



NFWF

Questions and Answers about the February 23, 2021 Request for Proposals (RFP): Contract for a Midpoint Evaluation of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Great Lakes Business Plan

March 9, 2021

NFWF accepted questions about the RFP in writing through March 5, 2021. All questions and answers have been posted on NFWF's [website](#) so that all offerors have access to them at the same time. Similar questions have been combined.

1. What is the target budget amount?

We cannot share information about the budget for this evaluation. The proposed cost should be adequate for the level of effort necessary for providing robust findings. The final scope and budget for the evaluation will be negotiated between NFWF and the selected contractor.

2. Which parts of the proposal are included in the 10-page limit?

The page limit for the proposal narrative is 10 pages. The narrative should include examples of similar evaluations the organization has completed. The names, dates and references for those evaluations should be included as part of the 10-pages. The final products for those examples can be included as attachments (not part of the 10-pages) to the technical proposal, either as appendices or separate files. Covers, section dividers, and resumes do not count against the 10-page limit.

3. Does the 11pt font requirement apply to the entire proposal?

The minimum font size for the proposal is 11pt, excluding the budget template and proposal attachments.

4. May we include NFWF as a reference?

Yes, you may include NFWF as a reference.

5. May we provide more than two references?

Yes, you may include more than two references.

6. Will the evaluation reports submitted as examples be kept confidential?

Yes, they will be kept confidential.

7. Is there a preference for firms based in the Great Lakes region to complete this project?

No, there is not a preference for firms based in the Great Lakes region. The RFP is open to all eligible firms.

8. If the firm has provided services to NFWF related to the Great Lakes Business Plan in the past (e.g., prior evaluations, monitoring plans, or support for applicants and grantees), is this considered a conflict of interest?

Prior work for NFWF's Great Lakes Business Plan does not automatically constitute a conflict of interest. Offerors should consider whether the specific circumstances of their past work with NFWF would prevent them from providing an independent evaluation of the Great Lakes Business Plan. All potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed in the proposal, along with steps the Offeror will take to manage them.

Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the contractor, the contractor's employees, or the contractor's subcontractors in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests, or otherwise. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the offeror, the offeror's employees, or the offeror's future subcontractors in the matter.

9. Does NFWF anticipate that the evaluation will entail any travel, such as for potential site visits or for delivery of presentations to NFWF and funders?

Travel is not required for this evaluation. Meetings with NFWF and presentations can be held online.

10. Should the evaluation team include individual task leads for each Business Plan goal area or can one evaluator cover more than one topic?

An evaluator can lead more than one part of the evaluation if their training and expertise allows them to do so.

11. Does the education and/or training requirement for the lead evaluator need to be in the field of program evaluation specifically?

The lead evaluator may have an advanced degree in a related field, such as public policy, public administration, environmental management or similar. However, the lead evaluator must have 10 or more years of experience in evaluation design and implementation, as specified in the RFP.

12. Would NFWF be willing to share the draft evaluation questions in advance of the proposal deadline?

The draft evaluation questions are included in the RFP under the heading Scope of Work.

13. In the evaluation questions listed in the RFP, NFWF notes that they want to understand how sustainable conservation outcomes of the programs are. Does NFWF have any specific definition or framework that it uses to define conservation outcome sustainability?

NFWF's general expectation is that the conservation outcomes generated by the business plan will be sustained for at least 10 years. Ideally, outcomes will persist and, in some cases, continue to grow, even though investments have stopped.

14. Beyond NFWF program staff, will other partners (e.g., funders, implementation partners) be involved in planning and oversight of the evaluation, or the fine tuning of the evaluation questions?

No.

15. Has NFWF considered an Advisory Group for this project? If yes, what organizations would be considered key to this evaluation project?

NFWF has not established an advisory group for this evaluation. If the Offeror includes an advisory group as part of its proposal, it should clearly outline the rationale for the group, its role, and its members.

16. Beyond the 2013 evaluation of the Sustain our Great Lakes programs, has NFWF conducted any previous assessments of the other grant programs under the Great Lakes Business Plan?

No other third party evaluations or assessments have been conducted.

17. Is there a model evaluation from NFWF’s past work that is a model for this request?

Each of NFWF’s evaluations are tailored to meet the needs and interest of the Foundation. While the final evaluation report should be similar in quality and clarity to the [evaluation reports listed on our website](#), the evaluation itself should be tailored to the Statement of Work described in the RFP.

18. Are any documents available that describe NFWF’s specific conception or model of adaptive management principles at a programmatic or organizational level?

NFWF follows the principals and practices for adaptive management outlined by the Conservation Measures Partnership, <https://www.conservationmeasures.org/>.

19. Can you provide guidance on any more recent NFWF Business Plans that should be considered as examples of how NFWF is currently approaching goalsetting for programs, assuming this has evolved somewhat since 2015?

Examples of other NFWF’s [business plans can be found on our website](#); however, NFWF’s approach to setting goals for conservation outcomes has not changed significantly since the Great Lakes business plan was written. We continue to set SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound.

