



ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

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Commissioner

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Southern Tier Agricultural Industry Enhancement Program

On-Farm Enhancement Grant Program

Schuyler Soil and Water Conservation District

Information for Applicants

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Southern Tier Agricultural Industry Enhancement Program On-Farm Enhancement Grant Program Schuyler Soil and Water Conservation District Information for Applicants

I. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Intent of Request for Applications (RFA)

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Department) through the (Schuyler) County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) invites applications from eligible entities for financial assistance to implement part(s) of a farm business plan or environmental plan that will increase farm production, enhance profitability and/or increase environmental sustainability of the farm operation.

Availability of funding for this program is from the State Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Budget, which includes an appropriation for this purpose. Funding is subject to re-appropriation in subsequent state fiscal years.

B. Purpose

The purpose of the program is to assist farm operations located in the Southern Tier Region of New York State (NYS). For purposes of this RFA, the Southern Tier Region is comprised of the following counties:

Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Steuben, Schuyler, Tompkins, and Tioga

C. Definitions

“Qualified or accredited third party” means an individual or a business entity that is trained in the development of farm business plans, certified, and/or otherwise qualified to make educated and informed recommendations pertinent to the farm business objectives for the qualifying farm operation.

“Value Added” any product or action that helps raise the value of the farm products or business or something added to a product that results in an increase to the margin of profit.

D. Project Submission Requirements

Applications for funding will be accepted during the following Open Application Periods.

Application Period 1:	January 19, 2016	to	March 7, 2016
Application Period 2:	July 11, 2016	to	September 19, 2016
Application Period 3:	January 16, 2017	to	March 6, 2017
Application Period 4:	July 10, 2017	to	September 18, 2017

Applications must be received **by 4:00 pm local time on the last day of the Open Application Period in order to be considered for funding during that application period.**

Incomplete applications will be returned to applicants.

Applicants are responsible for the timely submission of their application. Applications will be accepted only during an Open Application Period.

Faxed or e-mailed applications will **not** be accepted.

Envelopes should be clearly marked “RFA – STAIEG – On-Farm - <Schuyler County SWCD>.”

One original and one copy of the application in its entirety must be submitted to:

Attn: Jerry Verrigni
Schuyler County SWCD
2400 Meads Hill Road
Watkins Glen, NY 14891
(607) 229-9332

E. Question and Answers

Prospective applicants with questions concerning this RFA should present those questions to:

Attn: Jerry Verrigni
Schuyler County SWCD
2400 Meads Hill Road, Watkins Glen, NY 14891 (607) 229-9332

jerryverrigni@hotmail.com

All questions must be submitted in writing. (Email will be accepted.) Applicants should note that all clarifications are to be resolved prior to the submission of a proposal and review of the Q&A document is encouraged. A list of questions about the RFA, answers to those questions as well as any addenda to the RFA, will be added to a Frequently Asked Questions Document and posted to the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets website <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/RFPS.html> under Southern Tier Agricultural Industry Enhancement Program. Hard copies can also be requested by contacting the Schuyler County SWCD. All questions and answers shall be incorporated into the RFA as a formal addendum.

F. Funding

1. Available Funds

- The amount of state funding requested for an eligible project must be at least \$20,000 and not more than \$100,000

Available funds can be requested for **one** of two thresholds:

Lower

- Requests between \$20,000 and \$50,000

Upper

- Requests between \$50,001 and \$100,000

2. Environmental Stewardship Incentive

- Eligible Applicants may receive an additional \$10,000 in state funding for an eligible project, if the farm operation agrees to participate in a pre-qualified environmental stewardship program prior to application. Payment of the \$10,000 environmental stewardship incentive will be made upon successful completion of the eligible project and documentation of participation in the approved environmental stewardship program within the contract period.

Eligible programs shall demonstrate that the farm has reached out to mitigate their own adverse impacts on the environment or that the farm is proactively working to protect the environment. The following environmental stewardship programs are pre-qualified if conducted by an eligible applicant as part of an eligible “farm operation.”

- A Federal or State program that conveys a perpetual conservation easement
- A Federal or State program to establish, protect or enhance critical habitats for wildlife.

- A Federal or State program to utilize renewable sources of energy (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal, anaerobic digestion)
- A Federal or State program to destroy methane. (e.g. manure storage with impermeable cover and flare)
- USDA Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Continuous Enrollment Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP)
- NYS Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- USDA NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program or Grassland Reserve Program
- USDA Farm Service Agency Conservation Loan Program or Debt for Nature Program

Environmental stewardship programs that are not pre-qualified may be evaluated for eligibility by the Department and upon approval by the Department will be posted through the Q&A process.

