



April 24, 2024

Request for Proposals

I. Project Description:

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley seeks assistance enrolling farmers and landowners in Augusta, Rockingham, Page, Shenandoah, Warren, and Frederick counties into a new market opportunity that pays for the environmental outcomes achieved through qualifying agricultural practices. Farmers who are implementing the following practices for the *first time* on a given plot of farmland may be eligible to participate:

Cover Crops

Manure Injection

Reduced Tillage

Prescribed/Rotational Grazing

Cropland Grazing

Riparian Forest Buffers

Conversion of Cropland to Pasture

Liquid Manure Storage

Cover and Flare

Dry Stacking Manure Storage

Feed Management and Additives

The ideal applicant will have in-depth knowledge of common row crop and livestock production practices in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia as well as connections and contacts with members of the farming community and agricultural industry in the Shenandoah Valley. The contractor will work with Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley's Director of Conservation to recruit farmers, create initial practice designs, enroll participants and practices into the online Ecosystem Services Market Consortium portal, and guide participants through practice implementation serving as a liaison between the farmer and market administrators.

The upcoming round of enrollment will begin in the fall of 2024 and end in January 2025. Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley expects to enroll 15 farmers or landowners into the market in this enrollment period.

II. Project Context:

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley (Alliance) is a regional nonprofit conservation organization that works to ensure the Shenandoah Valley is sustained by farms and forests, clean streams and rivers, and thriving communities. The Alliance partners with numerous other organizations in our region to incentivize citizens to take conservation action on their land.

In 2022, the USDA announced their Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities (CSC) which seek to build and expand market opportunities for American commodities produced using climate-smart practices. CSC defines a climate-smart commodity as an agricultural commodity that is produced using farming, ranching, or forestry practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon in soils.

The Alliance is a partner in a Virginia-based CSC project that aims to combine emerging carbon market opportunities with ongoing water-quality improvement efforts to compensate farmers for sequestering carbon in soils and reducing nutrient and sediment loading into local watersheds. Other partners involved in this partnership include Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and Stroud Water Research Center.

III. Services and scope of work:

June 2024 - ongoing: Participate with the Director of Conservation in weekly coordination meetings of the CSC partnership to:

- Develop an in-depth understanding of the CSC market opportunity, eligible farming practices, and payment structure.
- Provide relevant input to the partnership to continually improve market access and function for Valley farmers.

June 2024 - July 2024: Work with the Director of Conservation to create an outreach plan to engage Valley farmers and landowners.

July 2024 - December 2025: Lead outreach and engagement efforts:

- Gain access to Ecosystem Services Market Consortium portal.
- Recruit farmers and landowners for enrollment into the market.
- Assist farmers with securing required FSA documentation.

November 2024 - April 2025: Work with Director of Conservation to enroll participants in market:

- Assist in preliminary practice design.
- Collect necessary historical production data.
- Assist with data input into Ecosystem Service Market Consortium online portal.
- Help to coordinate on-farm soil sampling.
- Guide farmers as needed throughout practice implementation.

IV. Contract Duration:

Contract start date: June 1, 2024

Contract end date: May 31, 2025

This contract will be renewable on a yearly basis until May 20, 2028, with the potential for adjustments as the market matures and evolves.

V. Compensation:

Total compensation for the contract will be up to \$62,000 per year. Compensation for the scope of work will range from \$30,000 - \$40,000 per year, with additional performance payments based on the number of farmers/farms enrolled, and travel expenses will be reimbursable up to \$6,000 per year.

VI. Necessary qualifications, knowledge, and abilities:

1. Familiarity with common agricultural practices in the Shenandoah Valley.
2. Knowledge of common agricultural conservation practices in the Shenandoah Valley.
3. Ability to network with farmers, landowners, and/or agribusinesses in the Shenandoah Valley.
4. Understanding of state and federal cost share programs for agricultural best practices.

5. Ability to create basic (non-engineered) designs for climate-smart agricultural practices.
6. Ability to travel to farms in the Shenandoah Valley using your own vehicle to meet with producers and landowners, discuss market opportunities, and collect production data and producer information.
7. Agricultural biosecurity training and equipment to maintain on-farm biosecurity.
8. Insurance to cover all activities related to fulfilling this contract.
9. Ability to comply with Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (Farm Bill) of 2008 regarding the disclosure of confidential producer information.
10. Ability to engage in weekly coordination meetings over Microsoft Teams and frequent communications via email and phone.

VIII. Proposals

Please provide clear and concise responses to the following:

1. Description of the applicant including association with the agriculture industry and resumes or CVs. If multiple staff will work on the project, please specify which staff will be responsible for each deliverable.
2. Description of previous experience engaging farmers and designing, implementing, and/or incentivizing adoption of agricultural best practices.
3. Experience fulfilling contracts and/or coordinating with partners to deliver agriculture or conservation programs.
4. Names and contact information for up to three references.
5. Description of insurance coverages.
6. The estimated cost of contract execution, including hourly rates and hours.

Submit proposals by 6PM EST on May 15, 2024, to Kevin Tate at ktate@shenandoahalliance.org.

IX. Anti-Discrimination

All businesses and individuals will be afforded the full opportunity to submit qualifications and will not be discriminated against on any grounds in consideration for award. This position requires a variety of competencies and knowledge. If you think you will be a good fit, we encourage you to submit a proposal even if you don't meet 100% of the qualifications.

Submit any questions about your proposal or the project to:

Kevin Tate
Director of Conservation
Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
ktate@shenandoahalliance.org
540.383.3417