



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
**Farm Service Agency • Commodity Credit Corporation**  
**Conservation and Environmental Programs Division**

**Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program**

The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program was authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-246) amendments to Sec. 1240R of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended (16 U.S.C. 3839bb-5).

**Announcement No.: CEPD – VPA-HIP – 2011 – 01**

**For Fiscal Year 2011**

**Date Issued: January 19, 2011**

Applications must be submitted electronically via the Grants.gov website.  
Details are provided under Part III.

**ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE:** Request for Applications

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:** CEPD – VPA-HIP – 2011 – 01

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER:** 10.093

**DATE:** Applications must be received on Grants.gov by 5:00 pm (Eastern time) on March 7, 2011.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) is a competitive grants program authorized under section 1240R of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended (16 U.S.C. 3839bb-5), and is only available for State and tribal governments. Up to \$50 million is available through fiscal year (FY) 2012. For FY 2011, in addition to the apportionment of \$16.667 million, additional VPA-HIP funds may be made available. VPA-HIP funds made available will consider obligations to prior-year approved proposals in addition to possible commitments to newly-approved proposals.

This Request for Applications (RFA) provides the objectives for projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a VPA-HIP competitive grant.

The primary objective of the VPA-HIP is to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, under programs implemented by State or tribal governments.

Grantees that are States will have the grant amount reduced by 25 percent if opening dates for migratory bird hunting in the State are not consistent for residents and non-residents. This paragraph does not apply to grantees that are tribal governments.

The regulations at 7 CFR part 1455 govern the VPA-HIP.

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## **Part I—Background and Program Authority**

### **A. Background**

The VPA-HIP provides an opportunity for State and tribal governments to apply for grants to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land under programs administered by State or tribal governments.

Only State and tribal governments are eligible for the VPA-HIP. Grants will be awarded through a competitive Request for Applications (RFA) process. In submitting applications for a grant under the program, a State or tribal government must describe the benefits that the State or tribal government intends to achieve by encouraging public access to private farm and ranch land for hunting and fishing and, to the maximum extent practicable, other recreational purposes, and the methods that will be used to achieve those benefits.

State and tribal governments may propose to use VPA-HIP grant funding to expand existing public access programs, create new public access programs, and/or provide incentives to improve habitat on enrolled public access program lands.

In approving applications and awarding grants under the program, priority will be given to States and tribal governments that propose to:

- Maximize participation by offering a public access program likely to meet with widespread acceptance among landowners;
- Ensure that land enrolled under the State or tribal government program has appropriate wildlife habitat;
- Strengthen wildlife habitat improvement efforts on land enrolled under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) by providing incentives to increase public hunting and other recreational access on that land;
- Use additional Federal, State, tribal government, or private resources in carrying out the program; and
- Make available to the public the location of land enrolled in the State or tribal government public access program.

Additional application evaluation criteria includes the scope of the program (project description), program benefits to be accrued (such as enhanced wildlife habitat, increased wildlife-based recreational opportunity, and improved connection of the public with the outdoors), program monitoring and accomplishment reporting to track performance, administrative and program delivery capabilities of the State or tribal government, including detailed work plans and budget, and the qualifications of those performing tasks.

To the extent that funds are available for this purpose, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) acting on behalf of Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) will award grants for applications found to be meritorious based on recommendations from an interagency review panel. There is no commitment by FSA or CCC to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

Award for individual VPA-HIP applications will be limited to grant periods lasting no more than three (3) years. Funding will be obligated to States or tribal governments with accepted applications and completed financial agreements and related documentation in the year of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) program fund apportionment.

Grants to any individual State or tribe will be no more than \$2 million per federal fiscal year and no less than \$75,000 per federal fiscal year. Actual disbursement to States of federal funds can occur in subsequent federal fiscal out-years within the grant period. States and tribal governments can expend received funds throughout and beyond the grant period provided that obligations for payment were incurred during the grant period.

Projects will be reviewed annually for progress to determine level of and continuation of funding. For projects in their third year, applications for renewals/continuation of funding will not be accepted. Grantees will be required to reapply with submission of a new application.

