

Call for Proposals
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Division of Soil Conservation

State Soil Conservation Committee
Research and Demonstration Grant Program

ATTENTION

Be sure to follow guidelines in this Call for Proposals.

Receipt Deadline
May 22, 2015

Who we are

IDALS stands for Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. IDALS's mission is to provide leadership for all aspects of agriculture in Iowa, ensure consumer protection and promote the responsible use of our natural resources.

DSC stands for the Division of Soil Conservation and is the division within IDALS responsible for state leadership in the protection and management of soil, water and mineral resources.

Learn more about IDALS at www.iowaagriculture.gov

Eligibility

The **State Soil Conservation Committee Research and Demonstration Fund** provides funds to collaborative teams of scientists, farmers, institutions, organizations, and educators who are exploring sustainable agriculture and nonpoint pollution projects through research projects or education/demonstration projects. Proposals from any location are accepted.

Amount of Funding Available

The funding level for the R&D grant program is dependent upon appropriations and budget decisions by the State Soil Conservation Committee, but we anticipate that roughly **\$150,000**, with individual grants not to exceed \$50,000 total for projects lasting up to two years.

It is essential that proposal authors use the current Call for Proposals.

Proposals will be reviewed by the State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC). Funding decisions will be made by July. We anticipate that **project funds will be available in July.**

Desired Outcomes for Research and Education Projects

There are no specific priority areas in the Call for Proposals, but proposals must address issues of nonpoint pollution control. Successful projects should contribute to the following broad-based outcomes:

- Sustaining and improving the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends, and
- Enhancing the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, rural communities, and society as a whole.

Proposals should clearly explain:

- Expected outcomes for the project and how they will assist in working toward the broad-based outcomes listed above,
- How project outcomes will be evaluated, and
- What impact the project will have on farmers/ranchers, rural communities, and society as a whole.

Proposal Format

Proposals must be:

- Printed in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font
- Single-spaced.
- Compliant with space limitations for different sections of the proposal.
- Printed on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, with one-inch margins.
- The SSCC would prefer to receive proposals that have been printed double-sided.

The SSCC reserves the right to exclude proposals that do not comply with formatting requirements.

Proposal Content

The three main components of your proposal are **Cover Page, Project Summary, and Appendices.**

I. Cover Page

Limit the Cover Page to one page and print it single-sided (the front side of one sheet of paper with nothing printed on the back). A template for the 2015 Cover Page is included at the end of this call for proposals. The template is also available in electronic format from at www.iowaagriculture.gov or contact DSC at Tarrita.spicer@iowaagriculture.gov. Items included on the cover page:

Project Title. Use a Title that is concise and includes keywords that help describe the project activities and expected outcomes.

Project Coordinator. The Project Coordinator is the person responsible for the project, who manages the project and provides reports to the State Soil Conservation Committee. This person will be the primary contact for the project. The Project Coordinator must sign the cover page.

Primary Grantee. This is the organization that will administer the project budget. The Primary Grantee will send invoices to the IDALS, receive funds from IDALS, and disburse funds to any Partner Organizations.

Partner Organizations. List any additional institutions or organizations that will receive project funds through subcontracts with the Primary Grantee.

Project Duration. Please indicate the proposed length of your project in years or months up to a maximum of two years and the proposed start and end dates for your project. Project funds will likely be available in July of 2015 and your project cannot start before an agreement for funding has been executed.

Total Budget Request. List the total amount of funds requested from SSCC R&D grant for each year of the project and the total request for all years of the project. The total request from for all years of the project cannot exceed \$50,000. The Total Budget Request listed on the Cover Page should include any funds that the Primary Grantee plans to subcontract to Partner Organizations.

Type of Project. You must indicate whether your proposal is for a Research project or for an Education/Demonstration project - **check only one.** All research projects should include some outreach effort, but use your best judgment as to whether your project is primarily Research or primarily Education/Demonstration.

Topic Area. Please indicate the topic area that is the best fit for your proposed project. Please **check only one topic area** – checking more than one area will not increase your chances of success. The following are examples of the kinds of projects that might be included in each topic area:

Cropping Systems

Examples include row crops, fruits, vegetables, cover crops, crop breeding, pest management (weeds, insects, diseases, nematodes, etc.), organic crop production, soils, soil quality, soil amendments, tillage, environmental and/or water issues related to crop production, and education or demonstration related to cropping systems.

