

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Conservation Research Grant Applications

The Department of Agriculture (Department) is soliciting applications to conduct agricultural conservation research on one or more of the following research topic areas, with the research to be conducted from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2026, with the possibility, but not the assurance, of extending that research into subsequent years. This notice establishes the procedures by which grant applications will be solicited and reviewed, and by which grants will be awarded. This funding is made available through the Clean Streams Fund Nutrient Management federal ARPA funds. The Department intends to make up to \$1,500,000 available for grants under the Program.

1. *Grant Solicitation.* The Department will accept grant applications for the purposes, in the form and according to the schedule set forth as follows. Following publication, additional publication and dissemination of this notice shall be made to applicants who have previously submitted grant applications to or received grants from the Department, as well as any individuals or entities who have requested notification from the Department of grant availability.

2. *Research Topic Areas.* Though not exclusive of original research topics, the Department is particularly interested in funding conservation research projects that are able to do the following:

- a. Identify the sources of nuisance emissions in the mushroom industry and best mitigation practices that are applicable to Pennsylvania operations.
- b. Quantify emissions from the mushroom industry and measure the impact of best practices that are deployed.
- c. Quantify the impact of Manure Treatment Technologies (MTT) on water quality, including traceability of nutrients as they are processed. Additionally, provide recommendations for best available technology and or best practices to improve MTT utilization.
- d. Quantify the impact of precision feeding and review implications for nutrient reductions.
- e. Quantify the climate benefits of best management practices installed through the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program and Conservation Excellence Grant programs (ACAP & CEG).
- f. Quantify the ability of non-traditional biomass crops to uptake excess nutrients and or contaminants like PFAS.
- g. Design a method in which to quantify the climate impacts of agriculture operations. Additionally, the work should be able to measure the impact of BMP implementation on a farm's climate impact.
- h. Evaluate the nutrient value and traceability of food processing residuals (FPRs). This should consider the movement of material from producer to applicator to farm owner.

3. *Grant Agreement.* The terms and conditions of the grant will be governed by a grant agreement between the Department and the applicant which shall be tendered to the applicant for execution, returnable in no more than 30 days. The Department may require that the grant agreement be submitted and executed electronically.

4. *Application Delivery and Deadline.* Interested applicants must submit a complete electronic research project proposal and grant application using the Department of Community and Economic Development's Electronic Single Application web site at <https://www.esa.dced.state.pa.us/Login.aspx> by Friday, June 7, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Questions regarding this online application process may be directed to Michael Roth, Director of Conservation and Innovation for the Department, at (717) 787-6257.

5. *Scoring of Applications.* The Department will evaluate each complete and timely-filed project proposal and grant application it receives, using a 100-point scale assessing:

- Up to 20 points for the research project needs statement.
- Up to 30 points for the impact of research outcomes
- Up to 20 points for the research methodology.
- Up to 10 points for project evaluation and replicability.
- Up to 20 points for support and participation from industry.

6. *Scores.* Upon completion of evaluations, the Department will prepare a record identifying each complete and timely-filed project proposal and grant application received and the numerical score assigned to each. The Department shall award grants based upon its evaluation and scoring.

7. *Multiyear Projects or Extensions.* The Department may award grant funding for multiyear projects or provide an extension of time to complete an ongoing project if the Department identifies that a multiyear term or an extension advances the Department's objectives and the grant's likelihood of achieving its stated goals. Requests for extensions of ongoing projects shall be made, evaluated, and processed in accordance with all the requirements of this notice.

8. *Notice of Award.* Applicants shall be notified by mail of the decision on their grant applications by the Department. Best efforts will be made to do so within 15 days of the application deadline.

9. *Grant Agreement.* After the Secretary approves a grant application, and as a precondition to the Department's release of grant moneys to a successful applicant, the Department and the applicant will execute a written or electronic Grant Agreement which describes the terms and conditions subject to which the grant is made. The Grant Agreement shall contain and conform to the requirements of this notice and shall also contain special terms and conditions as required by the Secretary. Applicants who wish to view the full terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement in advance of submitting an application may contact the Department at the address set forth in Section 4. Applicants who are unable to agree to the terms and conditions should not submit an application.

10. *Nonmatching Cost-Reimbursable Grant.* Grants made hereunder do not require the applicant secure or devote a matching sum to the project, but outside funding may be considered as an evaluation criterion under section 5(c) of this solicitation. Payment of grant funds will occur on a reimbursement basis, with the possibility upon the written submission of justification and subsequent approval of the Department of an advance payment option.

11. *Allowable Indirect Cost Reimbursement.* Grants made hereunder are subject to an indirect cost cap of 15% of total direct project costs. For the purpose of this research grant funding solicitation, indirect costs shall include administrative salaries and benefits, office supplies and equipment, facility related cost including maintenance and repairs, telephones, memberships/dues, freight/postage cost and any consultant related costs associated with the administration of this research grant.

12. *Reporting Requirements.* Upon completion of research projects funded through this program, grant recipients will submit to the Department within 60 days a final report detailing the nature of the questions under study, an explanation of the research design and methods, findings of the research and recommendations for future study.