



2027 Clean Water Indiana Competitive Grants Guidance

Executive Summary

The Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Grant Program (IC 14-32-8-5) utilizes the Clean Water Indiana Fund to Support Indiana conservation groups (nonprofits or units or subdivisions of government), in cooperation with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, in efforts to address the priority concerns of the State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB) business plan. The SSCB is accepting competitive proposals for targeted projects up to three years in length. The Clean Water Indiana fund is administered by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) under the direction of the SSCB (IC 14-32-8-6).

Application Deadline

September 3, 2026, by 12p.m. EST

Late applications will not be accepted.

Project Dates

All 2027 Clean Water Indiana Grant projects shall take no longer than three full years to complete. Projects will start after a fully executed contract between the lead applicant, and the Indiana State Department of Agriculture is signed. All funds must be spent by December 31, 2029.

Application Process

Notification of Intent (NoI)

- All lead applicants must submit a notification of intent to apply to cleanwaterindiana@isda.in.gov
- The NoI should include the lead applicants' name, lead staff contact and should be signed and dated by the lead SWCD board or authority for the lead organization.
- A notification of intent may be received up to the submission deadline of September 3, 2026. If notification of intent is not received by the application deadline of September 3 at 12pm the application will be disqualified.
- The notification of intent format may be scanned or submitted as a picture.

Application Submission

- All applications must be submitted online through the Indiana Grant Management System (GMS).
- A GMS account is required. To request an account for CWI grant access, visit: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/898f6ffc7f794f80abda15c5b773ba93>

Eligibility and Requirements

- Any SWCD or natural resources related conservation groups in the State of Indiana may apply.
- One application is permitted per project and must be submitted by a lead applicant.
- Lead applicants must be up to date on all past awarded CWI grant reporting.
- Lead applicants may be lead on up to two active CWI contracts as of January 31st, 2027. The SSCB has the authority to approve special circumstances.
- Applicants are not limited to the number of applications they can be partners on.
- All eligible applications will be scored and ranked by the grants committee for CWI funding consideration.
- Funding recommendations from the SSCB CWI Grants Committee will be presented to the full State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB) at the October 20, 2026, meeting.
- Applicants who are not a local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) must partner with an SWCD.
- Applicants should request only the amount of funding needed for the project, rounded to the nearest whole dollar.
- Lead applicants must be registered vendors with the State of Indiana prior to the October 20, 2026, SSCB board meeting to be eligible for funding. For assistance, contact: cleanwaterindiana@isda.in.gov.

- Projects relating to urban practices that will reduce sediment and nutrient are eligible.
- Conservation practices and laboratory analysis of soil and water that are components of research projects are eligible.
- Equipment purchases to own and make available to landowners is allowable.
- Funding for river clean ups should be justified as part of a larger system of efforts.
- Multi-state projects are welcome, but CWI funds can only be used for work completed in Indiana.

Submission Certification

- By applying, the lead applicant certifies that all partners have agreed to the terms outlined in the application.
- The designated signatory for the lead applicant must have prior approval from their board, manager, or other appropriate authority.
- If a PDF copy of your submitted application is needed, request one at:
<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/2a1a2557c61b4e688b028032c37697a4>

AI tools may be used for tasks such as proofreading, organizing ideas, or gathering general information. AI must not replace subject-matter expertise or the strategic decision-making required to prepare a competitive grant proposal. Heavy reliance on AI-generated content could result in a reduced score.

Attachments

- No more than three attachments, with a total maximum of six pages, may be uploaded with the application. Anything over six pages will not be included in the grant committee’s review. Only the first six pages will be available.
- Applicants must provide a letter of commitment signed by each board/partners involved outlining financial or in-kind commitment and roles. The lead applicant does not need a letter of commitment. The letters of commitment documents will not count against the six-page maximum.
- To ensure accuracy and credibility of proposed budgets, it is highly encouraged that applicants submit bid quotes on large purchases as part of their grant application. Bid quotes will not count towards the attachment pages allowance. Applicants may also submit the bids in the application.

Examples of attachments: Cost share outreach and forms, job descriptions, justification of grant completion of active CWI grants, map of grant focus area.