Economics, Marketing, Social Sciences, and Rural Development

Examples include marketing, food systems, financial management, financial analyses, business planning, entrepreneurship, farm planning, social sciences, women's issues, minority issues, quality of life, community issues, and education or demonstration related to economics or social sciences.

Education and Outreach

Examples include curriculum development, farmer networks, learning groups, and education not specifically related to cropping systems, economics, social sciences, or livestock systems.

Energy

Emphasis should be on the sustainability of various energy systems and bioenergy co-products. Examples of bioenergy projects could include water use for bioenergy production, relative sustainability for various bioenergy systems, environmental impacts of using crop residues for bioenergy, and ways to reduce the need for energy in agriculture and the food system.

Livestock Systems

Examples include dairy, beef, swine, poultry, grazing, grass-based animal production, pasture systems, forages, organic animal production, manure handling, composting, and environmental issues related to livestock production; if the focus is more on livestock, indicate livestock systems, but if the focus is more on crops or forages, indicate cropping systems.

Other - projects that don't appear to fit into the above categories.

Examples include food and microbial safety, human health (as related to food and agriculture), alternative crops, alternative animals, and wildlife.

II. Project Summary

The Project Summary should be no more than two pages of text, printed double-sided (one sheet of paper printed front and back). Write clearly and concisely. Reviewers are discouraged from gathering information that isn't directly contained in the proposal, so don't rely on links to websites or news articles to provide critical information.

The Project Summary should include:

Project Title

Project Description. Provide a brief narrative describing your project's objectives, the general method or approach that will be employed to reach those objectives, and the outputs and intermediate-term and short-term outcomes expected from project activities. The Project Description is like an abstract; it will provide reviewers with an overview of your project. **The Project Description should not exceed one-half page of text (the top half of the front side of a sheet of paper) and should include the following:**

Objectives: Briefly and succinctly state your project's immediate objectives (example: "This project will test the viability of a cooperative community processing facility for linking local food producers with restaurant and institutional food services.")

Method/Approach: Briefly describe how your project will be implemented, including your general approach, activities, methods, and project inputs. Specify methods only to the extent needed to give a general idea of the work to be done and the findings it will yield. Education project proposals may offer general descriptions of educational activities, participants, and relationships among them.

Outputs and outcomes. List your proposed project's outputs (typically tangible products, such as journal articles or conference papers, extension bulletins or other educational materials, completed workshops

or field days with expected number of participants; etc.), then describe your project's anticipated short- and intermediate-term outcomes for its audience (those who will change or benefit from the project). Short-term outcomes include changes in the knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes of your audience; intermediate outcomes include changes in the behavior or practices of that audience. Please specify your project's primary audience, and be sure your project's outcomes are specific, clear, and measurable.

Key Project Characteristics: In three separate statements, use the remaining one and a half pages of text to characterize your project's relevance, impact, and appropriateness as outlined below.

- A. *Relevance:*** Explain how your project is relevant to the mission of IDALS and the Division of Soil Conservation (listed near the beginning of this call for proposals). Explain how your project will contribute to sustainability in Iowa.
- B. *Impact:*** Tell who will benefit from your project, and in what ways. Explain who will use the project's outputs, the geographic areas in which they are likely to be used, conditions which may enhance or impede their use, etc.
- C. *Appropriateness:*** Explain why your project's approach or methodology is an appropriate way to reach your objectives. Tell how it is different from or superior to other ways to reach those objectives, as well as how it is different from or complementary to other projects.

III. Appendices

The following appendices are required to be part of your proposal:

- Appendix 1. Outreach Plan
- Appendix 2. Evaluation Plan
- Appendix 3. Stakeholder Involvement and Compensation
- Appendix 4. Project Coordinator, Major Participants, and Individual Collaborators
- Appendix 5. Past, Current, and Pending SSCC Grants
- Appendix 6. Estimated Budget
- Appendix 7. Statement Regarding Resubmitted Ideas

Keep appendices brief (try to limit each Appendix to a maximum of one side of a sheet of paper) and print the appendices double-sided (for example, *Appendix 2* can be on the back side of the sheet of paper for *Appendix 1*). Avoid use of lengthy appendices; focus on clarity in presenting your ideas instead of adding materials. If an Appendix is less than a full page of text, you may include more than one Appendix on a page.

Appendix 1. Outreach Plan

A critical component of a successful SSCC R&D project is a plan for disseminating project findings or other products (outputs) to the audiences expected to use them to accomplish outcomes. Describe your plans for communicating the new knowledge, practices, or other techniques your project produces to appropriate audiences. Every project – including Research projects – should include an Outreach Plan.