## **B. Authority**

The authority to make grants to State and tribal governments under the VPA-HIP is section 1240R of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, and the regulations at 7 CFR part 1455.

## **Part II—Timetables, Eligibility, and Application Format Instructions**

### **A. Timetables**

**Due Date:** VPA-HIP applications must be received by Grants.gov by 5:00 pm (Eastern time) on March 7, 2011.

**Late Submission:** VPA-HIP applications submitted after the due date will not be considered for funding.

## **B. Eligibility – Who may Submit an Application**

Only a State or tribal government may apply for a VPA-HIP grant. Any applications received by an individual or entity that is not a State or tribal government will not be considered.

A State or tribal government must include all proposed activity under a single application per RFA. If multiple applications are received from an applicant during a single RFA, only one application per State or tribal government will be approved for VPA-HIP funding per RFA solicitation. The applicant is the individual State or tribe; any application from any unit of the State or tribal government should be reviewed and prioritized at the State or tribal level before submission to FSA for consideration.

## **C. Incomplete Applications**

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. However, if time permits, incomplete applications may be returned and may be resubmitted.

## **D. Application and Budget Content Instructions**

1. Application Content Instructions. Each application must contain the following elements:
  - a) Title page, which includes:
    - (i) Program Name. Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program;
    - (ii) CFDA Number. 10.093;
    - (iii) Project Title. New or Existing State or Tribal government public access program name;
    - (iv) Submitted By. State or tribal government submitting application; and
    - (v) Date. Date the proposal was finalized by State or tribal government prior to submission to the USDA Farm Service Agency for consideration.
  - b) Table of contents;
  - c) Executive summary, one-page in length, which includes:
    - (i) Activities. Provide a summary of the application that briefly describes activities proposed to be funded under the grant; and

- (ii) Objectives, funding, performance, and other resources. Include objectives and tasks to be accomplished, the amount of funding requested, how the work will be performed, whether organizational staff, consultants or contractors will be used, and whether other resources will be used;
- (d) Eligibility certification that certifies both that the applicant is a State or tribal government (including units thereof) and that the individual submitting the application is acting in a representative capacity on behalf of the State or tribal government;
- (e) Application narrative that must include, but is not limited to, the following:
  - (i) Project Title. The title of the proposed project must be brief (not to exceed 75 characters) yet describe the essentials of the project.
  - (ii) Information sheet. A separate one-page information sheet listing each of the program evaluation criteria referenced in the application, followed by the page numbers of all relevant material and documentation contained in the application that address or support the criteria.
  - (iii) Objectives of the project. This section must include the following:
    - (A) A description of how the VPA-HIP funding will be used to encourage public access to private farm, ranch, and forest land for hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreational purposes;
    - (B) A description of the methods that will be used to achieve the provisions of paragraph (A) of this subparagraph;
    - (C) A description of how and to what extent the proposed program will meet with widespread acceptance among landowners, including any strategic marketing and communications efforts, such as Respected Access is Open Access or similar educational and outreach campaigns, to be used to mitigate landowner apprehension about making their land available for public access;
    - (D) A detailed description of how and to what extent the land enrolled will have appropriate wildlife habitat and how program funds may be used to improve those habitats;
    - (E) A detailed description of how and to what extent outreach and technical assistance will be made to participants in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), where CREP agreements are in place, to strengthen wildlife habitat on lands enrolled in CREP and to have such lands made available for public access;