Proposal Logistics

This grant opportunity is competitive. Proposals can be for any amount that would accomplish the project described. The grant proposal must document how the grant funds will address at least two of the State priority resource concerns referenced in the State Soil Conservation Board's (SSCB's) 2025-2027 Business Plan. Proposals that outline how CWI funds will leverage additional funding from other sources as well as engage other partners are strongly encouraged. CWI project proposals that will be in tandem with ongoing projects are encouraged. Example: CWI funds might be used to add technical assistance to help implement sediment and nutrient reduction practices cost-shared through a LARE or 319 project. The SSCB does not intend to partially fund applications. Partial awards will be only in special circumstances.

A lead district must be selected to serve as the grantee to receive and administer the grant. However, grant funds can be shared between districts through cooperative agreements locally.

Funding Restrictions

Proposals must fall within the funding context allowed under the Clean Water Indiana Law (IC 14-32-8). The law prohibits funds from being used for food, food related paper products, office equipment or district self-promotional materials (i.e. mugs, t-shirts, pens, etc.)

CWI grant dollars shall not be utilized to pay directly for employee benefits, such as retirement, health insurance, paid time off, taxes, etc.

Ineligible projects: Research equipment, easements, septic systems, and recycling and collections

Cost-sharing is also not allowed on specific practices that an entity is required to install to comply with a state or local rule or ordinance. Example: CWI funds cannot be used to meet MS4 requirements unless the proposed use of funds goes above and beyond the requirement outlined in the MS4 permit's Storm Water Quality Management Plan.

Cost share programs for the modification or purchasing equipment to enhance assets to a landowner are not allowable for a grant request.

Funding Staff

CWI competitive grant dollars shall not be utilized to pay directly for employee benefits, such as retirement, health insurance, paid time off, taxes, etc. This only pertains to CWI competitive grant dollars and not to the \$10,000 CWI statutory match that SWCD's are eligible. If CWI competitive grant dollars are being utilized to fund a staff position, once the funds are disbursed to a staff person, they may utilize their stipend/wages as they see fit.

All applications that will be funding staff must have a job description attached to be eligible for ranking and review.

Salary justification is required for any grant-funded staff position to ensure the requested compensation is appropriate and aligned with project responsibilities. The salary justification should be tied to the project responsibilities, justify the pay rate and hours needed, and emphasize how the role is crucial to the project outcomes.

The grant may ask for no more than 10% of the total grant funds for administrative support of the grant. Administrative support would include staff time implementing the grant. A county government employee should not receive the 10% support pay unless they have a salary ordinance and benefits policy with their county, please refer to Indiana State Board of Accounts and/or the county auditor for questions and concerns.

Partnerships

Each application must:

- Clearly state what each partner will be contributing to the proposed project (i.e. outreach, professional assistance, estimated funds, etc.
- Identify partners with a point of contact for the project, their contact information, and an explanation of any anticipated cash or in-kind match from the partner.

Conservation Practices

Conservation planning and practices and structural measures shall follow NRCS Field Office Technical Guide. If practices installed are not applicable, please work with your DSS and RS. New technologies not currently in the technical guide may be implemented if reviewed and concurred in by a technical representative of the Conservation Implementation Teams (CIT) or their designer.

Pollinator plantings must be free of species that are noxious, invasive, and/or all amaranth. To verify that seed mixes are free of these species, a district MUST request the seed lab card from the distributor.

The maximum cost share on all conservation practices is 75% of the total final cost of the practice, with 25% of the cost being the responsibility of the landowner.

Cover crop cost share programs must be for new acres; acres that have not had cover crops on them in the past 3 years.

- Cover crop cost share for a Single to double mix species rate is eligible up to \$30/ac.
- Cover crop cost share for a multi-species cover crop mix (3+ species) rate is eligible up to \$40/ac.

Any CWI funded applications that have cost share funds for livestock alternative watering systems, MUST fence out the existing watering sources that have a natural resource concern.