Appendix 2: Evaluation Plan

Describe your plans for evaluating the project. Identify evaluation indicators that will be measured or monitored at each stage of project implementation. Include evaluation plans for your activities (process indicators) and for your results (outcome indicators). Tell how you will measure the success of each outcome, including the evaluation indicators and methods of measurement you will use. Also be sure to consider evaluation costs when you develop your budget estimate.

Appendix 3. Farmer Involvement and Compensation

The relevance and impact of a sustainable agriculture research or education project often are enhanced when farmers, local organizations, or others who will use or benefit from the project are involved in its planning, design, and/or implementation. Describe how farmers, or others will be involved in your project – for example, in defining the research problem, providing facilities for or conducting on-farm research, etc. – and whether they will be compensated for their time or other contributions to your project.

It is helpful to provide names of specific farmers if you can. If you can't name specific individuals at the proposal stage, explain why the names aren't available and give your plan for identifying specific individuals.

If your project will use technologies that some consider to be controversial, feel free to use this appendix to state why you feel that use of this technology will contribute to your project or to making agriculture more sustainable.

Appendix 4. Project Coordinator, Major Participants, and Individual Collaborators

List individuals who will be involved in your project under separate headings for Project Coordinator, for Major Participants, and for Collaborators. Indicate the name, organizational affiliation or occupation (such as “farmer”), academic discipline/appointment (research, extension, etc., if applicable), and address for the Project Coordinator and for each Major Participant and Collaborator listed.

The Project Coordinator is the person who will be SSCC's primary contact for the project. He or she directs the project and provides reports to SSCC. The Project Coordinator must sign the cover page.

Major Participants are other individuals within the Primary Grantee institution and/or Partner Organizations who receive or are authorized to spend funds.

Collaborators are individuals who are involved in the project, but who do not receive SSCC R&D funds, except possibly for reimbursement of travel expenses to work on the project.

Appendix 5. Past, Current, and Pending SSCC R&D Projects

List the Project Coordinator, project title, project dates, amount, and project number (if applicable) for any significant grants that the Project Coordinator or Major Participants have received in the last five years. Also, please list any significant proposals that are pending (submitted, but you have not been notified about funding) including other proposals that are being submitted in this year's SSCC R&D program.

Appendix 6. Estimated Budget

Include a general, estimated budget in this Appendix. Show projected expenditures for the following general categories: salaries, equipment, supplies, travel, or other payments to project participants (other than those included in salaries), and any other categories that will help reviewers get a feel for how you plan to use SSCC R&D funds. The SSCC R&D program does not have a matching funds requirement for this grant program, but it is a consideration of the reviewers.

Although SSCC R&D does not limit the percentage of project budgets that can be spent on personnel costs, note that reviewers tend to give lower scores to projects that have a high percentage of their budgets devoted to personnel costs (salaries, wages, and consultant fees). Make sure that the role for people whose costs are included in the budget is clear in the proposal.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are not allowed under the SSCC R&D program.

Appendix 7. Statement Regarding Resubmitted Ideas

Indicate whether you have submitted this idea to SSCC before, and if so, when.

Procedure for Submitting Proposals

Ten (10) stapled paper copies; send the original plus nine paper copies AND one electronic copy. We use arrival of the hard copies to determine whether a proposal has been submitted on time. Send hard copies of proposals to:

*Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Division of Soil Conservation – State Soil Conservation Committee
502 East 9th Street
Des Moines IA 50319*

The electronic copy of your proposal can be included with the paper copies on some type of magnetic storage medium, or you can attach an electronic file containing your proposal to an e-mail message addressed to Tarrita.Spicer@iowaagriculture.gov. Note that the electronic copy is required **in addition** to the ten hard copies.

Cover letters are not necessary, but if you include a cover letter, make sure that the cover letter is attached to each of the ten hard copies of the proposal.

We will not add to your proposal any supplemental material sent separately.

Proposals may not be reviewed if they:

- **Are faxed instead of delivered by courier or U.S. mail service.**
- **Do not include ten hard copies (paper copies).**
- **Include links to websites that reviewers are expected to read.**
- **Exceed the space limits for the Project Description or Project Summary.**
- **Are received after the deadline.**
- **Request more than \$50,000 in funds.**
- **Fail to follow other proposal format requirements.**
- **Are submitted by someone who has overdue reports from past projects.**

Proposal Evaluation

Members of the SSCC and technical professionals will provide an initial overall screening of proposals. Funds for projects recommended for funding are expected to become available in July of the decision year.

