

Questions added January 11, 2023, are highlighted in yellow.

*Application and Eligibility Questions*

- 1. Who can sign the Cognito application form?**
  - a. The individual who signs the Cognito application form should be the person with authority within the applicant organization to sign and submit the application.
- 2. Do I need a fiduciary agent to apply for this grant?**
  - a. Fiduciary agents or financial sponsors can be utilized if necessary but are not required to apply for this grant.
- 3. Am I allowed to apply to both the Climate Smart Farming Grant and the Farm Transition Grant?**
  - a. Yes. Eligible applicants to both the Climate Smart Farming Grant and Farm Transition Grant can apply to each program. The project for each application *should NOT* overlap and should cover separate projects with separate expenses for each project.
- 4. Can an applicant apply for more than one project in a single application (for example a climate-smart ag-project and a climate-smart forest project)?**
  - a. Applicants should submit one application if project activities (whether it be ag-focused, or forestry focused) tie into one goal or outcome. If the applicant has two separate projects they can apply for two awards. However, the applicant should clearly demonstrate how they will manage the projects separately and successfully in their application.
- 5. Are the funds for this program Federal funds?**
  - a. This program is funded with funds appropriated by the Connecticut Legislature through PA 22-118.
- 6. Will the awards for this grant be a simple 'yes or no'? Or is there room for questions and negotiations as the reviewers narrow down their grant choices?**
  - a. There may be opportunity for the review panel to follow-up with applicants to ask clarifying questions about the projects under consideration. Decisions will follow the department's review process for competitive grants. Grant applications should be submitted as a complete project, and there will be no opportunity to revise a project after submitting it. There are no negotiations for awarded projects. The department has the ability to partial fund a project or change aspects of the budget if expenses included are determined ineligible.
- 7. Are applicants required to cite specific Climate Smart Practices (CSP) enhancement codes in their application?**
  - a. No, the codes used by NRCS to indicate specific Climate Smart Practices will not be required in the application.
- 8. Are projects involving solar installations on farms eligible?**
  - a. For this funding program, solar installations for farms would be eligible on previously existing infrastructure. Installations on prime/statewide/locally important soils will not be eligible for funding. Solar installations should be incorporated into the existing farm operation to make the farm more energy efficient. Solar energy generation for commercial purposes is not eligible.
- 9. Is there a priority for BIPOC projects?**
  - a. Priority will be given to projects which support historically underserved farmers, including but not limited to: BIPOC producers, veterans, new and beginning farmers

(farming for 1-3 years), anyone in a protected class, and anyone that speaks English as a second language.

**10. Are aquaculture projects eligible for this grant?**

- a. All agricultural commodities can participate including aquaculture, agriculture, and forestry.

**11. Do applicants working with a conservation district need the district to be the grant administrator?**

- a. No, any eligible business or organization can be the main applicant.

**12. Can the same entity be the lead applicant in one application and a contractor in another project, as long as the projects/roles are distinctly different?**

- a. Yes, as long as the projects are distinctly different.

**13. Are national projects eligible to apply or just CT based projects?**

- a. This grant program is intended to fund projects that directly impact and promote climate smart agriculture and forestry in CT and have CT beneficiaries as a result of the project.

**14. Do the duration brackets refer to completion deadline or the project life?**

- a. The duration brackets indicate the timeframe during which the grant project should be completed, and the grant funds should be spent.

**15. At the USDA level, women are considered underserved. Is this classification also applicable to this program?**

- a. Yes.

**16. Do applicants need an active UEI (unique entity identifier) number (formally known as a DUNS number)?**

- a. The application does not require a UEI, but you should have an employer identification number (EIN) and be a business in good standing at the local, state and federal level.

**17. Can you share the review criteria that the review panels will evaluate the proposals through?**

- a. The exact scoring breakdown the review panels use will not be shared. Applicants should strive to submit a complete, thorough, and well justified project with applicable quantifiable outcomes relating to climate smart agriculture and forestry to be competitive.

**18. Can projects involve climate smart practices that are not currently listed by NRCS as climate smart?**

- a. If there is a practice that is not currently listed and you believe that you have the data and have the process to measure the difference in change and how it benefits, or works towards being climate smart, we'll certainly entertain it. We are not limiting applicants to focus on climate smart practices that are solely on the list, but you need to make sure that you have a project that's developed enough to justify how you're going to essentially prove that it is a climate smart practice.

**19. NRCS climate smart practices include primary and secondary practices. Can we apply for just the secondary practice(s)?**

- a. If the secondary practice is supporting an already implemented primary practice, then yes that would be acceptable.

**20. Can applications be centered around advancing a single commercial product?**

- a. The intent of this grant program is not to benefit or advance a single commercial product.

**21. Are farms eligible to apply for project areas involving coordinating a training program? The guidance lists colleges and universities specifically, but not farms.**

- a. Yes.