- (F) A detailed description of how any additional Federal, State, tribal government, or private resources, if any, will be used to carry out State or tribal government public access program activities; and
  - (G) A detailed description of how the public will be made aware of the location of the land enrolled in the State and tribal government public access program.
- (iv) Work plan. Applications must discuss how VPA-HIP funds will be used to facilitate specific tasks associated with State or tribal government public access program delivery. The work plan should address landowner outreach; notification of hunters, fishermen and other recreational users of the availability of expanded opportunities; identification of additional staff and key personnel to be involved with administration of the grant, and the evaluation methods to be used to determine the success of public access program delivery, in general, and those specific tasks and overall objectives associated with the VPA-HIP grant. Work plan must include a budget providing a breakdown of the estimated costs associated with VPA-HIP activities and allocating these costs to each of the tasks to be undertaken. Additional funds from Federal, State, tribal government, or private resources, if any, as well as grant funds and resources provided in kind must be accounted for in the budget.
- (v) Performance evaluation criteria. Applications should discuss how the State or tribal government will measure and monitor accomplishments associated with VPA-HIP funds and meet the stated goals for the State or tribal program, including but not limited to landowner and recreationist participation, outreach, and cost-effectiveness.
- (vi) Other similar efforts. The applicant must describe its previous accomplishments and outcomes in public access activities, if any.
- (vii) Qualifications of personnel. Applicants must describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities of key personnel engaged in the delivery of the VPA-HIP that qualifies them to be able to provide sound, technical recommendations and other information to landowners making their land available for public access and improving wildlife habitat thereon and ability of the State or tribal government to perform tasks described in the application, and whether program delivery providers are to be full- or part-time employees or contract personnel.
2. Budget Content Instructions. Regarding detailed budget breakdown, use form SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs. All sections are required to be completed including:
- a) Section B regarding:

- (i) Personnel. Indicate the estimated costs of full or part time employees of the State or tribal government involved in public access program delivery. Actual identification of personnel involved in program delivery should be described in the application narrative.
- (ii) Fringe benefits. Indicate the rates/amounts in conformance with normal accounting procedures. Explain what costs are covered in this category and the basis of the rate computations.
- (iii) Travel. State the purpose of the trip and itemize the estimated travel costs to show the number of trips required, the destinations, the number of people traveling, the per diem rates, airfare, the cost of transportation, and any miscellaneous expenses for each trip. Calculations of other special transportation costs (such as charges for use of applicant-owned vehicles or vehicle rental costs) should also be shown. Provide detail on any specific item, which represents a significant portion of the requested funding.
- (iv) Equipment. Tangible, non-expendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. Purchase of equipment directly related to facilitating and managing public access to hunting and fishing opportunities such as fence and gate modifications, kiosks, ramps for those that are handicapped or disabled, and designated parking or boat launching areas is authorized. Such equipment helps control access and related traffic and use, protects and enhances appropriate fish and wildlife habitat, and maximizes landowner participation by alleviating many potential participating landowner issues, concerns, and apprehensions. Title to non-expendable personal property shall be vested with the Recipient or the Federal Government as determined in the award terms and conditions. Under no circumstances shall property title be vested in a sub-tier recipient.
- (v) Supplies. Show the costs of all supplies necessary for achieving the objectives of the project.
- (vi) Contractual. Show costs associated with external financial agreements such as with landowners participating in the state or tribal public access program, consultants, technical service providers, and others involved in program delivery, monitoring and evaluation.
- (vii) Construction. Costs of the installation of, but not limited to, gates, cattle guards, fencing, and parking areas.
- (viii) Other direct costs. Itemize the different types of costs not included elsewhere.
- (ix) Total Direct Charges. Totals for items (i) – (viii).

- (x) Indirect Charges (Overhead). Show the proposed rate, cost base, and proposed amount for indirect costs based on the cost principles applicable to the applicant's organization.
  - (xi) Amount proposed. Total items (ix) and (x); and
  - (x) Program Income. Gross income incidental to the accomplishment of the approved grant purposes and received by the grantee directly generated by a grant supported activity or earned only as a result of the grant agreement during the grant period. Three methods—deduction, addition, and cost sharing or matching—of accounting for program income are acceptable. However, if a method other than deduction is to be used, it must be identified in the grant agreement.
- (b) Section C regarding amounts of non-Federal resources, if any, that will be used on the program funded by the grant. If in-kind contributions are included, provide a brief explanation on a separate sheet.

### **Part III—Application Delivery/Submission Instructions and Deliverables**

#### **A. Preparing and Submitting an Application via Grants.gov**

All applications must be submitted online via the Grants.gov web site by the closing date and time in Part II above.

