



NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FRIENDS PROGRAM

2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar: **Thursday, May 14, 2020 at 3 PM ET** ([Register here](#))

Full Proposal Due Date: **Tuesday, June 30, 2020 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), along with its partners, recognizes the important role refuge Friends organizations play in building critical community support for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). As such, NFWF is requesting proposals for projects that help organizations to be effective co-stewards of the nation's important natural resources within the Refuge System. The Refuge System's Friends program (Friends program) provides competitive grants of \$1,500 to \$15,000 to *creative and innovative* proposals that seek to increase the effectiveness of Friends organizations assisting the Refuge System nationwide.

The Friends program will award up to \$132,000 in grants in 2020: up to \$81,000 for nonprofit capacity building grants, project specific grants, and peer-to-peer coaching grants, and up to \$51,000 for special initiative grants. Funding for the Friends program is provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The Friends program is a nationwide program focused on national wildlife refuges.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The main goal of the grant program is to foster active, vibrant, and effective Friends partnerships through four distinct proposal categories. Competitive proposals will address one of the following priorities.

- 1. Nonprofit Capacity Building Grants** – Funds will be provided to assist newly established and existing refuge Friends organizations to build their capacity. These funds may include formative and/or initial operational support. For example, funds may be requested for such things as membership drives, logo design, or consultant fees for website development. Funds for established refuge Friends organizations may include activities that strengthen an organization's ability to fully achieve its mission and sustain itself over time. For example, funds may be requested for a new event or expansion of an existing event, consultant fees for strategic planning, membership or volunteer development activities, or contributing to the building of a new community partnership.
- 2. Project Specific Grants** – Funds will be provided to refuge Friends organizations seeking support for projects initiated and managed by the Friends. For these grants, Friends must clearly demonstrate their involvement in all proposed activities, including how the project

will benefit the Friends and foster increased engagement of the public, community, volunteers and/or members. For example, funds may be requested for a Friends organization that proposes to develop and deliver environmental education programs for local schools, manage a habitat restoration project from start to finish, develop interpretive materials and programs that will be used by or delivered by the Friends organization, or manage the construction of an observation tower with clear steps outlined for how the Friends intend to use the facility to increase engagement with the Friends organization.

*It should be clear that projects are managed and/or implemented by the Friends organization and will provide a benefit to the Friends organization.

**Projects must be new OR be an expansion and/or improvement to an existing project.

***Please contact [Crystal Boyd](mailto:crystal.boyd@nfwf.org) (crystal.boyd@nfwf.org) to discuss any questions you might have about project ideas or project eligibility.

3. **Peer-to-Peer Coaching (P2P)** – Funds will be provided to refuge Friends organizations that propose to coordinate and execute a Friends training workshop for a minimum of three other refuge Friends organizations. See specific requirements for this category below.

Peer-to-Peer Coaching Proposal Requirements:

Your USFWS Regional Friends Coordinator must be contacted, identified, and involved as an official Service contact with the coaching planning effort. Additionally, all affiliated USFWS staff should be invited to the entire training, but they are not required to attend. Agenda development and content is at the discretion of the applicant and site manager following the guidelines below.

Applications must contain a draft agenda, which includes at least one session either led or co-led with USFWS staff and at least three of the following session topics:

- Board development and management
- Engagement and retention for Board members, Friends organization members, or volunteers
- Developing community partnerships
- Planning: Goal setting, project planning, annual work planning
- Communication and cooperation
- Overview of the USFWS, Refuge System, or Refuges
- Overview of and the roles and responsibilities of USFWS-Friends partnerships

Funds for Peer-to-Peer Coaching may be used for:

- Friends travel and lodging expenses (GSA per diem rates for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses (M&IE); IRS volunteer mileage rate of .14c/mile for driving personal vehicle; economy nonrefundable airfare)
- Training facility fees (only if appropriate free facilities are not available)
- Specialized trainer, consultant, or facilitator fees
- Training supplies such as flip charts, poster boards, copying expenses

Funds for Peer-to-Peer Coaching may not be used for:

- Food or beverages with the exception of GSA per diem rates for meals
- Airline seat upgrades, airfare insurance, or more than one checked bag

- Any expenses for participating Service employees
- An event agenda that includes any instruction on fundraising or lobbying or instruction intended to influence elected officials on legislation

4. Special Initiative: Public Access Enhancements and Increasing Hunting and Fishing Experiences on National Wildlife Refuges – There is approximately \$51,000 in funds available to refuge Friends organizations seeking to work with their Service site and partners in the following categories:

1. Access and Facilities: Develop new or repair/improve/expand existing public access points or facilities or construct new recreational infrastructure including but not limited to:
 - Roads, trails, boat ramps, fishing docks, hunt blinds, and archery ranges
 - Information kiosks and signs that better welcome and orient hunters and anglers
 - Above facilities or infrastructure for people with disabilities
2. Outreach, Experiences and Education Programs: Work in collaboration and coordination with state, local, and tribal governments to support hunting and fishing recruitment, retention, and reactivation efforts by dovetailing, developing new, or improving or expanding hunting or fishing experiences and/or programs including but not limited to:
 - Hunter and angler education and mentor programs (e.g., archery education program, outdoor skills programs and centers, angler skills class, fishing camps)
 - Hunting or fishing events (e.g., introduction to archery, fishing derbies or tournaments)
 - Awareness campaigns or targeted communications (e.g., National Hunting and Fishing Day, National Fishing and Boating Week, Take Me Fishing)
 - Tackle or archery loaner programs or equipment giveaway outreach programs
 - Above programs targeting youth, veterans, and people with disabilities
3. Habitat Restoration: Partner with habitat restoration projects that seek to enhance sustainable hunting and fishing programs.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include Refuge System’s Friends organizations whose primary mission is to support a national wildlife refuge or a complex of national wildlife refuges.
- Applicants must either be tax exempt under section 501(c), OR be in the process of applying for 501(c)(3) status and submit with their grant application a copy of the letter from the IRS confirming the application has been filed.

