



# Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Alternative Funding Arrangements<sup>1</sup>



Application period:  
**04/03/2024 - 07/02/2024**



Available funding for 2024: **\$1.5B**

1. In 2023, RCPP and Advanced Partner were two separate grants. In 2024, USDA has combined the grants into one grant called "RCPP and Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA)" - this fact pack explains the requirements of AFA as part of the RCPP program.

# RCPP-AFA is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land



## Goals and merit criteria for RCPP grants:

The RCPP follows a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. The following are the three key principles of RCPP:

- a) Impact: include effective and compelling solutions that address one or more natural resource concerns
- b) Partner Contributions: partners are responsible for identifying any combination of cash and in-kind value-added contributions
- c) Partnerships and Management: partners must have the experience, expertise, and capacity necessary to manage the partnership and project, provide outreach to producers, and quantify the environmental impacts

# RCPP Program Details

RCPP is a competitive grant program that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land via 2 possible application processes and criteria.

Match funding requirement: N/A<sup>1</sup>

## Alternative Funding Arrangements

Description		RCPP AFAs are intended to support project structures and approaches that cannot be carried out as effectively through the RCPP Classic NFO
Eligible uses		RCPP projects may include a range of on-the-ground conservation activities implemented by farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners such as land management, improvement, and restoration practices; land rentals; and entity-held and U.S.-held easements. This funding will prioritize partnerships that support implementation of conservation projects that directly improve soil carbon, reduce nitrogen losses, or reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide emissions associated with agricultural production.
Award amounts:	Minimum award	\$250K
	Maximum award	\$25M
	Award location distributions	NRCS intends to use \$700 million (50 percent of total funding) for proposals within the NRCS-designated CCA funding pool. The remainder of the funding (\$700 million) will be used for proposals that select state or multistate funding pool
	Award type set aside	Up to \$100 million is being made available specifically for NRCS to enter into programmatic partnership agreements with Indian tribes
Previous awards (national)	2023 Awards	81 projects (\$1B total)

1. Contribution is not match, but some FA activity types do have specific minimum match requirements

# Examples of past winners of RCPP in Michigan



## Tribal Stream and Michigan Fruitbelt Collaborative (2023)

**Lead Partner:** Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians

**Impacted locality:** Northwest Lower Michigan

**Funding:** \$20.4M

**Grant type:** Classic

### **Project description:**

The Tribal Stream and Michigan Fruitbelt Collaborative's primary goal is the preservation and restoration of the fragmented multi-tribal fisheries and wildlife populations in northwest Lower Michigan. These natural resources face challenges posed by the modern transportation network's disruption and unsustainable development. The Anishinaabeg people heavily depend on stream crossings within the contemporary transportation system as vital access points, enabling them to exercise their Treaty-protected rights to hunt, fish, trap, and gather resources within the 1836 Treaty of Washington Ceded Territory. Led by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians, one objective of this project is to rectify 29 problematic stream crossing structures throughout the Ceded Territory.



## Methane Avoidance on Dairy Farms in Michigan Milk Producers Association Region (2023)

**Lead Partner:** Newtrient LLC

**Impacted locality:** Midwest

**Funding:** \$6.2M

**Grant type:** Classic

### **Project description:**

The Methane Avoidance on Dairy Farms in Michigan project aims to drive high-yielding outcomes from Midwest dairy producers by increasing the adoption of methane-emissions-reducing NRCS conservation practices focused on manure management and feed management. Newtrient LLC will leverage NRCS's RCPP investment of \$6.2million through the delivery of \$2 million in partner cash and in-kind contributions. This project will creatively pair public and private funds to deliver economically viable conservation solutions to Midwest dairy producers by increasing producer-specific technical assistance and financial incentives.



## Accelerating Methane Emission Reductions in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana Dairy Producers (2023)

**Lead Partner:** Newtrient LLC

**Impacted locality:** Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana

**Funding:** \$9M

**Grant type:** Alternative Funding Arrangements

### **Project description:**

The Accelerating Methane Emissions Reductions project will help dairy farms in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana reduce methane emissions through NRCS conservation practices focused on manure management and feed management. This project will leverage \$9M in RCPP funding with around \$4M in partner contributions to achieve a cumulative reduction of 90,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent over the term of the project.

# What you will need to apply for a RCPP grant

RCPP applications are open to government, private and community entities, and require a thorough application package with additional components for Alternative Funding Arrangements



## Eligible Partners

- Agricultural or silvicultural producer association or other group of producers
- State or unit of local government
- Indian tribe
- Municipal water or wastewater treatment entity
- Farmer cooperative
- Water district, irrigation district, acequia, rural water district or association
- Institution of higher education
- Organizations with an established history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land
- Conservation district



## Key Grant Application Components<sup>1</sup>

No page application limit

- Basic Project and Contact Information
- List of Project Partners
- Narrative Questions
- Project Outcomes
- NRCS Funding Request Tables
- Contribution Deliverables Table
- Contribution Commitment Letters
- Project Map  
Partners are advised to carefully consider project area boundaries to optimize
  - the potential applications for project assistance (big enough area to ensure demand), and
  - the probability that the project will deliver meaningful and measurable conservation outcomes during the term of the project

Additional details for AFA

- RCPP AFA funding flows directly from NRCS to a lead partner and not directly from NRCS to producers, landowners, or other entities as in RCPP Classic.

1. Not inclusive of all documents required to apply; please refer to NOFO for the full requirements and details  
2. Excluding supporting documents