G. Match Requirements

1. Applicant Match Requirements

- Eligible matching funds are limited to cash. Examples of cash include cash on hand, loans, lines of credit, grants (other than NYS).
 - Match shall be specific to the project.
 - In-kind services and/ or labor cannot be used as matching funds.
 - Any and all costs incurred or funds spent prior to the award of state funds cannot be used as match.
 - Matching funds requirements for requests between \$20,000 and \$50,000
 - The state will provide up to 90% of an eligible project cost not to exceed \$50,000.
 - Applicants must provide at least 10% of the total project costs.
 - Matching funds requirements for requests between \$50,001 and \$100,000
 - The state will provide up to 75% of an eligible project cost not to exceed \$100,000.
 - Applicants must provide at least 25% of the total project costs.
2. Matching funds are **NOT** required for the additional \$10,000 environmental stewardship incentive.

H. Project Duration

Projects should be completed within 18 months of an executed contract.

II. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A. Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants **must** meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Be engaged in the business of farming as an individual, partnership, association, cooperative, corporation, or LLC business entity, and meet the definition of “farm operation” as defined in section 301 of the Agriculture and Markets Law <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/rfps/SouthernTierAIEP/STAIEP-Definitions.pdf> .
- Received the Farmers School Property Tax Credit in 3 of the 5 years prior to submitting an application. Applicants must include copies of NYS Department of Tax and Finance Claim for Farmers School Tax Credit IT -217 or Claim for Farmers School Tax Credit CT-47 as filed for each qualifying year. All documents will be required at the time of application.
- Be a resident of New York State and at least 18 years of age.
- Operate the farm business that is physically located in one of the following counties: Schuyler, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Steuben, Schuyler, Tompkins, and Tioga.
- Participate in the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management Program (AEM) prior to making an application for funding. Participation in AEM is defined as completion of an AEM Tier 1 Questionnaire **and** the appropriate AEM Tier 2 Risk Assessment Worksheets for all aspects of the farm operation; **or** an AEM Tier 3 Plan developed within the past 3 years.
- Be in compliance with all federal, state, or local laws or regulations.
- Be in compliance with state, federal, or local tax obligations.

B. Project Eligibility

1. Eligible projects **must** meet the following criteria:

- Be located on land owned and operated by an eligible “farm operation.”
- Increase production, enhance farm profitability and/or increase environmental compatibility of the farm operation.
- “Value-added” (*See I. C. Definitions*) projects must produce a minimum of 51% of the raw materials on the eligible “farm operation.”

- Implement part(s) of a farm business plan or environmental plan. Plan(s) must be prepared by or in consultation with a qualified or accredited third party (See I. C. Definitions).

2. General Farm Business and Environmental Plan Requirements

- Must be submitted with the application and be legible.
- Self-generated plans will not be accepted.
- Plans must have been completed or updated within the last three years.

a. Specific Farm Business Plan Requirements must include, at a minimum, the following components:

- A statement of purpose
- A description of the farm business
- An assessment of overall farm profitability
- A description of potential strategies that have been identified as a mechanism for improving farm profitability
- A description of the project proposed for funding and an evaluation as to how this project will address an identified strategy
- An evaluation on how the proposed project will address profitability

b. Specific Environmental Plan Requirements must include, at a minimum, the following components:

- Be prepared in accordance with Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program requirements and guidelines.
- All agricultural waste management related projects must have a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) prepared by an AEM Certified Planner, USDA NRCS Certified Planner, or an individual with equivalent USDA NRCS Job Approval Authority.
- All Best Management Practices proposed for implementation must meet New York State NRCS Standards and Specifications. If no NYS NRCS Standards or Specifications exist, then the practice must be designed to meet nationally recognized standards (e.g. American Concrete Institute Standards.) All practices implemented must be approved by an individual with appropriate approval authority.

C. Local Eligibility

(Any codified SWCD policy concerning applicant eligibility).

D. Eligible Costs

Eligible expenses include, capital costs and professional services costs necessary to complete an eligible project.

The following capital and professional services costs are eligible:

- Construction and renovation of buildings and structures (e.g. fencing)
- Water Management Practices (e.g. Irrigation, drainage and/or erosion control practices).
- Environmental Best Management Practice System(s)
- Trellis systems
- Greenhouses
- Permanently installed equipment
- Permanently installed root stock
- Legal services
- Architectural and/or engineering services
- Cultural resource impact determinations

Costs that are not listed may only be included for funding upon clarification/approval obtained through the Q&A process.

E. Ineligible Costs

Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Land Purchases and/or Rent
- Land Clearing and/or Land Preparation
- Machinery, implements, and rolling stock.
- Machinery or equipment that are not an integral part of a structure or does not otherwise require installation
- Working capital
- Livestock, Semen or Embryos
- Insurances or Bonding Expenses
- Non-permanent root stock or nursery stock (e.g. Christmas trees, annual bedding plants, container plants etc.)
- Refinance Debt, Taxes, Penalties or Fines
- Bank Charges and/or Loan Fees

F. Non Substitution of Funds

Program funds may not be used as a substitution for third party funding contractually or otherwise committed to the project.

