

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project
Webinar Transcript
April 21, 2021

Katrina Thomson:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project Webinar.

I’m Katrina Thompson with USDA’s Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and the moderator for today’s webinar.

This is a newly established program under the 2018 Farm Bill and fiscal year 2021 is the second funding applications for this funding opportunity.

Approximately \$2 M dollars is available to fund applications this fiscal year.

Applications must be submitted online through Grants.gov. Check Grants.gov for date the application is due.

Once the funding opportunity is posted you will be able to submit applications.

Please do not wait until the due date to submit application package. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Today's presentation will be divided into five sections. Myself and Jose Jimenez will be presenters.

I am a natural resource specialist on detail to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Jose Jimenez, is an Administrative Specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. ‘Q&A’ for FY 2020 is available for review. New questions can be submitted to urbanagriculture@usda.gov.

USDA is happy to provide any general, high-level inquiries that applicants may have regarding the application process. However, USDA staff is unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft, structure or write one’s proposal.

The mission of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including community composting and food waste reduction.

The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are under section 12302 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 also referred to as the 2018 Farm Bill.

The 2018 Farm Bill 7 USC 6923: Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

Jose Jimenez: Thank you. Today's webinar will discuss the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Pilot Project. You will see and hear us refer to this program by the acronym CCFWR. The purpose of CCFWR is to provide assistance through a cooperative agreement to municipalities, counties, local governments, or city planners in the United States to carry out planning and implementation activities that will generate compost, increase access for agriculture producers, reduce reliance on and limit the use of fertilizer, improve soil quality, encourage waste management and permaculture business development, increase rainwater absorption, reduce municipal food waste, and divert food waste from landfills.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the awarding agency for this funding opportunity and will enter into a cooperative agreement with local or municipal governments in no fewer than 10 states to carry out community compost and food waste reduction activities. The agency and Federal partners will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreement and will undertake activities such as coordinating and convening pilot project teams and Federal government, regional, institution, state, and local experts to share information and strategies to better address nationally and regionally important composting and food waste reduction goals that transcend localities. NRCS will gather the methods, results and benefits derived from pilot projects to evaluate, disseminate, and highlight the innovative processes. Also, will connect pilot projects and other agencies such as USDA's Office of Chief Economist and other Federal partners like the Environmental Protection Agency to collaborate on project activities and outcomes that contribute to the U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 goal.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service will enter into cooperative agreements with local or municipal governments in no fewer than 10 states on pilot projects. Priority will be given to eligible entities whose projects include the following four components. One, the project anticipates or demonstrates economic benefits. Two, the project incorporates plans to make compost easily accessible to agriculture producers including community gardeners. Three, the project integrates other food waste strategies including food waste recovery efforts. And four, the project collaborates with multiple partners. I will further explain these four project priorities over the next few slides and how they may be incorporated into an application.

First, let's discuss how a project can anticipate or demonstrates economic benefit. Pilot projects may include deliverables and outcomes that anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits to the applicant and its collaborators. It may include economic efficiency through its project activities including a

plan for self-sustainability. It may include a cost-effective budget in relation to the measurable outcomes and project impacts including the rent or lease of equipment, vehicles, land, and building space during the length of the agreement instead of purchase.

Second, how can a project incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers, including community gardeners. Pilot projects may include activities that divert food waste from landfills to generate compost. It may include activities that increase access to compost for farmers and gardeners and may include plans to continue aspects or components of the project related to composting beyond the end of the project period.

Through these pilot projects, USDA is tapping into the creativity of communities across the nation to rethink the lifecycle of food in ways that minimize waste and maximize use. Pilot projects may include activities that either compliment, strengthen or non-adversely impact any existing food waste recovery and disposal by commercial marketing or business relationships in the area. They may include locally driven processes that better address nationally and regionally important composting and food waste reduction goals that transcend localities and they may include innovative solutions for increasing access to compost and reducing municipal food waste through the integration of food recovery efforts such as gleaning and donation, secondary markets like produce delivery services, feeding animals, value added products, on farm storage, and others. Eligible entities should collaborate with two or more partner organizations on their CCFWR project. Applicants are encouraged to seek partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, academic institutions (including minority serving colleges universities) and other appropriate professional and community-based organizations. Only the applicants must meet the eligibility requirements for this funding opportunity. Thus, not eligible entities may be partners on a project. The eligible entity that submits the application to the Natural Resources Conservation Service is responsible for receiving and managing the award. Applicants that apply as partnerships or other similar groupings must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the partner parties. Awards will only be made to a single entity. Letters of intent or support from each partner are required with the application.

