United States Department of Agriculture
NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

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20013

1. Purpose:

To provide the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for processing grants, agreements, and memorandums of understanding.

2. Scope:

This SOP will be followed by employees responsible for initiating grants, agreements, and memorandums of understanding.

3. Outline of Procedure:

4.1 Definitions
4.2 Responsibilities of the Employee
4.3 Responsibilities of the Grants & Agreements Specialist

4. Specific Procedures:

4.1 Definitions

A. Contribution Agreements – an agreement between two or more parties that reflects a relationship between the parties to serve a mutual interest and contribute equal resources in carrying out the programs administered by NRCS. Financial or other resources are transferred or exchanged between the parties.

B. Cooperative Agreements – an agreement between two or more parties that reflects a relationship between parties when the principle purpose is to transfer anything of value and substantial involvement by the Government is anticipated. Financial or other resources are transferred or exchanged between the parties.

C. Grants – an agreement between two or more parties that reflects a relationship between parties when the principle purpose is to transfer anything of value and substantial involvement by the Government is not anticipated. Financial resources are transferred but there is no considerable involvement from NRCS.

A. Interagency Agreements – an agreement to document a cooperative effort for carrying out an undertaking of mutual interest between Government agencies. Financial or other resources are transferred or exchanged between the parties.

E. MOU (Memoranda of Understanding) – an agreement between two or more parties that documents a cooperative effort for carrying out an undertaking of mutual interest

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment

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between the parties. Each party carries out its responsibilities by using its own authorities and resources including funding. No financial resources are exchanged between the parties.

4.2 Responsibilities of the Employee

All request to process grants, agreements, or MOUs should be submitted in writing by a Division Director or above to the Management Services Division, Grants and Agreements Staff, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 5220-S, Washington, DC 20250, as soon as the need or commitment is established. All grants and cooperative agreements are competitive unless approved by the Chief or Deputy Chief for Management. Each request for a grant, agreement, MOU, or the extension or amendment of an existing agreement must include the following:

A. Contribution Agreements

1. Background narrative or materials that support the purpose of the contribution agreement.

2. A statement explaining the mutual interest between NRCS and the other party (ies) in carrying out the programs administered by NRCS

3. A statement of responsibilities to include:

   a. Each party's input (i.e., funds, technical expertise, other resources, etc.).

   b. A work plan or statement of work, if applicable.

   c. Deliverables.

4. Time frame identifying when the effort shall begin and end.

5. Funding of dollar amount and line item, if applicable.

6. Technical and administrative contacts include:

   a. Name, telephone and room numbers of the NRCS individual responsible for ensuring that the technical aspects of the agreement are provided by each party.

   b. Name, telephone number, and address of the other party's contact person for ensuring that they meet the requirements of the agreement.

7. Statutory authority to enter into agreement.

8. Cost breakdown for the agreement, including total contributions of each participating party and how the funding will be utilized.

B. Grants and Cooperative Agreements

1. Background narrative or materials that support the purpose of the grant or cooperative agreement.

2. A statement explaining how the agreement will benefit NRCS, and the other party (ies). Also, describe how this agreement will serve a public purpose related to the mission of NRCS and its program.

3. A statement of responsibilities to include:

   a. Each party's input (i.e., funds, technical expertise, other resources, etc.).

b. A work plan or statement of work, if applicable.

c. Deliverables.

4. Time frame identifying when the effort shall begin and end.

5. Funding of dollar amount and line item, if applicable.

6. Technical and administrative contacts include:

a. Name, telephone and room numbers of the NRCS individual responsible for ensuring that the technical aspects of the agreement are provided by each party.

b. Name, telephone number, and address of the other party's contact person for ensuring that they meet the requirements of the agreement.

7. Statutory authority to enter into agreement.

8. Award criteria.

9. Prepare draft announcement for advertisement in FedGrants.

C. Interagency Agreements

1. Background narrative or materials that support the purpose of the Interagency Agreement.

2. A statement explaining:

a. Why the agreement is in the best interest of the Government.

b. Why the services cannot be obtained conveniently or economically by contracting with a private source.

3. A statement of responsibilities to include:

a. Each party's input (i.e., funds, technical expertise, other resources, etc.).

b. A work plan or statement of work, if applicable.

4. Time frame identifying when the effort shall begin and end.

5. Funding of dollar amount and line item, if applicable.

1. Technical and administrative contacts include:

a. Name, telephone and room numbers of the NRCS individual responsible for ensuring that the technical aspects of the agreement are provided by each party.

b. Name, telephone number, and address of the other party's contact person for ensuring that they meet the requirements of the agreement.

D. MOUs

1. Background narrative or materials that will support the purpose of an MOU.

2. A statement explaining how the MOU will benefit NRCS, and the other party (ies).

3. A statement of responsibilities that includes each party's input (i.e., technical

expertise, other resources, etc.).

4. Time frame for when effort shall begin and end.

5. Contacts information should include:

   a. Name, telephone and room numbers of the NRCS individual responsible for ensuring that the technical aspects of the MOU are provided by each party.

   b. Name, telephone number, and address of the other party's contact person responsible for ensuring that they meet the requirements of the agreement.

E. Extensions

Extensions may not exceed 12 months and only in exceptional cases will more than one extension be granted. Extensions received after the expiration date of an award will not be granted. If an agreement requires a no cost term extension, a request must be submitted in writing and include the following:

1. Agreement number.

2. Length of additional time to complete project objectives and a justification for the extension.

3. A summary of progress to date.

4. An estimate of funds expected to remain unobligated on the scheduled expiration date.

5. A projected timetable to complete portions of the project for which the extension is being requested.

6. A status of cost-sharing to date if cost-sharing is required under the award.

F. Amendments

When amendments are required during the performance period of an agreement, the letter of request should include:

1. Agreement number.

2. Purpose of amendment that include new work or task(s).

3. NRCS contact person and telephone number.

4. Funding information identifying the line item increase/decrease).

5. Submit budget.

6. A statement that additional work or task(s) are within the scope or intent of the original agreement and why the additional work or task(s) was not included in the original agreement.

4.3 Responsibilities of the Grants and Agreement Specialist

A. Grants or agreements that do not have to be advertised and MOUs are processed within 30-45 days.

1. Review grants, agreements, or MOU requests for completeness of information submitted.
2. Conduct business and cost analysis.
3. Include appropriate clauses and provisions.
4. Route for approval signatures.
5. Mail award to awardees.

B. Grants or agreements that have to be advertised are processed within 6-9 months.

1. Review grants or agreements requests for completeness.
2. Review advertisement for proper formatting.
3. Post announcement electronically in FedGrants.
4. Receive applications.
5. Review applications for compliance with announcement.
6. Forward applications to Review Committee.
7. Conduct business and cost analysis on award applications.
8. Include appropriate clauses and provisions.
9. Route awards for approval signatures.
10. Mail award to awardees.

5. Technical Contact:

/s/ 8/24/05

Approved By: Shelia Leonard Date
Team Leader, Grants and Agreements

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/s/ 8/24/05

Approved By: Edward M. Bigger, Jr. Date
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