Please note that the electronic submission system is relatively complex for first-time users and involves several preliminary registration steps to be taken before the application can be submitted (go to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and click on the “Get Registered” link in the red Applicants section on the left side of the page).

It is virtually impossible to begin the process of electronic submission for the first time if you start just a few days before the due date.

If you have completed a prior application, you may already have completed the registration process. Please allow sufficient time for the application to be submitted electronically and allow time for possible computer delays.

An application received after the closing date and time will not be considered for award.

For registered applicants, to submit a grant application:

- Go to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) (applications will ONLY be accepted from this site). Information about submitting an application using Grants.gov can be found on the Grants.gov site with supplementary materials.
- Go to the “Apply for Grants” heading on the left side of page.

- Click on “Download a Grant Application Package.”
- Search for the application using CFDA number 10.093.

## **B. SF-424 Instructions**

All new and continuation/revision applications must contain the completed form SF-424 and project/budget narrative.

**Note:** The person who electronically submits form SF-424 must have the authority to bind the State or tribal government agency to the terms of the assistance award.

## **Part IV—Application Review**

### **A. General**

Evaluated applications will be ranked based on merit. Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process:

- Each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA and the regulations at 7 CFR part 1455; and
- Applications that meet these administrative requirements will be evaluated by an interagency review panel.

The interagency review panel will conduct a merit review based on the evaluation criteria. The views of the individual reviewers will be used by CCC to determine which applications will be recommended for funding. Final approval of applications recommended for award will be made by the FSA Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs (Deputy Administrator).

Interagency reviewers will be selected based upon knowledge, skills, training, and experience in relevant fields.

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

The evaluation criteria noted below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA.

1. Incomplete or non-responsive applications will not be evaluated. Applicants may revise their applications and re-submit them prior to the published deadline if there is sufficient time to do so.
2. Applications for grants for the VPA-HIP will be evaluated and scored using these criteria:

- (a) Benefits. The application will be evaluated to determine whether and to what extent the project's anticipated outcomes promote improvement of public access for hunting, fishing, and other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation and enhancement of wildlife habitat, and intended environmental benefits (0-15 points).
- (b) Project description and feasibility. The application will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates a reasonable approach to locating and making privately-held farm, ranch and forest land available for public access, notifying the public of the availability of expanded wildlife dependent recreational opportunity, and having sufficient resources and capability to complete the project in a timely manner (0-15 points).
- (c) Widespread acceptance and maximizing participation of landowners. The application will be evaluated based on the applicant's plan for encouraging the participation of owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land and making such lands available for public access, including outreach to address landowner issues, concerns and apprehensions and related efforts to encourage responsible behavior of those provided access (0-25 points).
- (d) Appropriate wildlife habitat. The applicant will be evaluated on demonstrated expertise in evaluating and assessing fish and wildlife habitat with respect to providing public hunting, fishing and other compatible recreational opportunities and establishing, maintaining, and/or enhancing appropriate habitat on program lands made accessible to the public (0-25 points).
- (e) Strengthening wildlife habitat for lands under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), where CREP agreements are in place. The application will be evaluated to determine level of outreach and incentives to increase public hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreational access on land enrolled under CREP. States and Tribes without CREP agreements will not be able to address CREP considerations directly but can describe outreach efforts to encourage participants in other USDA conservation programs to make their land available for public access and are eligible to apply for and receive grants based on other applicable evaluation criteria (0-20 points).
- (f) Additional private, Federal, State, or tribal government resources. While there are no matching requirements of States or tribal governments associated with VPA-HIP funding, resource commitment of partners is important to long-term success of State and tribal government public access programs. The extent to which the applicant has identified and established relationships with the partners necessary to achieve the project's goals will be evaluated. Applications that demonstrate additional resources will receive more points, all else being equal, than those that do not (0-25 points).