G. Reimbursement of Eligible Costs

- Costs incurred prior to the award of funding will not be reimbursed.
- Eligible costs will be reimbursed upon completion of work associated with a contracted project.
- Costs incurred after the award of funding but prior to execution of a contract will be reimbursed after the successful execution of a contract. Costs will not be reimbursed if a contract is not successfully executed.
- A minimum of 10 percent of the contract amount will be withheld pending satisfactory completion of the contract.

III. APPLICATION FORMAT

A. Application

- Only one complete application will be accepted per applicant.
- Applicants can only apply in one eligible county.
- Sign and submit one original and one copy of the complete application using the provided Application Form.
- Complete the Applicant Checklist,
- Identify all pages of the application in numerical order.
- Attach all required plans, support letters, necessary documentation etc. at the end of the Application Form.
- To conserve paper, electronic format submission of business plans, environmental plans, and/or CNMP plans are acceptable in .PDF format only, on a labeled compact disc.
- Provide all information requested in the application.

B. Project Budget

Submit the budget form included in the application forms.

IV. AWARDS

- Only one award will be given per applicant for the duration of the program.
- All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness based upon the attached Applicant Checklist.
- All projects determined to be eligible shall receive funding for approved project costs until all funds designated for this purpose are exhausted.

- The Department will make all final eligibility and award determinations.
- Once an application has been selected for funding, the Department will notify the applicant of the need to provide information necessary to complete the contract with the (Schuyler) County SWCD.
- If the (Schuyler) County SWCD is unsuccessful in negotiating a contract which will achieve the deliverables in a manner consistent with the proposal as approved by the Department, the Department reserves the right to rescind its approval of the proposal.
- Priority for funding will be determined by the date an application is determined to be **eligible** and **complete**. Eligible applications will continue to be funded on a first come, first serve basis until the funding allocation for (Schuyler) County is exhausted or until the end of the last application period in 2017.
- In the event that insufficient funds are available to fund all successful applicants in a given application period, awards will be made to entities based upon the value of leveraged funding in comparison to state funding.
- In the event that there are not sufficient funds available to cover the amount requested in an application, the applicant will be contacted to determine if the project can be completed within the available funding.

The Department has reserved the right to evaluate the program after the first year for a possible redistribution of funds.

V. CONTRACTS

- A contract will be developed and executed between the applicant and the (Schuyler) County SWCD.
- All payments will be issued as identified in the executed funding agreement with the (Schuyler) County SWCD.
- Payment for invoices submitted by successful applicants shall only be rendered by paper check.
- (Schuyler) County SWCD staff will monitor the progress of each funded project.
- The (Department) and the (Schuyler) County SWCD reserves the right to modify the reporting requirements during the course of the project.
- Successful applicants must provide progress reports and final reporting documentation and such other information as the Department or (Schuyler) SWCD may deem necessary.

- The Department and the (Schuyler) County SWCD reserve the right to conduct follow-up evaluations of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts.
- The Office of the NYS Comptroller, the Department, and the (Schuyler) County SWCD reserve the right to audit the applicant supplied books and records relating to the performance of the project during and up to six (6) years after the completion of the project.

VI. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A. Liability

The Department and the (Schuyler) County SWCD will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any applicant for work performed in the preparation of and production of a proposal, or for any work performed prior to the formal execution of a contract.

B. Freedom of Information

All proposals submitted and all related contracts and reports may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Law.

C. New York State Environmental Quality Review Act Requirements

Some projects may be subject to review under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). Applicants should go to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation web site <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/357.html> for further information regarding applicability.

D. New York State Office Of Parks, Recreation, And Historic Preservation Requirements

Some projects may be subject to further review by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) prior to development of a contract. The Department, and the (Schuyler) County SWCD reserves the right to request such additional information from applicants as is necessary to allow the OPRHP to make a determination regarding the impact of a project.

E. Reservations

The Department and the (Schuyler) County SWCD reserve the right to:

- reject any or all proposals received with respect to this RFA;

- disqualify any applicant whose conduct and/or proposal fails to conform to the requirements of the RFA;
- request from an applicant additional information as deemed necessary to more fully evaluate its proposal;
- amend the program's specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to all potential applicants;
- waive any requirements that are not material;
- waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and concurrence of the applicant;
- seek clarifications and revisions of proposals;
- select only certain portions of proposals for State funding;
- negotiate the terms of any agreement proposed by the applicant;
- negotiate the terms of the budget;
- eliminate and mandatory, non-material specifications with which all applicants cannot comply;
- make and award under the RFA in whole or part; and
- make all final decisions with respect to the amount of State funding and the timing of payments to be provided to an applicant.

All eligible proposals submitted in response to this RFA will become the property of the Department, and the (Schuyler) County SWCD.