- All proposals must be discussed with the appropriate refuge manager and accompanied by the Refuge Manager Signature Page.
- A copy of a signed, current Friends Partnership Agreement must be submitted. Ineligible applicants include any organization whose primary mission is not to support a national wildlife refuge or complex of national wildlife refuges including other non-profit 501(c) organizations, U.S. federal government agencies, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Indian tribes, educational institutions, businesses, unincorporated individuals, and international organizations.

Eligible Uses of Grant Funds

- NFWF funds can be used to pay for a student intern who is currently enrolled in an educational, career development, or job training program through a partnership organization. The partnering organization must cover tort and liability for the intern, and the intern's work must directly support the capacity building and/or projects of the Friends organization. The application must identify the intern's institution or organization.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- NFWF funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.
- NFWF funds may not be used for printing for fundraising or revenue generating purposes (e.g., direct mail campaigns, books, calendars, etc.), lobbying activities, non-profit filings, food or beverages with the exception of GSA per diem rates for meals, refuge-administered projects, or shortfalls in government agency budgets.
- NFWF funds may not be used to pay for salaries or volunteer services, with the exception of intern salaries (see Eligible Uses of Grant Funds).

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grant projects, the Friends program provides a list of metrics in Easygrants. **Your proposal should include all three of the metrics listed below.**

The starting value for each metric should be entered as zero. For example, if your Friends organization currently has 30 volunteers, and it expects that all 30 volunteers plus 20 new volunteers will work on the project, then the metric “# of volunteers participating” should have a starting value of zero and a target value of 50.

Please contact Crystal Boyd (crystal.boyd@nfwf.org) if you have questions about metrics.

Project Activity	Metric	Additional Guidance
All proposals	# of orgs contributing to goals	Enter the number of Friends groups or partnering organizations contributing to the project.
	# volunteers participating	Enter the number of volunteers participating in the project.
	# number of volunteer hours	Enter the number of volunteer hours contributed to this project.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

The National Wildlife Refuge Friends Program will award approximately \$132,000 nationwide in grants this year. Grant awards will range from \$1,500 to \$15,000. Friends organizations are encouraged (but not required) to contribute 1:1 non-federal matching contributions. All Friends grants should be completed within two years of the project start date.

Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Significant project deliverables and outcomes are expected to be achieved in year one. The start date indicated in an application should not precede December 1, 2020.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following criteria. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types and grant size.

Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the Program’s overall habitat and species conservation goals, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities outlined in the Request for Proposal.

Technical Merit – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design and implementation to ensure activities are technically-sound and feasible.

Cost-Effectiveness – Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation may include, but is not limited to, an assessment of either or both direct and indirect costs in the proposed budget. The federal government has determined that a *de minimis* 10% indirect rate is an acceptable minimum for organizations without a NICRA, as such NFWF reserves the right to scrutinize **ALL** proposals with indirect rates above 10% for cost-effectiveness.

Transferability – Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other Friends organizations or communities.

Communication – Project includes a detailed plan to communicate information about the project to appropriate audiences.

Funding Need – Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

Long-Term Sustainability – Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. This should include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

Past Success – Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing conservation practices with specific, measurable results.

Partnership – An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and the project is supported by strong local partnership that leverages additional funds and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Identify proposed partners, if known (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicants), the roles they will play in implementing the project, and how this project will build new or enhance existing partnerships. (Note: a project partner is any local community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state, and federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in the completion of the project.)

Letters of Support – Proposal includes letters of support from significant partners, especially those providing match or contributing to the project in a significant way.

OTHER

Budget – Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF’s [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.

Matching Contributions – Matching contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the project during the Period of Performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

Procurement – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF’s express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

Receiving Award Funds – Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

Compliance Requirements – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

Permits – Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state or local requirements. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

Federal Funding – The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information (www.nfwf.org/refugefriends).

Applicant Webinar Register Here	May 14, 3:00 PM Eastern Time
Full Proposal Due Date	June 30, 11:59 PM Eastern Time
Review Period	July through September
Awards Announced	Early October

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Easygrants system.

1. Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information. Please disable the pop-up blocker on your internet browser prior to beginning the application process.
2. Once on your homepage, click the “Apply for Funding” button and select this RFP’s “Funding Opportunity” from the list of options.

3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A PDF version of this can be downloaded [here](#).

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be downloaded [here](#).

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's "Applicant Information" page (<http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/home.aspx>).

For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:

Crystal Boyd, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 612-564-7253, crystal.boyd@nfwf.org

Deborah Moore, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 703-358-2386, Deborah_Moore@fws.gov

For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org

Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.

Include: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.