- (g) Making available the location of enrolled land. The application will be evaluated to determine how the project proposes to make available to the public the location of the land enrolled (0-25 points).
  - (h) Performance evaluation criteria. The application will be evaluated to determine whether the applicant has included outcome-based performance measures (0-10 points).
  - (i) Administrative capabilities. The application will be evaluated to determine whether the grant applicant has a track record of administering the project or, in the absence of a track record, the capacity to administer the project. Applicants that have demonstrated capable financial systems and audit controls, personnel and program administration performance measures, and clear rules of governance will receive more points than those not evidencing this capacity (0-10 points).
  - (j) Delivery. The application will be evaluated to determine whether the applicant has a track record in implementing public access or similar programs or, in the absence of an actual track record, the capacity to implement a public access program. The applicant's potential for delivering an effective public access program and the expected effects of that program will also be assessed (0-10 points).
  - (k) Work plan and budget. The work plan will be reviewed for detailed actions and an accompanying timetable for implementing the components of the application. Clear, logical, realistic, and efficient plans will result in a higher score. Budgets will be reviewed for completeness and whether and to what extent additional resources were committed by Federal, State, or tribal government, or private resources (0-10 points).
  - (l) Qualifications of those performing the tasks. The application will be reviewed to determine that key personnel, such as the State or tribal government public access program manager, fiscal officer and/or federal aid coordinator, collectively have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities with respect to hunting, fishing, and other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation on privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land, funds control, grants management, performance monitoring and evaluation, and other activities relevant to the success of the proposed public access program (0-10 points).
3. After all applications have been evaluated using the evaluation criteria and scored in accordance with the point allocation specified in the RFA, a list of all applications in ranked order, together with funding level recommendations, will be submitted to the Deputy Administrator, FSA.

### **C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**

During the interagency review process, care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect review or evaluation.

Names of an individual State or tribal governments submitting an application, application content, and interagency review evaluations will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the interagency reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

### **D. Access to Review Information**

Copies of an individual State or tribal government's reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be available to the applicant after the review process has been completed.

## **Part V—Grantee Responsibilities**

Before receiving grant funding, the grantee will be required to sign an agreement similar in form and substance to the form of agreement published within or as an appendix to the RFA. The agreement will require the grantee to commit to do all of the following:

- Take all practicable steps to develop continuing sources of financial support from other Federal, State, tribal government, or private resources;
- Make arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land enrolled in public access programs as a result of VPA-HIP; and
- Provide an accounting for the VPA-HIP funding received by the grantee under this subpart.

Grantees will be required to monitor funds or services as specified in the next paragraph of this section, and must agree to that monitoring before grant funds are awarded.

The grantee must certify that the grant funds and services will not be used for ineligible purposes. Specifically, grant funds and services may not be used to:

- Duplicate current services; however, grant funds may be used to expand the level of effort or extend services beyond what is currently being provided;
- Pay costs of preparing the application for funding under the VPA-HIP;
- Pay costs of the project incurred prior to the date of grant approval;
- Fund political activities;

- Pay any judgment or debt owed to the United States;
- Pay for the design, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility (including a processing facility);
- Purchase, rent or pay for the installation of fixed equipment, other than property identification signs, gates, cattle guards, fence, kiosks, boat ramps, or parking areas directly associated with public access designed to inform and manage such public access, maintain appropriate wildlife habitat, enhance quality of the outdoor experience and mitigate adverse environmental impact;
- Pay for the repair of privately owned vehicles; or
- Pay for research and development not directly related to quantifying the performance of VPA-HIP and lands enrolled with funding from the VPA-HIP.

Grantees that are States will have the grant amount reduced by 25 percent if opening dates for migratory bird hunting in the State are not consistent for residents and non-residents. This paragraph does not apply to grantees that are tribal governments.

Failure of the grantee to execute a grant agreement in a timely fashion, as determined by the CCC, will be construed to be a withdrawal from the VPA-HIP.

## **Part VI—Award Administration and Information**

### **A. Award Administration Information**

#### **1. General**

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, FSA will make grants to those responsible eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA.

The effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which a project is approved for support and funds are available for such purpose. However, FSA's intention is to award grants as soon as possible. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period.

All funds granted under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations at 7 CFR part 1455, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's regulations at 7 CFR parts 3015 and 3019, and the provisions of 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-5.

Award recipients are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the agreement and supported activities to assure compliance with applicable Federal requirements, and that performance goals are being achieved. Recipient monitoring must cover each program, function or activity.

