



## **SOUTHERN PLAINS GRASSLAND PROGRAM 2022 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2021 by 11:59 PM Eastern / 9:59 PM Mountain**  
Applicant Webinar ([Register Here](#)): Thursday, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2021 at 10:00 AM Mountain Time

### **OVERVIEW**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to conserve and restore grasslands and wildlife species in the Southern Great Plains. The Southern Plains Grassland Program seeks to work closely with nonprofit and government partners and the ranching community to bring important financial and technical resources to improve grassland ecosystem health and resilience to climate change in the Southern Great Plains. These actions will boost the vitality of this often-overlooked ecosystem, providing benefits to wildlife and to rural, ranching-based communities. These actions increase the ability of grasslands to store carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide key benefits to address climate change. The Southern Plains Grassland Program anticipates awarding approximately \$1.5 million in grants. Major funding partners include Sysco, Cargill and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

### **GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

Projects in the following areas are eligible for Southern Plains Grasslands support: Eastern Colorado, Kansas, southern Nebraska, Northeastern New Mexico, Oklahoma, and the Texas Panhandle.

### **PROGRAM PRIORITIES**

Projects that improve management on grazing operations, increase organizational capacity and utilize innovative and community-based approaches are encouraged. All projects should emphasize strategies that improve landscape-scale resilience to climate change or that specifically address intensifying environmental threats and stressors related to climate change. The Southern Plains Grassland Program seeks projects that address the following desired outcomes:

*Demonstrate successful models for grassland habitat conservation that:*

- Implement management at large scales that facilitates persistent long-term behavioral changes that benefit grasslands, increase climate resiliency and support grassland-obligate species on working lands (e.g. conversion of expiring Conservation Reserve Program to managed grazing systems, installation of grazing management agreements etc.).
- Increase connectivity through grassland restoration efforts (e.g. re-seeding, removal of woody invasives, prescribed fire, etc.).



- Implement or provide capacity to engage in conservation delivery for NRCS Great Plains Biome Framework.

*Community Co-Benefits - Increase institutional and regional capacity:*

- Provide ranchers and community-led organizations with technical assistance to accelerate on-the-ground delivery and implementation of conservation and improved grassland management practices.

*Wildlife Co-Benefits - Improve population levels and related outcomes for grassland species:*

- Improve landscape permeability for pronghorn and other ungulates by removing and modifying fence and installing structures to minimize mortality at road crossings and migration bottleneck sites.
- Increase habitat for monarch butterfly and other pollinators.
- Sustain populations of lesser and greater prairie chicken through restoration of meadows and removing or marking fence around leks.
- Projects that help identify and address limiting factors for grassland obligate songbirds.
- Promote black-footed ferret conservation.

## PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Southern Plains Grassland Program has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for future reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics for their project (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Seth Gallagher ([seth.gallagher@nfwf.org](mailto:seth.gallagher@nfwf.org)) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

If awarded, grantees may be requested to submit additional county-level data as it becomes available in addition to self-selected metrics for the quantification of project carbon benefits as modeled by the NFWF Carbon Calculator Tool.

### PRIMARY PROJECT OUTCOMES

*All proposals must select at least one of the following metrics to report out on throughout the life of the project that will directly restore, improve or enhance grasslands on private working ranches and/or publicly owned properties in ways that build landscape resilience to climate change.*



Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Improved management practices	Acres under improved management	Any practice that improves grassland function (grazing management, changed behaviors, infrastructure development to facilitate managed grazing)
Land restoration - general	Acres restored	Enter the number of acres associated with upland restoration activity (re-seeding, conifer removal etc.) specifically designed for lesser and greater-prairie chicken, report what the restoration practice in the notes section
Riparian restoration	Acres restored	Enter acres associated with mesic wet meadow and stream restoration practices
Habitat Restoration	Habitat Restoration - Removal of invasives (woody vegetation)	Specify the number of acres with woody invasives treated
<p><b>SECONDARY PROJECT BENEFITS</b></p> <p><i>Applicants are encouraged to report on additional project benefits that support wildlife populations and rural agricultural communities.</i></p>		
Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of fencing improved	Enter miles of fence removed or improved, specify in notes specific practice and target species: Prairie Chicken (fence markers, fladry etc, report practice in the notes section) pronghorn/deer (raising the bottom wire, drop fence)
Black-footed ferret disease control	# acres protected from disease	Enter the number of acres treated for the control of sylvatic plague and the conservation of Black-footed ferret. (specify control measures implemented in the notes section)
Black-footed ferret disease control	# sites protected	Enter the number of sites protected from disease for the conservation of Black-footed ferrets
Economic benefits - # jobs created	# jobs created	Enter the number of new jobs created. If applicable, in the notes section, please report the number of new jobs created specifically for historically underserved communities



Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance - # people with changed behavior	# people with changed behavior	Enter the number of individuals demonstrating a minimum threshold of behavior change. If applicable, in the notes section, please report the number of people in historically underserved communities with changed behavior
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**EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

This Program desires to support projects that meaningfully engage and benefit low-income and communities of color throughout the Southern Great Plains landscape. This Program recognizes that these communities are often disproportionately impacted by climate change and associated environmental issues of special concern for this RFP. This Program will prioritize investments that seek to address these impacts while also meaningfully engaging communities to achieve benefits for the environment and people.

Priority will be given to projects that were developed through community input and co-design processes. Additionally, projects should engage community-level partners (e.g. municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders) to help design, implement, and maintain projects to secure maximum benefits for communities and long term sustainability post-grant award. Projects should also include plans and methods to engage and inform the public about the project’s benefits (see Evaluation Criteria – Community Engagement and Education for more details).

Additionally, applicants should plan to report on their approach to tracking and measuring qualitative, diversity, equity and inclusion benefits of the project in the full proposal narrative of the application. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate data to provide context. Projects receiving awards from this program will be asked to report on these outcomes and project-related benefits to low-income communities and communities of color in their annual programmatic reports to NFWF.

**ELIGIBILITY**

**Eligible and Ineligible Entities**

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, U.S. Federal government agencies, rancher and community-led organizations, educational institutions, tribal governments and organizations, and state or local units of governments (e.g. state agricultural and/or conservation agencies, counties, townships, cities, conservation districts, utility districts, drainage districts, etc.).
- Ineligible applicants include for-profit entities and unincorporated individuals.

**Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds**



- **Equipment:** Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible and cost-effective or use matching funds to make those purchases. NFWF acknowledges, however, that some projects may only be completed using NFWF funds to procure equipment. If this applies to your project, please contact the program staff listed in this RFP to discuss options.
- 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.
- Federal funds and matching contributions may not be used to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems (including entering into or renewing a contract) that uses telecommunications equipment or services produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities) as a substantial or essential component, or as critical technology of any system. Refer to Public Law 115-232, section 889 for additional information.

## **FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH**

The Southern Plains Grassland Program will award approximately \$1.5 million this cycle to 10-15 grants. Grants may be up to three years in length. A minimum match requirement of 1:1 is required and will be considered in application review.

## **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.

**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.

**Partnership** – An appropriate partnership exists to implement projects and leverage additional funds to sustain it after the life of the grant. Identify proposed partners, if known (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant), 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.)

**Transferability** – Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.

**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.

**Conservation Plan and Context** – The project advances an existing conservation plan or strategy.

**Monitoring** – Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

**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.

**Key Personnel** – Please include a brief description of all proposed project personnel and qualifications.

**Community Engagement and Partnerships** – Project engages relevant communities and local stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders) project planning, co-design and post-implementation education and engagement to optimize the public use of and benefits to communities generated by the project. Project substantiates community partnerships and engagement through letters of support or shared investment in the project,



demonstrated by including community partner entities as a match source in the proposal or sub-awarding grant funds requested in the proposal budget to community partners. Priority will be given to projects that benefit and engage low-income communities and communities of color.

## **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 NFWF [Southern Plains Grassland Program](#) page for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar ( <a href="#">Register Here</a> )	Thursday, August 19 <sup>th</sup> 2021 at 10:00 AM Mountain Time
Full Proposal Due Date	Thursday, November 4 <sup>th</sup> 2021 by 9:59 PM Mountain Time
Review Period	December 2021
Awards Announced	Late February 2022

## HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through NFWF’s Easygrants system.

1. Go to [easygrants.nfwf.org](https://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.
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 *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](#)” webpage.

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



- Seth Gallagher, Program Director of Grasslands and Mountain West, [seth.gallagher@nfwf.org](mailto:seth.gallagher@nfwf.org)
- Daley Burns, Regional Program Senior Coordinator, [daley.burns@nfwf.org](mailto:daley.burns@nfwf.org)

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

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: [Easygrants@nfwf.org](mailto: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.