



A GUIDE TO

Grants for Organizations that Support Dairy Sustainability

Competitive grant programs offer organizations, including co-ops, processors, non-profits, and universities, the opportunity to secure funding for research, education, and sustainability practice implementation. To receive funding, organizations submit proposals outlining their proposed projects, and funding is awarded based on a rigorous evaluation process that considers the merits of each proposal. If funded, organizations can leverage these public and private funding sources to increase the availability of technical and financial support for farmers and action toward industry goals.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- #1 Understand the goals.** Funding programs have specific goals and objectives. The key to funding success is to ensure your proposal fits the grant objectives.
- #2 Understand the target grant recipient.** Some funding programs are designed to deliver funding directly to farmers, and NRCS provides the required technical assistance. Other funding programs deliver funding to organizations and NGOs to distribute to farmers. In this instance, the grant recipient usually is also responsible for administration, practice verification, funding distribution, etc.
- #3 Understand the geographic focus.** Most federal programs can be used anywhere in the U.S.; however, certain areas may have designated priority funding to address regional or state priorities. Other funding opportunities are administered on a regional level; in certain regions (e.g., Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay), funding is available that is unique to that watershed.
- #4 Understand the reporting requirements.** All grants have different verification and reporting requirements; be sure to understand these requirements and budget time/resources to meet them.
- #5 Combine funding sources and seek out partners.** A successful sustainability research or implementation project will often leverage multiple funding sources. As different funding programs are designed to fund different activities, a project or initiative will often need to leverage funding from multiple grants or partners to be successful. Technical and financial support from partners and other funding sources can also be a good source of requisite “match” dollars.

KEY TERMS

Competitive Grant: Funding awarded based on a competitive evaluation process where proposals from individuals or organizations are assessed for merit and alignment with specified criteria. The financial award provided by a government agency, foundation, corporation, or entity for a specific purpose or project, with no expectation of repayment.

Cost-Share Program: Initiative requiring the grant recipient to contribute a specified percentage of the project’s total costs. Cost share programs typically have a less rigorous application process but have clear guidelines that delineate what will be funded.

Financial Assistance (FA): Funding for equipment, supplies, planning, and infrastructure that support sustainable practice implementation.

Technical Assistance (TA): Expertise, support, and guidance that support sustainable practice implementation.

Match: A portion of project funding that the grant recipient must contribute from its own resources or non-federal sources to supplement the grant award. The match can be an *in-kind match* (paid or volunteer labor, supplies, administrative expenses, etc.) or *cash match* (monetary contributions).

Indirect: A portion of grant funds negotiated with funding agencies to cover indirect costs, such as overhead and administrative expenses, expressed as a percentage of the project’s direct costs.

OVERVIEW

GRANT & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP

\$ Less than \$1,000,000
 \$\$ \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000
 \$\$\$ More than \$5,000,000

FUNDER & PROGRAM	AVERAGE GRANT SIZE	PRIMARY FOCUS
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)		
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)		
RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners, and communities, in collaboration with project partners.	\$\$\$	Providing FA & TA to Farmers
RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements Grants support the development of new conservation structures and approaches that would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic. The lead partner must work directly with agricultural producers.	\$\$\$	Providing FA & TA to Farmers
Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)		
National CIG Classic Grants support the early-stage development and piloting of new tools, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands.	\$\$	On-farm Scalable Research
State CIG Classic Grants are state-level competitions that target state-identified conservation priorities and support early-stage development and piloting of new tools, practices and technologies.	\$	On-farm Research
CIG On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials (On-Farm Trials) support more widespread adoption and evaluation of innovative conservation approaches in partnership with agricultural producers. On-Farm Trials Awardees provide technical assistance and incentive payments to producers to help compensate for risks associated with the implementation of new conservation practices, systems, and approaches.	\$\$	On-farm Research
USDA - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)		
Research & Education Grants program funds projects that result in gains in farmer knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes that are then applied to make measurable on-farm changes leading to greater sustainability.	\$	Research & Education
Professional Development provides training, grants, and resources for agricultural professionals to build their awareness, knowledge, and skills related to sustainable agriculture concepts.	\$	Agricultural Service Provider Education
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)		
Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities (CSC) finance partnerships to support the production and marketing of climate-smart commodities via a set of pilot projects lasting one to five years.	\$\$\$	Farmer FA, TA, & Market Development

DISCLAIMER: The information provided in this document is a non-comprehensive summary overview of relevant funding program opportunities. Funding program awards are competitive and funding is not guaranteed. Funding decisions are made by programs under program criteria. The information provided in this document should not form the basis for decisions with financial ramifications without first obtaining appropriate professional, scientific, engineering and / or legal advice specific to your organization. The National Dairy FARM Program makes no representations, warranties, or guarantees related to the information provided in this document.

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Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FARR) Various FFAR Grant Programs target urgent food and agriculture topics. FFAR connect funders, researchers and farmers through public-private partnerships to support audacious research addressing the biggest food and agriculture challenges.	\$\$	Research
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Various Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) funds research, education, and extension grants to improve rural economies, increase food production, stimulate the bioeconomy, mitigate impacts of climate variability, address water availability issues, ensure food safety and security, enhance human nutrition, and train the next generation of the agricultural workforce.	\$\$	Research
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Various Regional Programs award competitive grants through programs to protect and conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats. NFWF funds technical assistance and innovative financial incentives for agricultural producers to make operational improvements that benefit wildlife and improve soil health and water quality.	\$	TA & some FA
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program provides technical and financial assistance for restoring and enhancing wildlife habitats. The Program works with public and private partners in all 50 states and U.S. territories to solve the most challenging conservation problems.	\$ - \$\$	Plans, TA, & FA
State/Regional Funding Section 319(h) Grant Programs; Under Section 319, states, territories and tribes receive grant money that supports a wide variety of activities including technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects and monitoring to assess the success of specific nonpoint source implementation projects.	\$ - \$\$	Plans, TA & some FA

NOTE: Additional state-based grant programs are available. Check your state conservation and natural resource agencies for information.

LEARN MORE



For more information, scan the QR code or visit <https://grants.gov>