20. What is the time-frame horizon for forward-looking recommendations?

The specific time frame for recommendations should be determined in conjunction with the development of the evaluation’s finding and with the consultation of NFWF’s staff. We anticipate they may fall into two categories: 1) near term adjustments that apply to the current Great Lakes Business Plan (2022-2026); 2) longer-term programmatic strategy considerations that may apply to future Business Plans and/or program design past the life of the current business plan.

21. We received several questions about the grants included in the Scope of Work for the evaluation.

- a. The total number of grants awarded since the implementation of the business plan is 170. The breakdown of these grants is as follows:
 - i. Sustain Our Great Lakes: 112 grants
 - ii. Chi-Cal Rivers Fund: 31 grants
 - iii. Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund: 21 grants
 - iv. Conservation Partners Program: 6 grants
- b. NFWF has awarded these grants to 109 unique grantees

- c. A small portion on the grants (fewer than 20%) expand upon or implement subsequent phases of prior NFWF grants.

22. Should the evaluation include the four other competitive grant programs specifically, or is NFWF seeking a comparison to these programs for the synergistic and collaborative nature of the sum of these efforts of the GLBP's?

The evaluation includes the grants awarded through the four programs that contribute to the goals of the Great Lakes Business Plan, as listed above. It is not an evaluation of the individual programs.

23. Can NFWF provide a map or list of past and current project locations and/or grantee locations at this time for purposes of informing proposal development?

Please note that this map includes grants dating back to 2006. This evaluation includes grants from 2016 – 2021. The focal geography has remained fairly consistent over time.



24. Are there particular pre-existing or geographical lines that you would want us to consider when assessing the allocation of grants?

Please see the Focal Areas outlined in the [Great Lakes Business Plan](#).

25. The RFP notes the programs contributing to its outcomes have experienced both growth and change. With this in mind, are there any newly identified goals or specific objectives defined that we should consider as a part of this proposal?

The goals of the Great Lakes Business Plan have not changed but the program priorities have expanded in response to the growth of the program. We have seen increased funder support for the following investment areas: invasive species control efforts, green stormwater infrastructure, and working lands conservation practices and regenerative agriculture. These strategies are in the business plan, but the original budget for them and level of implementation has exceeded expectations.

26. Do any of the four grant programs to be evaluated receive funding from settlement agreements, NRDA claims or similar?

None of the funds awarded come from NRDA claims, court orders civil, criminal, and administrative settlements or similar sources.

27. Will NFWF provide the original project evaluation and or technical review information and criteria used in decision-making?

The criteria used to select projects for grant awards are outlined in the solicitations for grant proposals, under the section “evaluation criteria.” The [current solicitation is available on our website](#) and prior solicitations can be provided to the selected contractor if needed.

28. What level of participation (cooperation) can we expect from the grantees? Did NFWF contracts with grant recipients require their participation in an evaluation of this type?

While NFWF’s grant agreements do not require grantees to participate in evaluations, their voluntary participation has historically been very high.

29. Will NFWF serve as the liaison with the grantees, or will the contractor serve this role (e.g. communications regarding the evaluation and survey questions, scheduling interviews, etc.)?

NFWF will facilitate introductions between the grantees and the selected contractor. The contractor will be responsible for all follow-up activities, such as scheduling and conducting interviews or deploying surveys.

30. What types of data are collected from grantees for evaluation?

Grantees are required to select and report on metrics to monitor the progress of projects throughout the lifetime of the grant and quantify project impact and outcomes. Metrics data will be provided to the selected contractor. For an example of project metrics, please

see the “metrics and monitoring” section of [the current grant proposal solicitation on our website](#).

31. Are grantees required to report on any social outcomes? If so, can you provide more detail on how NFWF uses any social outcomes or metrics to measure progress toward the business plan?

Metrics on community engagement and benefits are included in the set of metrics used to monitor the progress of projects, as described above.

32. To what extent is monitoring data available for projects, especially those that have been completed?

In addition to the performance metrics described above, grantees are encouraged to monitor biological outcomes, particularly improvements to target fish, shorebirds, breeding marsh birds, and waterfowl populations. Monitoring data are available for approximately 10-15% of all the projects that have been awarded.

33. Does NFWF conduct any annual reporting for the Great Lakes Business Plan or the four grant programs within it? The Great Lakes Business Plan notes that scorecards will be created on an annual basis to provide a snapshot of progress for primary conservation outcomes and strategies. Were these scorecards created?

Annual scorecards have been created for the Great Lakes Business Plan and the most recent scorecard can be provided to the selected contractor. Annual program fact sheets can also be provided.

34. Is there an expectation that data external to NFWF’s project-specific information will be considered in assessing progress and developing recommendations or adjustments (e.g., GLRI-funded habitat restoration outcomes that have advanced Business Plan goals but are not directly linked to NFWF investments, or impacts of record-high lake levels)?

The focus of the evaluation is on the NFWF funded projects and their contributions to the Great Lakes Business Plan’s goals. Information about other projects may be used to provide context, but an evaluation of broader benefits is not within the scope of this contract.