*Budget, Funding, and Payment Questions*

**22. Can an applicant apply for less than the minimum of Tier 1 (<\$100,000)?**

- a. No.

**23. What can be included for administrative and indirect costs—is there a cap for either?**

Indirect and administrative costs should be reasonable and directly applicable to the project. Indirect costs must be stated as an overall percentage for the project – the percentage is left to the discretion of the applicant; however, the percentage may impact the competitiveness of an application.

**24. Can the cost of liability insurance be included in the budget?**

- a. Liability insurance for general business operations is not eligible to be covered by grant funds. But, if additional insurance is required to undertake the project, that may be considered an eligible expense. Rather than itemize that expense in the budget, it is recommended to include additional insurance expenses in overhead/indirect.

**25. How will payments be structured, if awarded?**

- a. Advance payments of awarded grant funds will be available, and the schedule of payments will be determined during contract development.

**26. Is equipment purchased through this program defined as it is from the Feds - >\$5,000 with a useful life or depreciation of 3 or more years?**

- a. No, this is a state funded grant program and the federal definitions do not apply.

**27. For contractor/consultant costs, are applicants held to the various federal wage rate/Davis Bacon rules and recordkeeping requirements?**

- a. No, only state minimum wage and hour laws apply.

**28. How would an applicant itemize an intern?**

- a. The costs to employ a paid intern could be itemized under Salaries/Fringe, Contractor/Consultant or the costs could fall under the Other budget category. It depends on how they're paid and how they file taxes.

**29. How should indirect costs be indicated on the budget sheet?**

- a. Indirect costs should be indicated in row 31 of the budget sheet, which was updated on 12/20/2022.

**30. Where should stipends be included on the budget sheet?**

- a. Stipends should be included as a line item under "Other Costs".

**31. Are educational outreach efforts eligible to be included in the application?**

- a. Yes.

**32. How would a software as a service (SAAS) subscription be classified on the budget sheet?**

- a. If the software purchase directly applies to the project and is not replacing expenses associated with the previous or current operations, it is eligible and should be listed under Other (for example, if you need to buy software to operate a piece of equipment purchased with grant funds for this project.).

- b. Any unique or special software subscription should be detailed as to the necessity to the project. Software for normal business operations will not be considered an eligible grant or project cost.
- c. Software maintenance or annual fees are ineligible and will not be covered upon contract completion. If there are annual fees for software, the applicant should have a plan to pay for those costs post project period to maintain the project.

**33. Is farmer/owner "salary" ineligible to be covered with grant funds?**

- a. Farmer/owner salary cannot be paid for with grant funds. Employees paid to do work on the awarded project can be paid for with grant funds. Timesheets identifying and supporting the time paid to employees to work on the project must be included in the final report.

**34. What is the difference between administrative costs and indirect costs?**

- a. Indirect costs include items such as: lighting, internet, photocopier lease fees, etc., and all of those other things that cannot be itemized specifically to the grant project itself. Typically, the indirect cost is a percentage on the overall project budget. This grant does not specify a limit on indirect costs. Administrative costs are going to look different for each applicant, depending on their capacity. If you have employee(s) on staff and they're going to be the ones administering and managing all the paperwork and reporting for this grant program, their full-time equivalent spent working on this project would be included as the administrative cost and reflected in the Salary and Fringe budget categories. If you do not currently have an employee who will manage the project, but are looking to hire someone to fill that role, that amount could also be included in the administrative costs and would be reflected in the Contract/Consultant category.

**35. Scenario: Staff are 100% full-time paid employees (farmer) and would be doing 20% oversight on this project. If the grant were to pay them, would that be considered supplanting even though they're conducting 20% time on the project?**

- a. Per question #29, DOAG does not reimburse the farmer on his own farm for his time. For an employee of a farm, if their time is diverted to spend on this project to grow or impact the farm business, that specific project time may be eligible for reimbursement under the grant. In this example, if an employee is paid to oversee/manage the project and 20% of their time is dedicated to doing so, 20% of their salary and fringe could be charged to the grant. Per question #29, supporting documentation is necessary.

**36. Is the grant taxable? If so, how is it taxed in CT and federally?**

- a. That will depend on your own business circumstances. For accurate guidance on how this grant could impact your operation, consult with an accountant or tax advisor.

**37. Will DOAG consider partially funding an application?**

- a. Yes.

**38. How should match funds be included on the budget sheet?**

- a. Matching funds are not required for this grant program and should not be included on the budget sheet. Applicants who are contributing match funds may include those expenses in their grant narrative if they wish to mention them.

**39. Should the applicant disclose if they are applying for other grants to assist with the completion of this project?**

- a. Applicants should disclose if applications to other funding opportunities have been submitted and a summary of what project expenses the other funding opportunity is covering.