who is eligible to apply for a CCFWR cooperative agreement? Only local governments are eligible to apply for CCFWR and must be located within the United States, District of Columbia, Caribbean Area (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and the Pacific island Area (including

Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

The definition of local government is based on the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Grants Guidance posted on the slide. It states that local government is defined as any unit of government within a state including a county, borough, municipality, city, town, township, parish, local public authority, including any public housing agency under the United States Housing Act of 1937, special district, school district, interstate district, council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law and any other agencies of a multistate regional or intra-state or local government. You can find this definition listed on the frequently asked the question on Farmers.gov/urban and on Grants.gov.

That brings us to who is not eligible to apply for CCFWR. Individuals such as a farmer or gardener, for profit organizations and small businesses, Tribal governments, state governments, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) including extension programs are not eligible to apply for CCFWR projects. Applicants not located within the United States, District of Columbia, Caribbean Area (including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and the Pacific Islands Area (including Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) are not eligible.

An eligible applicant can serve as the lead on only one CCFWR application and can be listed as a partner on more than one application.

The proposed project should not duplicate activities from another Federal award. Applicants can receive this award and an award from a different Federal agency if projects have specifically different objectives. The minimum award amount for a pilot project is \$45,000. The maximum award is \$90,000. Applicants are expected to complete their project within the required timeframe. Projects should be 24 months or two years in duration. This opportunity requires applicants to match 25% of total project costs.

Applicants are required to match 25% of total project costs. This means Federal funds may constitute no more than 75% of the total project budget. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a match that exceeds the required amount. If your project is selected for funding, any exceeding amount will be considered voluntary. Applications must include written documentation showing the amount and sources of match including signed letters verifying matching funds. Applications submitted in Grants.gov that do not include a committed or secure

match along with required matching documentation will be ineligible for an award.

Here is an example of how to calculate the match requirement. If the total project budget is \$90,000 thousand dollars, the applicant would request \$67,500 in USDA funds which is 75% of the budget in their application. They must provide a match amount of \$22,500 which is 25% of the budget. It's important to remember the minimum award amount for pilot project is \$45,000 and maximum is \$90,000. Your requested project budget should request funds from USDA within this range. Last year we created an Excel sheet to assist applicants with calculating the required match amount. You can find the link in the frequently asked question document which is posted on the www.Farmers.gov/urban website.

What types of match will be accepted? Matching may be achieved by contribution of cash, supplies, services, third-party in-kind contributions or in combination from sources other than funds provided through the grant. Cash can be a recipient's cash outlay, or cash donation with non-Federal third parties or non-Federal grants. In-kind can be the value of non-cash contributions typically in the form of personnel, goods, and services. Volunteer services provided by third-party professionals including technical personnel, consultants, and others skilled and unskilled labor can be counted as cost sharing or matching if the service is an integral and necessary part of project activities.

What types of match will not be accepted? Applicants cannot use program income or any other Federal funds as a match. Applicants cannot use unrecovered indirect costs as part of the match requirement either. Unrecovered indirect cost means the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount that could have been charged under the potential recipient approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA).

Next slide will discuss what the program does and does not fund. Materials, supplies, and other costs related to the development and testing of strategies to generate compost and reduce food waste. However, the per unit cost of each supply items must be below \$5,000. Any item with a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or above and a useful life of more than one year is considered equipment.

Construction. Funds may be used to construct, alter or repair of buildings, structures, or other real property. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be

considered a construction project. Funds can be used to expand or improve current compost operations. Contractual costs. Contractual costs are expenses associated with procuring goods or services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. Personnel costs. Funds may be used for personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities. The purchase of special purpose equipment and vehicles, land, and building space is allowable. If a project does not include the purchase but instead includes lease or rental of special purpose equipment, vehicle and building space during the length of the project will be given higher consideration. Any lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the award. Special purpose equipment means equipment used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities.