If applying for cost share, please describe the process you will implement to select grant recipients. Priority will be given to projects who demonstrate a strategic process for managing cost share dollars and prioritizing first-time users and new acreage.

Priority will be given to practices that are part of an on-the-ground systems approach.

Cost share practices must have a signed application on file with the grantee during the grant project timeline before the practice is installed and funds are paid to the landowner.

The cost share program must have an advertised enrollment period during the grant timeline to receive applications. A cost share program must not automatically fund applicants from a wait list.

ISDA Resource Specialists (RS) are to review and sign off on all cost share applications. The RS reserves the decision to designate a proxy to sign off for them.

All cost share applications must use the ISDA approved cost share application. Grantees can add additional information to customize their projects but must not remove any of the form's items.

Staff, board of supervisors, and any other entity that has a relationship with grantee and applies for cost share must submit a Conflict-of-Interest form to the State Board of Accounts and refrain any voting or comments for decisions.

All cost share payments must be made after verification and work has been completed. A grantee may not pay any funds up front.

Match Requirements

A 50 percent cash and/or in-kind match is required. Match contributions can be federal, state, and/or local sources including such things as landowner costs, staff time, supervisor time, equipment use, purchase, rental, etc.

Proposals that request funds for staffing require 25% cash or in-kind match for the staffing component. *Example: District A submits a \$10,000 for solely a staff position. District A's proposal requires a match of \$2,500. District B submits a \$10,000 proposal that includes \$5,000 for staff and \$5,000 for cost share. Proposal B requires a \$3,750 match.*

Each grantee must track in-kind/ cash match for all partners and be able to provide documentation. Grantee's may not count match that is already being counted in another grant.

Grant proposals must use the match standards outlined below to develop their project budget.

All state employee time and any staff paid by CWI grant funds may not be counted as match.

All match contributions must be new, distinct, and directly associated with the specific project being proposed. Match that has already been committed to or used for a separate CWI-funded project cannot be reused or double-counted.

The match is applicable only if directly related to the purpose of the proposed project. The grants committee may give preference to cash match rather than in kind during the scoring process.

All match must have occurred during the contract timeline.

All in-kind must be reported in full for each grant update. In-kind cannot be accounted for in a later report.

Out-of-state funds and resources may be used as match.

Match Rate Table

Role	Allowable Rate
ICP Staff / SWCD Supervisors (including associates)	\$35/hour
Landowner Time	\$35/hour
Professional Services	\$35/hour
Student / Intern / Volunteer	\$15/hour
Mileage Reimbursement (State of Indiana)	\$0.49 per mile

*ICP match rates were calculated from publicly available data in Gateway and public transparency portals.

Any landowner contribution toward the remaining portion of cost share practices should be counted as cash match.

In general, time spent working on the project should be considered in-kind match, whereas money should be considered cash match.

Match is not to be counted for anyone under 18, unless signed approval by a guardian.

Leveraging Funds

Applicants are encouraged to partner with traditional and non-traditional organizations/agencies at the local, state, and federal level to leverage additional funds for their project/initiative. Projects which add to the percent cost-share/incentive rate offered through another program are prohibited. Example: A project where CWI funds are used for cost share and 319 funds for technical assistance are acceptable. A project where CWI and 319 funds are both used to give producers a larger cost share amount is prohibited.

All applicants are encouraged to work with county officials or other organizations to retain staff hired through staffing grants at the completion of any CWI grant funding. We recommend having discussions with your county boards or other potential funding sources while applying for the grant to make them aware of potential new employees and retention options once grant has ended.

CWI Promotion

All CWI funded programs will be required to have a CWI logo for equipment, handouts, and presentations.

CWI logos may be found on:

<https://ingov.sharepoint.com/sites/ISDASWCDResources/SitePages/Clean-Water-Indiana-Resources.aspx> or by reaching out to cleanwaterindiana@isda.in.gov .

Process of Payments

All funded applicants are required to register as a bidder with the State of Indiana. Instructions for registration can be obtained from the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). Once the proposal is approved by the SSCB, ISDA will issue an electronic contract to the grantee.