Upon notification of selection, grantees will be notified of documentation required for receipt of award.

## **2. Reporting Requirements for Grantees**

Grantees must provide the following to FSA:

- 1) A “Financial Status Report” listing expenditures according to agreed upon budget categories as specified in the grant document.
- 2) Annual performance reports that compare accomplishments to the objectives stated in the application, and that must also:
  - a) Identify all tasks completed to date and provide documentation supporting the reported results;
  - b) If the original schedule provided in the work plan is not being met, discuss the problems or delays that may affect completion of the project;
  - c) List objectives for the next reporting period; and
  - d) Discuss compliance with any special conditions on the use of award funds. Reports are due as provided in Section B of this Part, below.
- 3) Final project performance reports, inclusive of supporting documentation. The final performance report is due within 90 days of the completion of the project.
- 4) All reports submitted to the Agency will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law.

## **3. Changes in Project Plans**

1. The permissible changes by the grantee in the approved project grant shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to FSA for a final determination.
2. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the FSA prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall

requests for such changes be approved if they are outside the scope of the original approved project.

3. Changes in project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be forwarded by the grantee to FSA.
4. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the FSA prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the grant.
5. Changes in Project Period: Project periods are for three years. However, the project period may be extended by FSA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as FSA determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the grantee and approval in writing by the FSA, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the grant.
6. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by FSA prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

**B. Reports**

The following reports will be required from all award recipients:

<b>Report</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (Quarterly)	45 calendar days after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 15;</li> <li>• February 15;</li> <li>• May 15; and</li> <li>• August 15.</li> </ul>
Performance Reports	90 calendar days after: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The end of each Federal fiscal year or December 31; and</li> <li>• Completion date</li> </ul>
Form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (Final)	90 calendar days after completion date.

1. Cash Management and Financial Reporting Requirements

- a) Form SF-425 is required quarterly and is due 45 days after the end of each fiscal quarter until the final Federal Financial Report is submitted. Instructions for submitting SF-425 can be found at [www.forms.gov](http://www.forms.gov).

Within 45 calendar days after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter, the SF-425 must be submitted by mail to FSA at the address in Part VIII.

If after 45 calendar days, recipient has not submitted a report, the account will be placed in a manual review status. Funds may be withheld for accounts with delinquent reports.

Report unused grant funds and interest earned using Section 12 of the SF-425.

- b) The grantee will submit a final SF-425 no later than 90 calendar days after the grant agreement completion date and promptly return any unobligated federal cash advances.
- c) Revision to the final SF-425 will be considered only when the revision results in a balance due to the Government, the grantee must submit a revised final SF-425 and refund the excess payment whenever the overcharge is discovered, no matter how long the lapse of time since the original due date of the report.

2. Performance Reports

Annually and upon grant completion, recipients of awards under this program are responsible for managing and monitoring the project, program, sub-award, function, or activity supported by the award. Performance reports must generally contain brief information that compares accomplishments to the objectives stated in the application, and that also:

- a) Document the number of public access viewing days made available by the grant funds;
- b) Identify all tasks completed to date of report and provide documentation supporting the reported results;
- c) If the original schedule provided in the work plan is not being met, the report must discuss the problems or delays that may affect completion of the project;
- d) List objectives for the next reporting period; and
- e) Discuss compliance with any special conditions on the use of award funds.

All reports submitted to FSA and CCC will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law.

## **Part VII—General Provisions**

### **A. Cost Principles, Audit, and Administrative Requirements**

The grant recipient is subject to the following Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars and regulations, which are incorporated herein by reference. Copies of these Circulars can be obtained from the Internet at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/index.html>.

1. OMB Circular A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments;
2. OMB Circular A-102, Grants and Cooperative Agreements With State and Local Governments; and
3. OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations.

### **B. Method of Payment**

The grant will be disbursed by the FSA Financing and Cash Operations Office in Alexandria, Virginia, using electronic funds transfer to the grant recipient's bank account. The grant recipient must complete form SF-3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form, and return the form to FSA before disbursement can be made.