#### *Grant Narrative Related Questions*

**40. What is the maximum length for responses to the Grant Narrative questions?**

- a. The document containing responses to the Grant Narrative questions should be no longer than **5 pages single-spaced**. Do not include the questions themselves and just number the out your responses #1-5. This limit does not include other attachments such as letters of support, quotes, drawings, etc.
- b. **5 single spaced pages seems short for an application of this nature?** We are looking for well thought out projects with measurable outcomes, with clear timelines and tasks to accomplish goals. Heavy scientific narratives or references are not necessary, however if scientific data is necessary to justify aspects of the project, it should be well detailed as to its necessity in the grant narrative and project overall.

**41. Should applications include quantitative outcomes? How should quantitative outcomes be measured? Measured in dollars, in climate related outcomes, a mix of both, or something else?**

- a. Applications and therefore projects, should have a quantitative outcome. Outcomes can be measured through a variety of means including but not limited to dollars, percentage, percentage change, climate-related outcomes, etc. Quantitative outcomes must be included at the time of submission.

**42. Can multiple outcomes be listed in the Grant Narrative?**

- a. Yes, but be aware each outcome needs to be achievable, quantified, and measurable.

**43. Is there guidance on the difference between outcomes and impacts?**

- a. An impact is the immediate effect of the project. For example, the number of farmers who attend a workshop on climate smart practices, the number of no-till pieces of equipment made available to the industry, the number of nutrient/manure management/composting sheds constructed, etc. An outcome is the over-arching short- or long- term effect of those impacts. For example, the number of farmers who are now implementing climate smart practices on their farms after attended a workshop, the number of acres/farms that have utilized the no-till equipment, and the improvements in soil, water, and greenhouse gas emissions after utilizing the nutrient/manure/composting sheds.

**44. Is there a restriction on where projects can take place (i.e., privately owned property?). Does the applicant need an MOU or other type of agreement about the use of the land for the project duration?**

- a. Projects taking place on property that is rented, leased, or not owned by the applicant must submit a Landlord Consent Agreement with the application, showing that the landowner consents to the project. The template is available for download under the Documents/Forms tab on the grant website.

- 45. Will the department place any specific requirements on eligibility of projects or producers if an organization is giving out subgrants via an open solicitation? Does DOAG's requirements on grants transfer to an organization's subgrant program?**
- Yes. While it is not expected that subrecipients of a grant program are identified at the time of application, the parameters of the program such as eligible applicants, projects, expenses, an understanding of financial expectations and payment for subrecipients should be some of the things outlined in the application. All requirements will be outlined in the contract.
- 46. If an applicant knows farmers and has projects and partners lined up to be accomplished during the project, should those farmers and partners be named in the application?**
- Yes. Letters of support from those farmers and partners would add to the competitiveness of the application by confirming the partnership.
- 47. Are letters of support for the project accepted with the application?**
- Absolutely. Letters of support may be added at the bottom of the application in the space to upload additional attachments. Letters of support do not contribute to the five-page limit for the Grant Narrative questions.
- 48. Are videos acceptable attachments to the application?**
- Yes, videos can be included in the attachment section if directly applicable to the application. These must be referenced and explained in the narrative and cannot be marketing or promotional in nature. If they are, they will be ineligible for consideration to the application. Videos cannot be included in lieu of the narrative or contain any portion thereof. Videos are only supplemental.
- 49. If an applicant is applying for funding of a portion of a project, for example, Phase 1 of a larger, multi-phase project, should information on the future steps of the project, after the grant funds have been exhausted, be included?**
- It's important to present an overall picture to gain an understanding of the complete project while specifying what aspects of the project this grant will pay for.
- 50. Can links to supporting research or other related documents be included in the grant narrative?**
- It cannot be assumed that reviewers will click on or view all links included in the grant narrative. Links are not prohibited from being included in the grant narrative, but the main justification for the need and explanation of the project should be contained within the limits of the grant narrative.

#### *Other Questions*

- 51. If you are awarded this grant, can you apply for a different DOAG grant next year for a different project or to expand the current project?**
- Yes.
- 52. Is it beneficial to attend the webinar on 12/19 and hold off on my submission?**
- All interested parties are encouraged to attend the webinar on 12/19 before submitting their application. A recording of the webinar and presentation slides are available to view on the "Overview" page for the grant. Attendance on the webinar has no impact on grant awards.

**53. If awarded, what reporting will be required during the project duration?**

- a. We anticipate some reporting requirement every 6 months of the project. This report would include a financial report showing how much of the grant dollars have been expended, and a narrative report detailing how the project is advancing and the steps of the project that have been completed at that time.

**54. Are there other expectations that DOAG anticipates for future grantees?**

- a. We anticipate once a year, or every other year, depending on project durations, getting all the grantees together to share out an update on their projects and how they're progressing.

**55. When will the awards for this grant program be announced?**

- a. Awards will be announced by March 1, 2023.

**56. Who should the letters of support be addressed to?**

- a. The letters can be addressed to the review panel or to the Commissioner of Agriculture.