Grantees must return their electronically signed contract to ISDA within 30 days of receipt to receive their funds. Up to 50 percent of grant funding may be disbursed at the beginning of the grant. All other payments, after 50% is spent, will be made as reimbursement for 45 days in arrears upon receipt of an updated report and claim that is submitted to GMS. Please note that reimbursement claims require updated financial reporting, and proof of expenses showing that requested funds have been paid by the lead entity.

10% of the total grant funds will be withheld until the final report is completed.

All funds must be spent at the end of the grant. Applicants need to make sure all cost share, or incentive payments are made to the landowner by the December 31 deadline.

Reporting Requirements

Financial and project status reports will be required for the duration of the grant, and a cumulative final report will be due at the end of the grant. The grant updating form will be provided on GMS.

The report must be completed semi-annually (every 6 months) and summarize the outcomes and achievements of the project for the 6 months. The total match and in-kind for each report are cumulative. Reports may be submitted 30 days prior to the deadline.

Tracking of conservation practice implementation (following FOTG standards) must be reported through Conservation Link: conservation project tracking system (CPT) spreadsheet shall be completed by the 1st Friday of the quarter.

The final report of the grant is a cumulative report; 10% of the total grant funds will be withheld in the state account before submitting the final report.

All in-kind must be reported in full for each grant update. In-kind cannot be accounted for in a later report.

Photo(s) required for grant final report and saved to ISDA Conservation Link or emailed to ISDA staff.

Reporting Deadlines

Grant updates due in GMS annually: January 31st, July 31st

*Reports may be submitted 30 days prior to the 31st deadline.

Conservation Project Tracking in Conservation Link: 1st Friday of January, April, July, and October

Grantees are expected to meet all deadlines. If reporting deadlines are not met on the due date:

- For one deadline missed: a grant audit review is conducted, and no claims can be made until the review is complete
- For two or more missing deadlines: the grant audit review is conducted, no claims can be made until the review is complete, a full audit review report to the State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB) will be provided, and the grantee must appear in person at a designated SSCB meeting.
- If special circumstances prevent a deadline being met, communication before the deadline must be made by writing to the ISDA District Support Specialist or Grants and Training Coordinator.

Grant Reviews

ISDA and the LG Grant Services team routinely visit its grantees to ensure projects and grants are proceeding as intended and offer guidance and support if needed. Each year, ISDA will review grants that have a cost share and/or staffing. Reviews can include open grants and grants that have been completed in the last three years. Upon completion of a review, ISDA will send a summary of results to all involved in the project and their board(s).

If found during review, failure to make progress on the project or report progress as specified in the grant contract no grant payment will occur until the grantee corrects any grant failures upon approval of ISDA and LG Grant Services. Grant Reviews must take place or be scheduled within 90 days of being contacted by ISDA through email notification, or the lead applicant will be ineligible for future grants for two years. Exceptions may be made (e.g. FMLA).

Modifications

Modifications should not be made lightly. These grants were awarded based upon merit. Largely changing the program of a grant could be seen as favoring some applicants over others. No modifications may be made in the first year of the grant. Other applicants may have submitted similar applications to the proposed modification but were not funded.

No modification requests will be accepted following the last SSCB meeting in the final year of the grant term.

All modifications will be considered for review. Please contact the DSS team or CWI Program Director before submitting a modification.

Questions

For assistance for SWCDs please contact your ISDA District Support Specialist (DSS):

Region	Name	Email / Phone
North	Sandra Hoffarth	shoffarth@isda.in.gov (317) 460-0428
Central	Geneva Tyler	gtyler@isda.in.gov (317) 518-4036
South	Laura Fribley	lfribley@isda.in.gov (812) 595-5641
West	Nathan Stoelting	nstoelting@isda.in.gov (812) 320-9873
East	Kylie Wheeler	kywheeler@isda.in.gov (765) 480-1713

Assistance for conservation partners please contact the Clean Water Indiana Program Director:

Name	Email	Phone
Tara Wesseler-Henry	twesseler@isda.in.gov	(765) 745-0306

State Soil Conservation Board meeting information: <https://www.in.gov/isda/boards/state-soil-conservation-board/>