### **C. Additional Regulations**

In addition to the regulations governing VPA-HIP at 7 CFR part 1455, this award is also subject to the following additional regulations, as applicable:

1. 7 CFR part 3015, Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations;
2. 7 CFR part 3016, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments;
3. 7 CFR part 3017, Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants);
4. 7 CFR part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying;
5. 7 CFR part 3019, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-profit Organizations; and
6. 7 CFR part 3052, Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-profit Organizations.

## **D. Additional General Terms and Conditions**

### Advance

Grantees must use the request for advance form, which will be provided by CCC, to request advances.

### Appeals

Appeals will be handled according to regulations at 7 CFR parts 11 and 780.

### Audit

Grantees must comply with the audit requirements of 7 CFR part 3052. The audit requirements apply to the years in which grant funds are received and years in which work is accomplished using grant funds.

### Availability of USDA Information

Section 2004 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 and Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 described the type of information that can be shared by USDA with State and tribal governments. USDA is prohibited from disclosing information about an agricultural operation, its land, or its farming or conservation practices and any geospatial information. Information may be released to any person or agency that is working in cooperation with USDA to provide financial or technical assistance to a producer or to respond to a disease or pest threat. Payment information, aggregated or statistical data, and information that a producer consents to release may be disclosed. However, producer consent to disclose information cannot be a pre-requisite for participation in a USDA program. FSA will cooperate with State and tribal governments as authorized in order to facilitate efficient and effective delivery of VPA-HIP.

### Civil Rights

CCC prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. The VPA-HIP will also be administered in accordance with all other applicable civil rights law.

### Close-out Procedure

Upon submittal of the final SF-425 to FSA, close-out procedures will be initiated for the agreement. Each agreement is a separate action and will be closed out in accordance with the applicable general provisions.

### Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the grant provide otherwise, the grantee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of grant funds.

### Environmental Review

The purpose of the environmental review process for VPA-HIP is to evaluate any potential environmental impacts of a new or expanded public access program provided by the State or tribal government.

After an application has been selected and before the balance of grant funds are made available, the State or tribal government applying for VPA-HIP funds must either:

- i) submit to FSA a Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that has already been completed which addresses the current public access program. Consistent with the regulations at 40 CFR § 1506.3 after thorough review of the submitted National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document, FSA will determine if it complies with the provisions of the NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), and FSA’s environmental quality regulations for compliance with NEPA (7 CFR part 799) and Agency shall adopt the documentation as such.
- ii) prepare a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) in a manner consistent with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), and FSA regulations for compliance with NEPA (7 CFR part 799). Consistent with the regulations at 40 § CFR 1501.4 ( c ), the PEA will be used to determine if the receipt of Federal funds will constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) needs to be prepared.

**NOTE:** In an effort to help Federal Agencies ensure the integrity of their environmental reviews, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released final guidance on "Establishing, Applying and Revising Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA]" and delivered the Federal Register notice on November 23, 2010. This new guidance states that, “*A federal agency cannot rely on another agency’s categorical exclusion to support a decision not to prepare an EA or an EIS for its own actions.*” Because revised guidance from CEQ conflicts with the policy found in FSA’s Handbook on Environmental Quality Programs, 1 –EQ, Revision 2 (issued April 16, 2009), CEQ confirmed that all VPA-

HIP applicants must comply with NEPA by either submitting an EA that covers the current public access program OR complete a new PEA.

#### Exceptions

CCC may, in individual cases, make an exception to any requirement or provision of the regulations at 7 CFR part 1455 provided that any such exception is not inconsistent with any applicable law or opinion of the Comptroller General, and provided further, that CCC determines that the application of the requirement or provision would adversely affect the Federal Government's interest.

#### Fiscal Integrity

The recipient will notify FSA of any significant problems relating to the administrative or financial aspects of the award, such as misappropriation of Federal funds.

#### Inspection

Grantees must permit periodic inspection of the program operations by a CCC representative, as determined by CCC.

