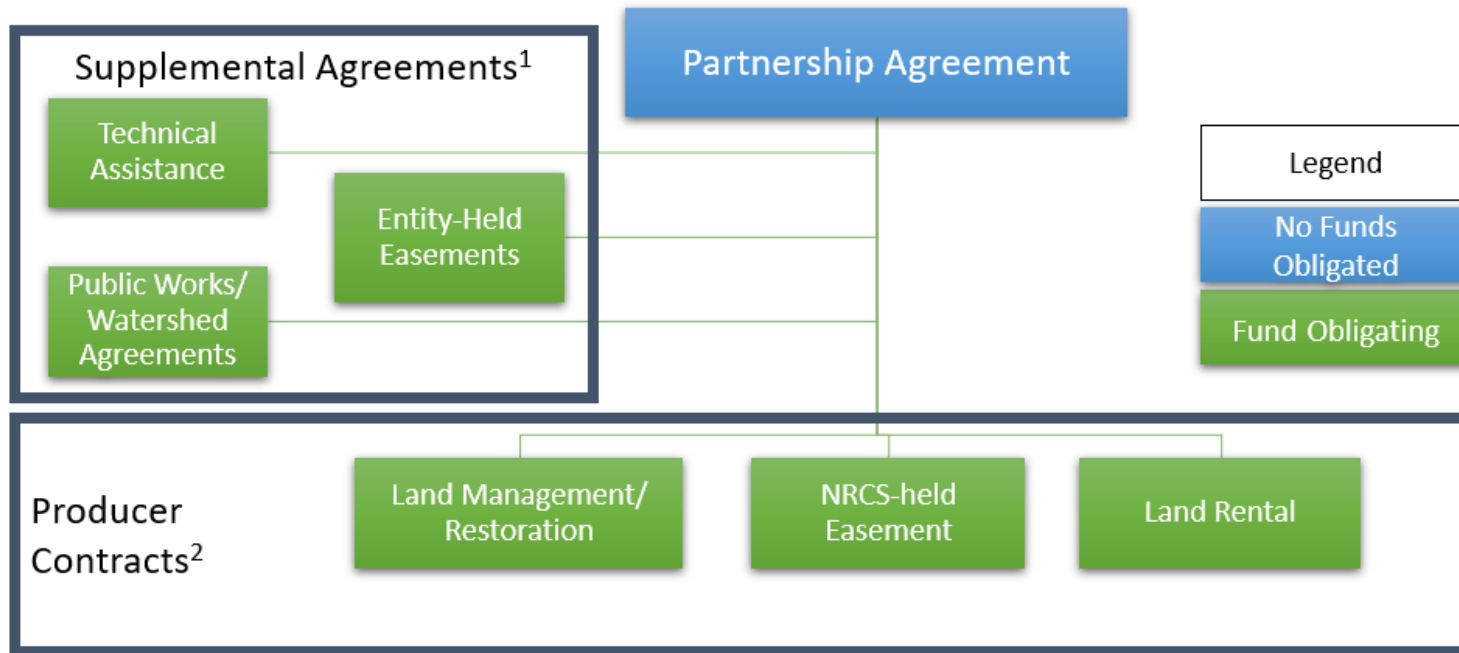
RCPP applicants should anticipate a project start date of June 15, 2020.



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RCPP Programmatic Agreement Structure



1 – Agreements with partners for public works/watershed activities, technical Assistance, and entity-held easement agreements.

2 – Contracts with a producer may contain one or more of the components listed in this section.

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