

Question and Answer Opportunity Responses

Conservation Agronomist Request For Applications (RFA 2024-USDA-SMART-002)

Please note: Some questions have been edited to provide clarity and consistency

- 1. I am a current employee working with Truterra at a retailer and looking to apply for this grant for myself to transition to a conservation agronomist role and receive funding. Can I apply for the grant or does another employee at the coop have to apply?**

The ag retail entity is applying for funding, rather than an individual. An application can be developed by ag retail staff. The primary point of contact should be an individual authorized to submit the application on behalf of the ag retailer. We suggest that the primary contact listed in the application occupy a position of leadership and be distinct from the intended Conservation Agronomist role.

- 2. Could you put out a formatting example for a cover letter? Specifically, regarding how you would like counties listed/demonstrated? Is a map a better option? Do the counties need to be named or is highlighting on a map sufficient, etc.**

Truterra will not be providing a cover letter template but will address the specific question about identifying counties serviced. A map highlighting counties serviced by the retailer may be used. Please make sure to also include a metric to show the total number of counties serviced by state.

- 3. What would be considered peer networking development?**

A peer network is meant to enable farmer-to-farmer learning opportunities. The development and format of the peer network should be determined by the retailer to best fit their customer base and be described in the technical application. USDA has expressed support of small, casual gatherings.

- 4. What would a climate smart commodities plan look like?**

As described in the Request for Applications document, a climate smart commodity plan is an annual plan providing agronomic and climate smart practice recommendations on a given field or operation for a specific commodity(ies). Truterra has developed a template for retailers to utilize that includes considerations for identifying resource concerns, developing a menu of climate smart practice alternatives, and providing recommendations for climate smart practice implementation. The climate smart commodity plan is meant to be a vehicle to capture and deliver annual conservation agronomy technical assistance provided to the grower.

- 5. What would you consider a rural community and/or education group that a Conservation Agronomist could engage?**

These engagements should be tailored to fit the local landscape of partners present in a retailer's service area. This could include groups like FFA, 4-H, watershed groups, school and community organizations, etc. Strong applications will describe why collaboration with identified community or education groups will amplify conservation messaging.

- 6. When it says number of farmers reached via campaign- does that mean just number of people I mailed or email information to? Or would that be the number of people I contacted and ENGAGED with and had a conversation etc. What is the difference between the number of farmers reached via campaign and the number of farmers educated on the climate smart programs?**

The farmer outreach (campaign) milestones are intended to capture all growers that received outreach campaign materials about practice change and available technical support. These milestones are more general in nature and are campaigns designed by the retailer including topics such as soil health, cover crops, reduced tillage, conservation agronomy service offerings, etc. These campaigns might include direct mail or email.

The farmer education on climate smart programs milestone refers to information shared with growers about the availability of public and private *programs* available to assist farmers such as EQIP, RCPP, CRP or private sector conservation or farmland carbon programs.

- 7. For peer networking events in the budget the example says 4 units/events and cost \$25 for coffee and donuts. Could our conservation agronomist do a lunch & learn 4 units/events and pay for the cost of the meal and estimate that cost to be in that column? For the peer networking milestone: ex. 10 customers and 4 coffee donut events- are these expected to be the same customers and have 4 meetings where the conservation agronomist facilitates a coffee and donut meeting or 4 different meetings with new customers at each event? Under community and partner engagement it says N/A and add (eg. event) but it is locked. What should we do there? Under Marketing of CA Deliverable Offerings printing ex. says 100 units. What is that number 100 based off of, if that goal in the example is 300 for each campaign in year 1? Is it assumed some of that is digital delivery vs. all 300 mailed?**

The milestones mentioned above are planned and executed as determined by the retailer to fit their goals and should be described in the technical application. Multiple peer networks may be developed to accommodate a range of geographies and topics and may include both new and returning attendees. The peer network configuration is determined by the applicant based on knowledge of farmer needs and behaviors. The budget and milestone worksheet has been edited (associated cells are unlocked) and re-posted to allow users to capture costs associated with the community and partner engagement milestone. In the example used for “Marketing of CA Deliverable Offerings”, there were a total of 300 farmers reached. This includes 200 reached digitally and 100 reached through direct mail. Please consider various methods of delivering marketing campaigns to achieve best cost and best reach of customer segments.

- 8. When estimating the workshops and field day expenses should we include the cost of food if we plan to serve a meal?**

Meals included in workshop and field day expenses must have a reasonable cost and be necessary for the continuity of the event. Meal costs should be based off of vendor quotes or receipts from past events.

- 9. For the letters of support, would this be geared towards the cooperative/company and the past experience and future support this organization would be willing to offer? Or if this is an internal hire, would it be appropriate for this letter to include details about that individual and working together?**

A letter of support should refer to the retail organization as a whole and provide endorsement for the objectives, methods, and impacts of the retailer’s proposal. A letter of support can also establish credibility of the ag retailer applicant and demonstrate the need for proposed work.

10. What exactly is the organizational chart and essential staff details?

An organizational chart shows a company's internal structure and hierarchy based upon role within the organization. The RFA seeks an organizational chart that includes the Conservation Agronomist's manager and tier(s) above. Essential staff are those individuals who contribute to the development and execution of work described in the proposal.