Project activities not funded under CCFWR include the disposal of animal carcasses and materials or animal byproducts. The purchase of general- purpose equipment, which is equipment which is not limited to research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishing, modular offices, networks, etc. Organized fundraising, this includes any financial campaign, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions, regardless of how the funds will be used. This list is not exhaustive, and a more detailed list of funding restrictions is provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity at [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov).

All the overview information I shared can be found through the resources that have been made publicly available at [Farmers.gov/urban](https://www.Farmers.gov/urban) and [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov). We encourage you to visit [Farmers.gov/urban](https://www.Farmers.gov/urban) to learn more about the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and its funding opportunities. You can reach out to us with any high-level inquiries about the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Project at UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov. Thank you. Back to you Katrina.

Katrina Thompson: Part III and IV of today's webinar that covers the Application, Evaluation and Notification Process and Helpful Tips

Step 1 and 2 are completed by the applicant by 11:59 pm ET on the day specified on [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) and in the NFO announcement.

Step 3, 4 and 5 are completed by USDA.

The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31, 2020 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2021.

Pre-work involves several steps that the applicant is responsible for completing.

Read the Notice of Funding Opportunity to make sure you are eligible to apply and understand the instructions. If you determine your organization is eligible and wants to apply, follow the instructions in the NFO.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity is several pages in length.

Where can you find the Notice of Funding Opportunity? You can find a link to it on farmers.gov/urban website.

Know what forms you need to submit. You may use this simple checklist as a guide.

CCFWR requires that all application packages include:

Project Summary/Abstract and Proposal Narrative: The text of the proposal must be single spaced and typed in New Times

Roman, no smaller than 12-point font and must not exceed 15 pages. The proposal shall not exceed 10 pages of written text, and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (15 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered.

Application Form: (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance)

Standard Form (SF) 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs. Complete this form only if the proposal does not include construction.

Budget Narrative. In a separate narrative 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.

Matching/ Cost Share. Signed letters verifying matching funds for each cash and/or in-kind resource is required. For third-party contributions, a separate letter of support is required for each

contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the contributing organization and the applicant organization.

Collaborator Letters. Documentation verifying support from collaborators is required, such documentation may include a separate letter of support for each partner that is signed by the authorized representative of the organization.

Letters documenting collaboration or match are not included in the 15-page limit.

When applicable, application packages are required to include:

Standard Form (SF) 424C, Budget Information – Construction Programs

Complete this form only if the proposal includes construction.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA).

A Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) is required if requesting indirect costs. The NICRA must be in PDF format and attached to the Grants.gov application package. Applicants selected for an award who do not have a NICRA but request indirect costs must accept and sign the 10 percent de minimis rate as a condition of the award, which constitutes establishing an approved rate. Recipients who do not request indirect costs are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award.

Don't wait until the last minute! This chart is a general overview and includes the main steps a new organization or organizations that have never applied for a federal grant before must complete outside of Grants.gov prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov.

Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) also known as a federal tax identification number (TIN), which is used to identify a business entity. If your organization does not have an EIN, you should allow an additional 5 weeks to request and obtain an EIN from the IRS. The length of time to get an EIN depends on whether applying online, by fax or through mail.

Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) provides a D-U-N-S Number, a unique nine digit identification number, for each physical location of your business. D-U-N-S Number assignment is FREE for all businesses required to register with the US Federal government for contracts or grants.

Registering with the System for Award Management (SAM) is a required step in order for your organization to be able to apply for federal grants. The registration process is FREE. You need to have a TIN or EIN and a DUNS number to register with SAM.

Register with Grants.gov. The amount of time to register can vary. You should allow two full weeks to complete all registration steps, but additional time may be required. More detailed information about each of these steps is on the Grants.gov registration page.

CCFWR applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time specified in NFO and on Grants.gov. Only applications submitted through this electronic system will be considered.

Who should you contact for help if you need assistance or have technical difficulties while trying to complete any of these steps? Federal Help Desk – Grants.gov

These systems are not owned or managed by USDA. You must contact the applications directly for assistance.