The SSCC will consider the following factors in evaluating proposals:

- **Relevance of project outcomes:** Will the stated project outcomes contribute to sustainability of agriculture in Iowa? Will the project outcomes contribute to program's broad-based outcomes? Does the proposed project attempt to solve a problem and/or address an issue that is significant in Iowa?
- **Lasting impact of the project:** For projects that are intended to be on going, what is the potential for the project to become financially self-sufficient after grant funding ends? Can others benefit from the results of this project? Are the results from this project likely to be used by others?
- **Appropriateness of proposed methods for achieving stated outcomes:** Are the proposed approach, activities, methods, and inputs likely to lead to the stated outcomes? In what respects are they more appropriate than other strategies for reaching similar outcomes?
- **Outreach:** What are the outreach and information dissemination plans? How will others learn about project results? Is there a plan to make sure that information generated by the project reaches people who can use the information?
- **Evaluation plan:** Are the expected outcomes measurable and is the proposed evaluation plan suitable for measuring the outcomes?
- **Farmer or other end-user involvement: Proposals that don't include farmer or other end-user involvement are unlikely to be funded.** Farmers and other end-users of the information should be involved in ways that are appropriate for the type of project. For some types of projects, farmers or other end-users might be involved in all phases from development of the idea through planning, conducting, and/or

evaluating the project. It is better to specifically name the individuals who will be involved in the project or at least to list a specific process for identifying them.

- **Feasibility of achieving the stated outcomes:** Does the project team include the disciplines and expertise necessary to carry out the project? Is achieving the stated outcomes within the scope of the proposed budget?
- In cases where SSCC grant funding has previously funded projects in the proposed area of work, reviewers will look for evidence that proposal authors are aware of previously funded SSCC projects and that they intend to **build on previous work** rather than just repeat it. How is the proposed work different from previous work? How will the project build on information from previous SSCC projects?
- **Compliance with program formatting requirements and program guidelines:** The SSCC may decide not to review preproposals that do not follow formatting requirements or other program guidelines.
- **Project Coordinator's reporting history for previous SSCC grants:** The SSCC may choose to reject proposals from Project Coordinators who have delinquent reports for previous SSCC projects.

Help with Proposals

Contact: Tarrita Spicer, 502 East 9th Street, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319; phone: 515-281-5851; e-mail: Tarrita.spicer@iowaagriculture.gov; or web: www.iowaagriculture.gov.

Special Notes

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Distribution of proposals is limited to people involved in the review process, but note that the program considers all funded proposals and subsequent reports and related information to be in the public domain. All reports related to funded projects will be made available to all interested parties in printed, electronic, or other means of communication, without discrimination. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of Project Coordinators (from funded projects) may be provided to interested news entities, farmers, ranchers, or organizations for subsequent inquiries. Proposals and proposals are used in the peer review process and submission to the program establishes consent by the author for appropriate distribution to fulfill review requirements.

Final Checklist

- Typewritten in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font
- Single-spaced
- Double-sided, except Cover Page
- Printed on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, with one-inch margins (6.5 x 9 inch text)
- Cover Page with all necessary signatures and all required information (a Cover Page template is included on the next page)
- Project Summary, including Project Description and Key Project Characteristics
- Appendices
- Ten hard copies AND one electronic copy of the entire proposal

Good luck!

State Soil Conservation Committee R&D Proposal Cover Page

PROJECT TITLE:

PROJECT COORDINATOR:

Name:

Organization:

Address:

City, State Zip:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

I have read the Call for Proposals and consent to the review process.

Signature of Project Coordinator

Date

PRIMARY GRANTEE (Institution or Organization that receives funds from SSCC):

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS (Institutions or Organizations that receive SSCC funds through the Primary Grantee):

PROJECT DURATION (36-month maximum): _____

Proposed Start Date: _____ **Proposed End Date:** _____

TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST FROM SSCC (\$50,000 maximum):

First Year Funding \$

Second Year Funding \$

Total Funding \$

TYPE OF PROJECT (check one): _____ Research _____ Education/Demonstration

TOPIC AREA (check one):

_____ Cropping Systems

_____ Economics, Marketing, Social Sciences, and Rural Development

_____ Education and Outreach

_____ Energy (especially sustainability of Bioenergy sources)

_____ Water Quality – Nonpoint Pollution

_____ Other

Primary Grantee Official/Title:

Signature of Primary Grantee Official (if required by Primary Grantee)

Date