



National Association of  
Conservation Districts

# Strengthening Grassroots Leadership and Capacity to Scale Climate-Smart Production Systems and Facilitate Historically Underserved Producers' Access to Markets

## Call for Climate-Smart Concept Papers

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is proud to be a recipient of a USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant. Through this program, NACD will competitively select and fund a series of locally led pilot projects across the U.S. and territories. We anticipate reaching over 1,400 producers, implementing climate-smart practices on over 430,000 acres, and reducing or sequestering over 1.5 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e.

NACD is seeking projects that foster private-public partnerships; scale implementation of climate-smart practices; advance greenhouse gas measurement, monitoring, reporting, and verification (MMRV); and support producer participation in resulting markets. Projects should:

- 1 Leverage the locally led conservation delivery system to provide the education and technical assistance needed to transition to climate-smart production systems.
- 2 Develop economic opportunities within communities and build local capacity that can sustain projects and partnerships beyond the life of the grant.
- 3 Seek to mitigate historical and systemic barriers within the broader food system to increase participation of underserved producers and communities.
- 4 Provide external match, leverage, or additional financial incentives to producers, more holistically de-risking their transition to climate-smart systems and supporting their long-term economic viability.

NACD's total subaward budget is nearly \$80 million. Approximately \$42 million is dedicated to producer incentives to implement conservation practices. The remaining funds will support project implementation.



# Project Selection Process

NACD will select projects via a multi-phase process. This process is intended to provide sufficient time for partnership development, project scoping, and budgeting. The call for concept papers will also allow NACD to assess nationwide demand and inform the equitable distribution of funding.

After concept papers are submitted, NACD will facilitate a unique matchmaking process. This allows concepts that may not be complete on their own to pair with other organizations to strengthen the potential project and application.

## Phase 1

### Call for concept papers and rough orders of magnitude

(DUE OCTOBER 13, 2023)

This phase is intended to be an abbreviated process to facilitate a matchmaking process across potential projects and partners. Concept papers must address at least one of the project components – scaling climate-smart practices, MMRV, and/or developing or expanding markets for resulting commodities. Specific partners do not have to be committed at this time. Potential partners will have opportunities to further develop scope, detailed budgets, etc.

## Phase 2

### Partner matchmaking

(EST. OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023)

Projects and partnerships must involve a conservation district or Tribal conservation district, state/territory association of conservation districts, resource conservation & development council, and/or Tribal government or inter-tribal consortium. While final proposals must involve one of the above entities, they are not required to be the lead organization.

NACD will circulate contact information and a summary of the concepts to facilitate project development amongst potential partners. The full papers will be circulated amongst conservation districts and state/territory associations of conservation districts. Concept papers will not be formally evaluated, although NACD reserves the right to provide feedback.

## Phase 3

### Final proposals

(ANTICIPATED DUE DATE IN MARCH 2024)

A formal request for proposals (RFP) will be forthcoming Fall 2023. The lead organization shall be responsible for submitting the proposal and managing selected projects. More information will be posted to NACD's website:

<https://www.nacdnet.org/about-nacd/what-we-do/climate-smart-commodities-project/>



## Note on Planning & Capacity Grants

NACD recognizes that administrative capacity can be a major barrier for organizations with limited resources. As such, NACD will be setting aside a portion of its budget for Planning & Capacity grants. These recipients will be eligible to compete for a smaller future pool of funding.

Organizations interested in planning and capacity grants do not need to submit formal concept papers; however, NACD requests that such organizations submit an expression of interest. This will help inform the overall budget for Planning & Capacity grants, including future pools of project funding. We anticipate that the maximum Planning & Capacity grant will be \$15,000. This is subject to change based on demand and budget. The formal process for submitting applications for Planning & Capacity grants will be described in the formal RFP released Fall 2023.

Visit [NACDnet.org](https://www.nacdnet.org) for additional information or email [climate@nacdn.net](mailto:climate@nacdn.net) with questions.