1. Use these phone numbers to contact the Internal Revenue Service if experiencing Employer Identification Number (EIN) also known as a federal tax identification number (TIN) with issues or questions.
2. Use this phone number or email address to contact Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) with DUNS Number issues or questions.
3. Go to the Help tab at the top of the SAM.gov website for assistance and user guides.
4. Use this phone number or email address to receive support with Grants.gov.

Keep a record of any correspondence with Grants.gov or other helpdesks, including any ID or case numbers provided.

You can find and download the Notice of Funding Opportunity and related documents by going directly to Grants.gov and doing a keyword search for the program acronym “CCFWR”, the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number (also known as the Assistance Listing): “10.935” or by entering the Funding Opportunity Number which is USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CCFWR-20-NOFO0001112 in the UPPER RIGHT CORNER OF THE WEBPAGE.

Once you find the grant opportunity on Grants.gov, four blue tabs will appear. If you click on the tab labeled RELATED DOCUMENTS, this list of files will appear that can be printed or downloaded such as the full announcement, the frequently asked questions PDF, and other associated documents and instructions.

When you're ready to apply, click on the tab labeled PACKAGE and then select the APPLY tab. Reminder: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on date listed in NFO and on Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline.

Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received.

Jose Jimenez: Moving onto USDA review process, each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First applications will be screened to ensure it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. The slide shows examples of applications that would not meet the administrative requirement. Those are the application is submitted late through Grants.gov; proposal does not comply with the required content, format and formatting structure including page length. The application is incomplete or noncompliant. The application does not fit the purpose of the CCFWR project. Some additional examples are if the proposal includes activities funded by another award or applicants that do not meet eligibility criteria including eligible applicant types. Applicant is identified in the SAM.gov exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited, restricted, or excluded. Last, applicant has committed fraud including material, misleading or incorrect information in the application.

The second part of the process involves applications that have met the administrative review requirements will be evaluated with the technical evaluation by a review panel. Appropriate members of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other USDA agencies will review all applications submitted if necessary, also may seek the opinions of others who are qualified to give expert advice on that specific topic. Peer Reviews will be conducted by teams that will be considering when evaluating each proposal. Be sure to review the five criteria yourself stated in that Notice of Funding Opportunity so you can understand what you should address in your project and budget narrative.

A summary of the five criteria for this funding opportunity are on the slide. They're all equally weighted at 20%. I will read each one in full. Again, this information is very clearly stated on the Notice of Funding Opportunity. You don't have to take notes. One is alignment and intent is consistent with the CCFWR purpose and priorities presented herein. The second is achievability potential for significant, positive impact with food waste recovery and disposal by commercial, marketing, or business relationships. Three, Projected Impact and Measurable Outcomes which is the quality of the plan presented to integrate innovative food waste strategies and methods such as food recovery and ability to make compost easily accessible to agricultural producers including community gardeners. Four is Fiscal Plan and Resources which anticipates or demonstrated economic efficiency of the project which includes evaluating the amount of Federal funds requested and the cost-effectiveness of the budget. Including analysis of such items as rental

of equipment, vehicles, land and building space during the length of cooperative agreement instead of purchase thereof. Last is collaboration partners. That is the quality of the plan for collaborating with multiple partners including public or private entities, nonprofit or for-profit entities, academic institutions and or other appropriate professional, community-based organizations, and local government entities to achieve project outcome objectives.

After technical reviews have been completed, pilot project will be submitted to the approving official. The approving official for this opportunity is the Director of the USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production. Thank You.

Katrina Thompson: Outline of the Application, Evaluation and Notification Process and Tentative Timeline for the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR)

Project.

Step 1 and 2 must be completed by the applicant by 11:59 pm ET on date listed in NFO and on Grants.gov.

Step 3 and 4: Application Review in July 2021

Step 5: The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2021.

Part III: Helpful Tips

The Notice of Funding Opportunity is posted on Grants.gov under the Funding Opportunity Number or by searching the acronym 'CCFWR'

Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding.

Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered.

Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered.

Part V: Questions

As a reminder, USDA staff is unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal.

All new questions will be added to the existing Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Project Frequently Asked Questions document posted online at Grants.gov and

Farmers.gov/urban

This presentation with closed captioning will also be posted on the website Farmers.gov/urban and Grants.gov for any time viewing as well.

Please send questions to UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov

Thank you for attending the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) Project Webinar and we look forward to working with you in the near future.