#### Modification Authority; Change in Scope or Objectives

The Grant Agreement may be modified in writing by mutual consent of FSA and the Grantee. However, the Grantee must obtain prior approval from FSA for any change to the scope or objectives of the approved project. Failure to obtain prior approval of changes to the scope of work or budget may result in suspension, termination, or recovery of grant funds.

#### Performance Evaluation

CCC will incorporate performance criteria in grant award documentation and will annually evaluate the progress and performance of grant awardees.

#### Program Income

Any program income will be deducted from total allowable costs to determine the net allowable costs before calculating the Government's share of reimbursable costs, as provided in 43 CFR 12.65(g)(1) (for A-102 recipients) or 43 CFR 12.924(b)(3) (for A-110 recipients).

### Publication Requirements

Publishing project accomplishments or any portion, thereof, are subject to prior review.

Appropriate credits to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, must be in any formally published article(s) providing FSA does not otherwise feel it appropriate to issue a disclaimer.

### Suspend, Terminate, or Require Refund

CCC may elect to suspend or terminate a grant in whole or in part, or funding of a particular work plan activity, and require refund of part or all of the grant, with interest, where CCC has determined:

1. That the grantee or sub-recipient of grant funds has demonstrated insufficient progress in complying with the terms of the grant agreement;
2. The opening dates for migratory bird hunting in a State have been changed so as to be not consistent for residents and non-residents during the term of the grant;
3. There is reasonable evidence that shows joint funding has not been or will not be forthcoming on a timely basis; or
4. Such other cause as CCC identifies in writing to the grantee based on reasonable evidence (including but not limited to the use of Federal grant funds for ineligible purposes).

## **Part VIII—Supplemental Information**

### **A. Contacts**

#### **For Further Information Contact –**

For questions specific to VPA-HIP's policy provisions, please:

- Email [david.hoge@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:david.hoge@wdc.usda.gov)
- and in the Subject Line type: VPA-HIP;
- Telephone (202) 720-7674; or
- Mail to:

David A. Hoge  
USDA/FSA/DAFP/CEPD/STOP 0513  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0513.

For questions specific to VPA-HIP's financial and accounting provisions including email, fax, and/or address for submitting SF-425, please:

- Email [Lindsay.Teeple@kcc.usda.gov](mailto:Lindsay.Teeple@kcc.usda.gov);
- Telephone (816) 926-1443;
- Fax (816) 926-5940; or
- For regular mail (USPS), mail to:

USDA – Farm Service Agency  
Beacon Facility - Mail Stop 8598  
P.O. Box 419205  
Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

- For express mail (FedEx or UPS):  
USDA – Farm Service Agency  
Beacon Facility - Mail Stop 8598  
9240 Troost Avenue  
Kansas City, MO 64131-3055

- For sending interest and refund checks with regular mail (USPS), mail to:

USDA – Farm Service Agency  
Beacon Facility - Mail Stop 8212  
P.O. Box 419205  
Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

- For sending interest and refund checks using express mail (FedEx or UPS):

USDA – Farm Service Agency  
Beacon Facility - Mail Stop 8212  
9240 Troost Avenue  
Kansas City, MO 64131-3055

For questions related to Grants.gov, please:

- Email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) or
- Telephone at (800) 518-4726.

## B. Reference Links

For access to grants.gov application web site: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

For converting documents to PDF: <http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>

For access to Grants.gov application guide:  
<http://www.grants.gov/assets/ApplicantUserGuide.pdf>

For access to FSA's web site: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

For further information about VPA-HIP: [www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation)

To receive e-mail notifications for new VPA-HIP announcements, to:  
<http://www.grants.gov/search/subscribeAdvanced.do>

## C. Definitions

In addition to the definitions for the VPA-HIP under the regulations at 7 CFR part 1455, these definitions also apply:

Indian Tribe or national tribal organization is any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) (43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

State agency is any State agency, department, board, commission, or other government entity which is responsible for the management of fish and/or wildlife resources within a State.

State or State government is any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Virginia Islands, Guam, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands or any agency or instrumentality of a State exclusive of local governments.

*Any inconsistency between the original printed document and the disk or electronic document shall be resolved by giving precedence to the printed document.*

-- END OF PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT--