



# 2023 Applicant Webinar America the Beautiful Challenge

*Dedicated to investing in ecosystem and watershed restoration projects, resilience, equitable access, workforce development, corridors and connectivity, and collaborative conservation*



Beartooth mountain range, Montana



# General Session Agenda

1. Webinar Instructions
2. Introduction to NFWF
3. Program Context and Priorities
4. Review of Request for Proposals
  - *Five Grant Categories*
  - *Evaluation and Guidelines*
4. Frequently Asked Questions
5. Q&A
6. Using Easygrants



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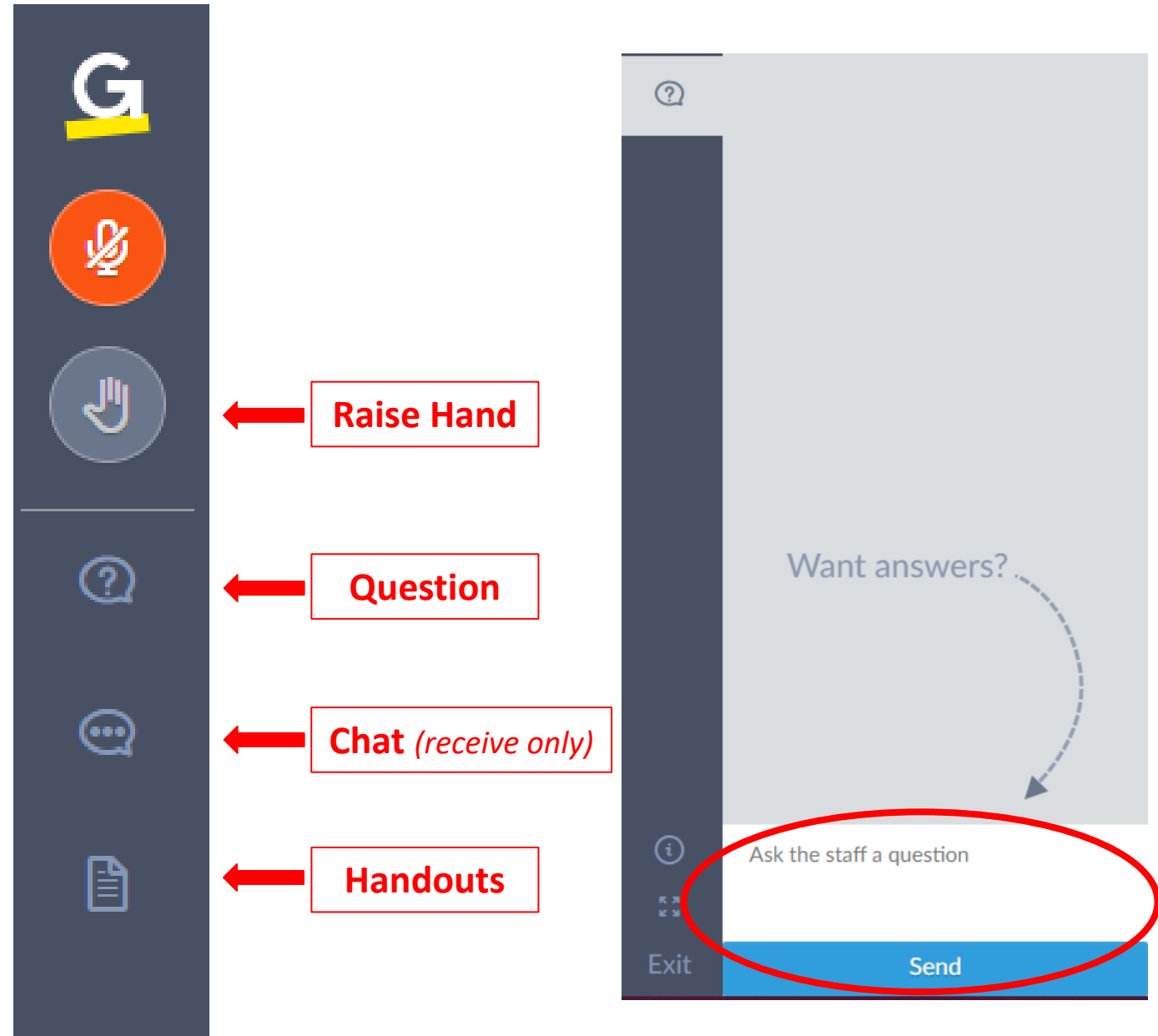


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# Webinar Instructions

- To improve sound quality, all participants will be muted for the duration of the webinar. If you want to ask a question you have two options:
  1. Enter your query where it says “Enter a question for staff” and click send. A NFWF staff member will type a response or read your question aloud when we pause for Q&A.
  2. Write it down and contact us after the webinar. We have a lot of material to cover, so you may prefer to have a more in-depth discussion later.
- We may ask you to raise your “hand” in the webinar dialogue box to confirm participants can hear us.
- If you experience a technical glitch, please type it into the question box, since we can’t hear you. (We may not know about the glitch unless you say something!)

*The webinar will be available for download next week at [www.nfwf.org/challenge](http://www.nfwf.org/challenge)*



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# Introduction to NFWF

## WHO WE ARE

- Chartered by Congress in 1984
- 30 member Board appointed by Secretary of the Interior
  - Includes FWS Director & NOAA Administrator

## WHAT WE DO

- Sustain, restore, enhance the nation's natural heritage
- Support collaboration among federal agencies & private funders
- Create common ground among diverse interests

## HOW WE DO IT

- Leverage private money with public funding – average 3:1
- On-the-ground conservation projects through competitive grant making

### NFWF IS

- An implementer – we fund projects

### NFWF IS NOT

- An advocacy or litigation organization and does not fund these activities



# Public-Private Partnerships

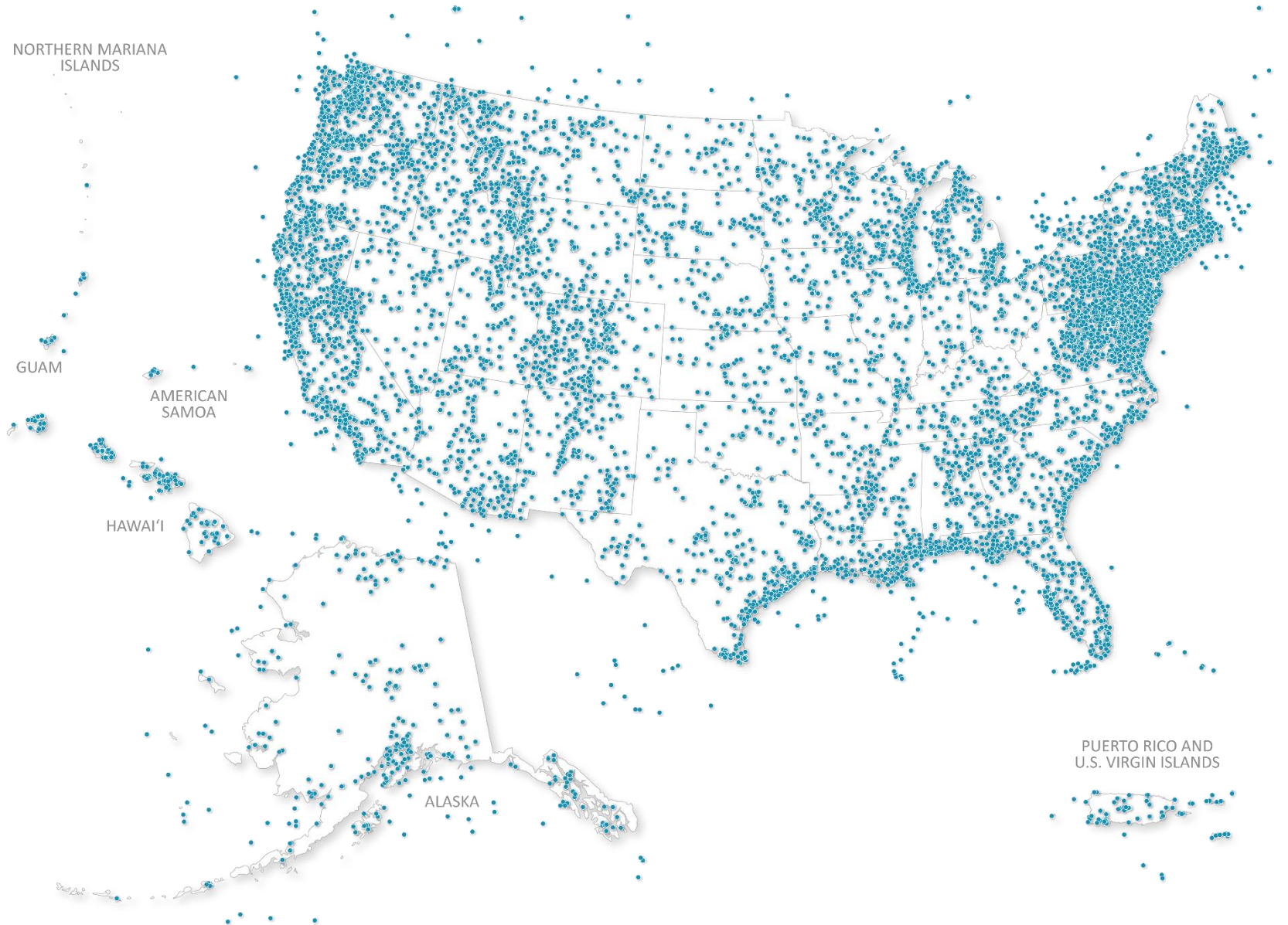


## 6,000+ Implementing Partners





# NFWF Conservation Investments (1984 – 2022)



- **21,680 Investments**
- **6,000+ Organizations**
- **All 50 states**



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# What is the Challenge Program?

- A one-stop-shop for implementers to easily access federal conservation funding from multiple agencies
- An opportunity for public-private partnerships to further leverage federal investments
- A means to deliver infrastructure related conservation funding on the ground in a fast manner
- A way to pool federal agency funding and expertise to support locally-led, cross-boundary, multi-state, and/or landscape-scale restoration projects
- A five-year program, 2023 will be the second annual RFP



Golden Eagle

- *A minimum of 10% of the 2023 funding will be awarded to Tribal and Native Nation led projects*
- *A minimum of 3% of the 2023 funding will be awarded to U.S. Territories*

# Overarching Program Themes

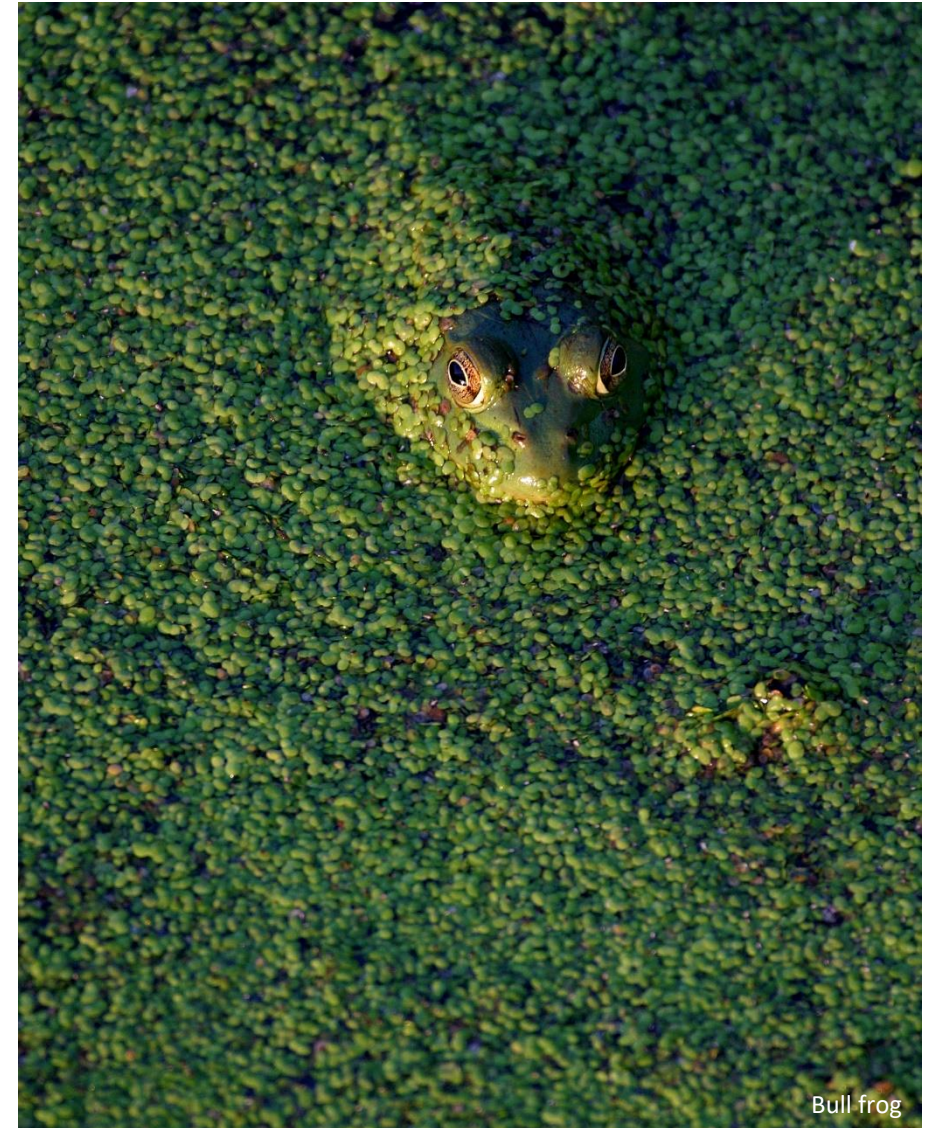
1. Conserving and restoring rivers, coasts, wetlands and watersheds
2. Conserving and restoring forests, grasslands and other important ecosystems that serve as carbon sinks
3. Connecting and reconnecting wildlife corridors, large landscapes, watersheds and seascapes
4. Improving ecosystem and community resilience to flooding, drought, and other climate-related threats
5. Expanding access to the outdoors, particularly in underserved communities





# Program Priorities

- Benefit At-Risk Fish, Wildlife and Plant Species
- Expand Habitat Connectivity
- Provide a Range of Ecosystem Services
- Strengthen Ecosystem and Community Resilience
- Expand Public and Community Access to Nature
- Engage Local Communities
- Support Tribally Led Conservation and Restoration Priorities
- Contribute to Local or Tribal Economies
- Contribute to Workforce Development
- Advance Sentinel Landscape Partnership Priorities



Bull frog

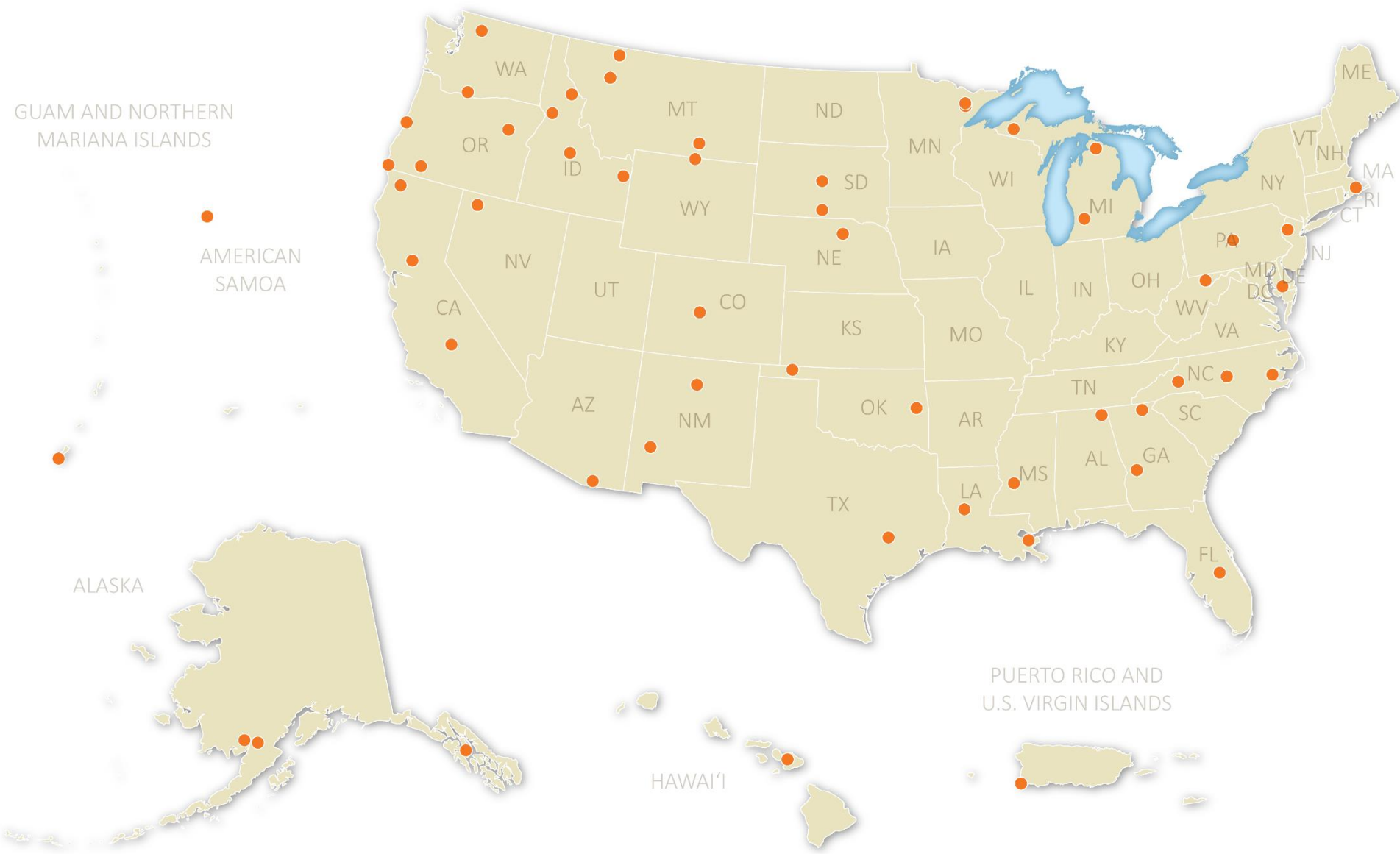
# Native Nation Priorities and Opportunities



- Prioritizes Tribal and Native Nation implementation, stewardship, collaboration, capacity, planning
- Seeks projects developed and informed by Indigenous Knowledge
- Encourages direct local community engagement
- Directs benefits to accrue to local and Tribal economies
- Match covered by Native Americans in Philanthropy



# 2022 by the Numbers



## Applicants

- \$1.1 billion
- 527 proposals
- All 50 states, DC and 3 U.S. Territories
- 133 Tribal Nations

## Grantees

- \$91 Million
- 55 proposals
- 45 states and 3 U.S. Territories
- 14 Tribal Nations

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# Grant Categories



**Funding:** \$100M for categories one and two – total available this year

**Eligible:** States, Territories, and federally recognized Tribes

**Geographic Focus:** National

**1. Implementation Grants:** Grants to implement projects that address program priorities on public, Tribal, and/or private lands; partnerships with NGOs and others through subawards are encouraged.

- Size: \$1 million to \$5 million+, *Landscape scale restoration requests beyond \$5 million may be considered on a limited case-by-case basis. Please contact NFWF program staff to discuss.*
- Length: up to four years



# Grant Categories Continued



**Funding:** \$100M for categories one and two – total available this year

**Eligible:** States, Territories, and federally recognized Tribes

**Geographic Focus:** National

**2. Planning Grants:** Grants that enhance local capacity to implement future on-the-ground actions that address program priorities through community-based assessments, partnership building, planning, project design, and other technical assistance activities. Projects in this category should include multiple partners, be at a significant scale for the landscape/watershed/seascape, and clearly demonstrate how efforts will lead to implementation projects.

➤ Size: \$200,000 to \$2 million

➤ Length: up to 3 years

# Grant Categories Continued



**Funding:** \$5 million available this year

**Eligible:** Non-profits, local municipal governments, and educational institutions, States, U.S. territories, and non-federally recognized and federally recognized Tribes

**Geographic Focus:** Sentinel Landscapes, Pacific, or off-base species/habitat goals

**3. Sentinel Landscape Grants:** Grants will be funded through the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program and will be prioritized to Sentinel Landscapes or areas that preserve or enhance military readiness. Projects in this category should include multiple partners and clearly contribute to outcomes identified in a Sentinel Landscape implementation plan or other applicable conservation or restoration implementation plan, by enhancing local capacity to implement future on-the-ground actions or by directly contributing to on-the-ground outcomes. Projects in this category must demonstrate benefit to DOD facilities and be in the vicinity of or ecologically linked to a DOD installation or range. DOD funds may not be used for work directly on military lands.

- Size: \$250,000 to \$1.5 million
- Length: 2 to 4 years

# Grant Categories Continued



**Funding:** \$10M available this year

**Eligible:** Non-profits, local municipal governments, and educational institutions, States, U.S. territories, and non-federally recognized and federally recognized Tribes

**Geographic Focus:** National Forest system lands

**4. National Forest Grants:** Grants will support projects on National Forest System lands to achieve the restoration of a forest ecosystem through the removal of vegetation, the use of prescribed fire, or the decommissioning of an unauthorized, temporary, or system road. Projects should target outcomes identified in a conservation or restoration implementation plan. Projects completing vegetation management should be connected to a watershed protection plan.

- Size: \$250,000 to \$1.5 million
- Length: 2 to 4 years



# Grant Categories Continued



**Funding:** \$1 million available this year

**Eligible:** Non-profits, local, municipal governments, and educational institutions States, U.S. territories, and non-federally recognized and federally recognized Tribes

**Geographic Focus:** Private lands with a focus on implementing Working Lands for Wildlife Frameworks and Initiatives

**5. Private Forests, Rangeland and Farmland Grants:** Grants will support outreach and engagement with private landowners for voluntary conservation efforts on working lands to advance NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Framework and Initiatives (e.g. sagebrush, grasslands, bobwhite quail, northeast turtles, golden-winged warbler).

➤ Size: \$200,000 to \$500,000

➤ Length: 2 to 3 years

# Matching Requirements

## DOI Conservation and Restoration Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
States	90% of costs	10% of costs (11% of grant request), at least 2.5% must be cash
<del>Tribes &amp; Territories</del>	<del>97% of costs</del>	<del>3% of costs, at least .75% must be cash</del>

## DoD Conservation and Restoration Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
All Entities	100% of costs	Not required

## USFS Conservation and Restoration Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
All Entities	80% of costs	20% of costs (24% of grant request)

## NRCS Technical Assistance Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
All Entities	50% of costs	50% of costs (equal to grant request)

# Matching Requirements Continued

- Match requirement is waived for the territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Native Americans in Philanthropy is providing all match for any granted Tribally led projects up to the 10% ATBC funding floor for Tribal Nation grantees. Match for Tribally led projects funded beyond the 10% will be subject to NAP funding availability.



NATIVE AMERICANS  
IN PHILANTHROPY





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# Overall Evaluation Criteria

## All Proposals:

- Program Goals and Priorities
- Technical Merit
- Conservation Plan and/or Indigenous Knowledge
- Partnership and Community Impact
- Budget

See Appendix 4 for more details!



# Conservation Plan Examples

## Existing conservation or recovery plans

- NFWF's [Conservation Landscapes](#)
- [Migratory Bird Joint Ventures](#) such as [Saltmarsh Sparrow Conservation Plan](#)
- Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) [Sagebrush Conservation Strategy](#)
- NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Conservation Frameworks for [Great Plains](#) and [Sagebrush](#), [Bobwhite Quail](#) and [Gopher Tortoise](#)

## Collaborative Landscape Conservation Designs

- [Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy](#)
- [Nature's Network](#)

## State-driven conservation efforts

- [State Wildlife Actions Plans](#)
- [Coastal Master Plans](#)
- [State Action Plans for Big Game Migrations](#)

## Tribal conservation priorities and Tribal co-stewardship agreements; and local collaboratives

- [Black-foot Challenge](#)
- [the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission](#)
- [Crown of the Continent Landscape Conservation Design](#)
- [Sentinel Landscapes Partnership](#)

## Tribal conservation priorities and Tribal co-stewardship agreements; and local collaboratives (cont.)

- [Salmon Superhighway](#)
- [Sacramento Valley Salmon Recovery Program](#)
- [Southeast Conservation Blueprint](#)

## Science-based tools

- USFS's [Watershed Condition Classification](#) and Terrestrial Condition Assessment
- [Nature's Network Conservation Design](#)
- WAFWA's [Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool](#)

## Climate strategies

- [Advancing the National Fish and Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaption Strategy into a New Decade](#) and the Voluntary Guidance for States to Incorporate Climate Adaptation into State Wildlife Actions Plans and other Management Plans



# Federal Funding Compliance Implications and Requirements

- ATBC projects will be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA; state and federal), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and Clean Water Act (CWA)
  - 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)
- Acquisition included in projects may be subject to requirements under Federal acquisition regulations and Yellow Book standards. Agency approval and reporting may be required.
- Contractors and subcontractors in budgets may be subject to prevailing wage requirements
- Materials and supplies may be subject to Buy American requirements
- *Be sure to budget time and resources towards completing these requirements and obtaining all necessary permits and clearances*

# Overall Proposal Guidelines - Highlights



- Project periods of performance cannot start prior to August 1, 2023 or end after June 30, 2028
- If you haven't thought about permits and compliance yet, START NOW!
- Start collecting your letters of support (write templates for your partners)

## Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds:

- Support of ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements
- Support of political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations

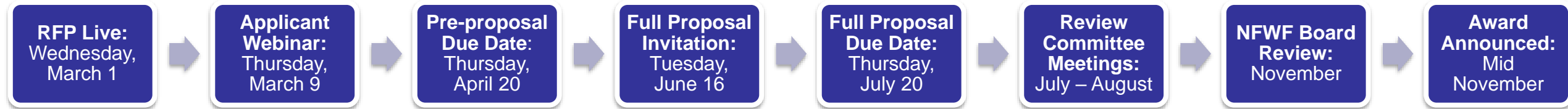
# Applicant Demographic Information Form

- In an effort to better understand diversity in our grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic demographic information on applicants and their organizations via a voluntary survey form.
- **The information you provide will not be shared with proposal reviewers and will not be considered when making grant decisions.**
- The Foundation will not share identifying information about any particular entity or project.
- While the form is a required upload, applicants can opt out of providing the information within the form itself
  - If your organization does not collect this information or if you have provided NFWF with this information in the last 12 months, you can opt out.
- **The information provided on this Excel form will be kept confidential.** The Foundation may share its anonymized aggregate findings as appropriate with its staff, Board of Directors, funding partners, and publicly on its website or through other media.





# Program Timeline





# Applicant Assistance Opportunities and Resources

- Full RFP and supporting materials are available on our website
  - Tip sheet for help navigating RFP and Easygrants
  - Frequently Asked Questions living document
- Pre-Proposal lab sessions with NFWF staff March – April 20<sup>th</sup>
  - Intended only for discussion of specific project concepts and ideas; please send general RFP and program inquiries via email
- Applicants submit pre-proposal through Easygrants portal – Due April 20<sup>th</sup>
  - [easygrants@nfwf.org](mailto:easygrants@nfwf.org) for help with Easygrants issues
- Webinar recording will be posted to website
- NFWF staff and Field Liaisons are available to assist



**Please email us if you have any questions!**

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NFWF

# Field Liaison Support

NFWF is contracting with [Native American Fish and Wildlife Society](#) and [Sundance Consulting](#) to provide ATBC applicants and grantees with additional assistance

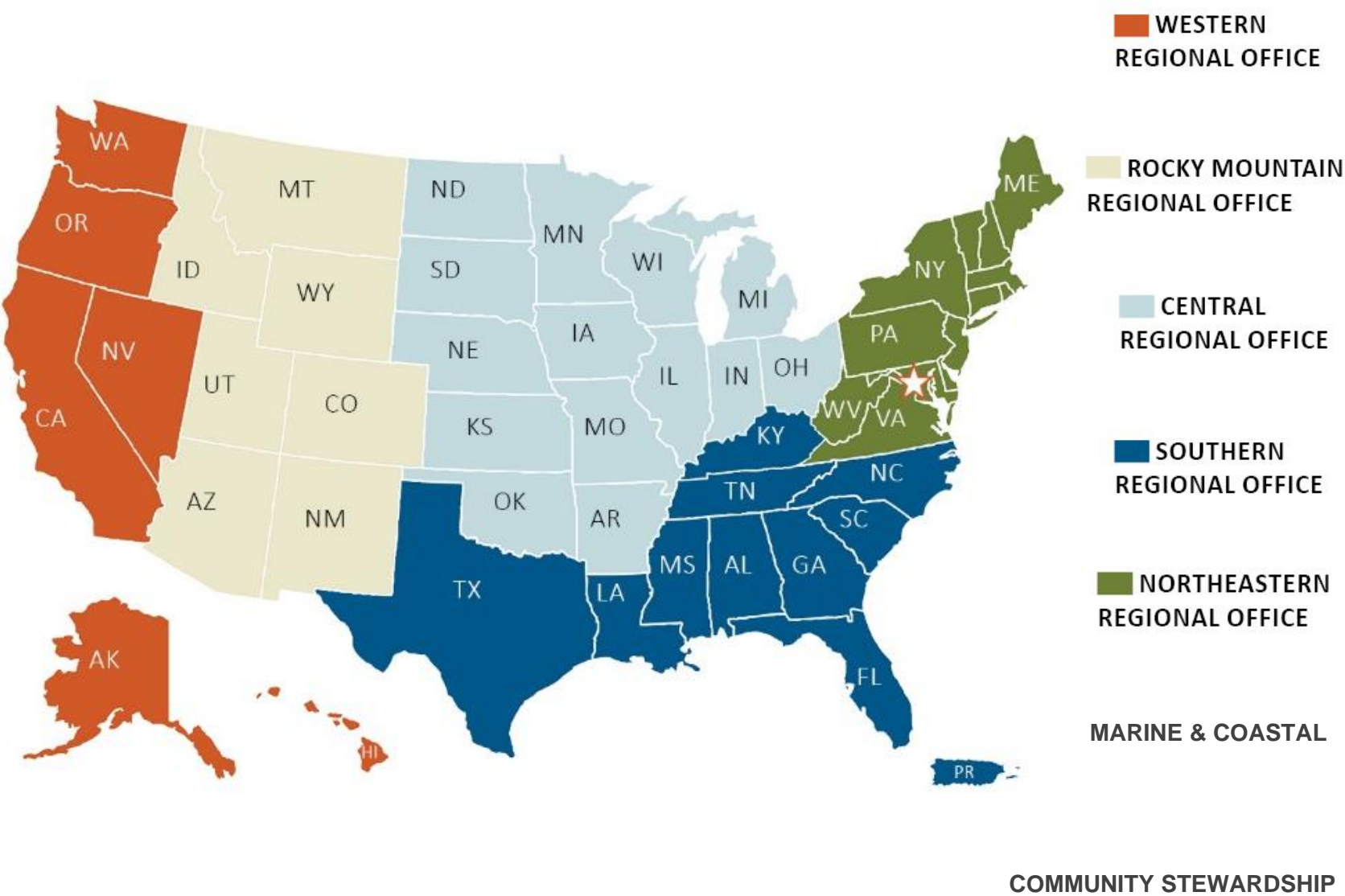
## America the Beautiful Challenge Field Liaisons

FIELD LIAISON CONTACT	EMAIL	SECTOR EXPERTISE
NAFWS	<a href="mailto:JThor@nafws.org">JThor@nafws.org</a>	All Sectors, Tribally led projects
Sundance	<a href="mailto:ATBC_Support@sundance-inc.net">ATBC_Support@sundance-inc.net</a>	All Sectors





# NFWF's Conservation Team: Key Contacts



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# Frequently Asked Question – 1

**Q:** Is land acquisition or conservation easement eligible under this program?

**A:** The focus of the 2023 ATBC is on implementing restoration priorities identified in established or new conservation plans, broader ongoing restoration efforts and/or projects that are informed by Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and promote Tribal co-stewardship. Voluntary acquisition and easement projects are not excluded, but to be competitive the application would need to demonstrate how the acquisition or easement is critical to the overall landscape restoration and stewardship work being conducted. Land acquisition and conservation easement proposals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis — particularly with respect to the conservation and restoration outcomes that can be delivered, the degree to which they incorporate a public access component, and the overall cost effectiveness of the proposed approach, among the other evaluation criteria detailed in the RFP. Only grant categories 1 and 3 allow for land acquisition. This type of transaction would require an appraisal and compliance with federal acquisition rules, and the details of the particular project may affect the type of appraisal needed.

*In short, acquisition or easement could be a means to achieving a broader conservation goal, but not the goal of the project itself.*

*An example would be protecting land within a high priority migration corridor as part of a broader effort to improve the overall health and functionality of that corridor.*



## Frequently Asked Question – 2

**Q:** Can multiple organizations submit a joint application for one project?

**A:** Yes, we encourage applicants to bring together broad partnerships in support of the project. However, the application can only have one primary applicant organization, and the point of contact on Easygrants (NFWF's grant-management software) must be directly affiliated with the applicant organization. If awarded, all funding will flow through the applicant organization, which will be responsible for managing subawards to any project partners. If applicants would prefer to or need to apply separately for the same project, they should be sure to reference the co-proposal(s) in the corresponding proposal narrative question.



## Frequently Asked Question – 3



**Q:** Can an organization submit more than one application for this RFP?

**A:** Yes, more than one application may be submitted, but please note that anything beyond two or three submissions per grant category may see diminished competitiveness. We generally encourage applicants to submit the one or two of their best projects per RFP grant category. Please do not submit the same project to multiple categories — select only the most appropriate one. If submitting multiple proposals, please indicate priorities if any.

## Frequently Asked Question – 4

### **Q: What qualifies as a Tribal Government?**

**A:** The Department of the Interior has determined that Tribal governments also include affiliated operating entities. This may include Tribal Nation government entities, such as fish and wildlife departments, historic preservation offices, corporations, etc. Generally, a nonprofit, even if Tribally-led/run, would not be such an entity and so would not qualify as a lead applicant for grant categories one and two (funding from DOI through FWS). However, a Tribe may apply for a grant and utilize a nonprofit to execute the grant funding. In other words, while the grantee must be a governmental entity of the Tribal Nation, it is not necessary for the Tribe to carry out the grant. If available, an applicant may include any MOU, statutory language, resolutions, or other documentation that defines the applicant as an entity of Tribal government.





## Frequently Asked Question – 5

**Q:** What if you have a project idea for the implementation or planning, collaboration, and engagement grant categories, but you aren't an eligible applicant?

**A:** Ineligible applicants for these two grant categories are encouraged to partner with eligible applicants (states, territories, and federally recognized Tribes). Subawards and subcontracts to NGOs, associations, state recognized Tribes, counties/municipalities, land trusts, and others are allowed for all four grant categories.





## Frequently Asked Question – 6



**Q:** What sort of information should be included in project context?

**A:** While NFWF, our funding partners, and our proposal reviewers have extensive conservation and restoration expertise, they may not know the context of your particular project. Please do make every effort to tell us why this is the right time for this project, why these are the right actions to take, and why it should happen in this geography. Also describe any additional plans (Indigenous Knowledge, municipal, federal, state, etc) and goals this project helps deliver—but do not upload each of those full plans with your proposal (you may provide links). If you are submitting a proposal for planning, collaboration, or capacity building, please be sure to clearly characterize the final project vision and what implementation will achieve/benefit.

## Frequently Asked Question – 7

**Q:** Can we request funding for planning, collaboration, engagement and capacity building activities? What if my project is doing both implementation and planning?

**A:** Yes, activities associated with planning, collaboration, engagement, and capacity building are eligible. It will be helpful to show what initial steps are already underway and what partners and/or impacted communities have offered support or buy-in. Be sure to articulate the ultimate potential and vision for the effort. Giving reviewers the full picture—in addition to describing the activities for which funding is requested—will be helpful. If your project includes a combination of planning and implementation, try to apply to the category that best fits the scope of work and clearly describe each part and how they work together in a seamless effort. If the planning and implementation work does not fit together, then they should be submitted as two separate projects.





## Frequently Asked Question – 8

**Q:** Can you clarify what you mean by capacity building? Will you fund staff positions to help deliver conservation and restoration?

**A:** We are open to a wide variety of capacity building activities as it relates to increasing the capacity of an organization or collaborative network to deliver on-the-ground restoration or conservation that aligns with the program priorities. In terms of funding full-time positions, while this is an eligible use of funds and budgets should be constructed to adequately reflect what's needed to deliver the project, be aware that full or partial funding of a staff position is not guaranteed after the end date of your project. Be sure to include context on the need for the position and how it will be sustained post-award.



## Frequently Asked Question – 9

**Q:** Is ATBC the same as the 30 by 30 Initiative?

**A:** The America the Beautiful Challenge is intended to fund a broader range of outcomes focused on conservation and restoration, whereas the 30x30 Initiative is a worldwide effort to designate 30 percent of the Earth's lands and oceans as protected areas by the year 2030. The America the Beautiful Challenge includes objectives such as conserving and restoring rivers, coasts, wetlands, and watersheds and connecting and reconnecting wildlife corridors, large landscapes, watersheds, and seascapes. In short, the ATBC is much more comprehensive and focused on a broader range of activities to conserve and restore America's natural heritage for the benefit of future generations.





# Frequently Asked Question – 10

**Q:** How is ATBC different from NFWF's National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF)?

**A:** While NCRF and ATBC are both national programs with an emphasis on resilience, ATBC is not limited to funding only in coastal areas or only on flooding/coastal resilience. In general, if the project is primarily focused on coastal resilience and aligned strongly with the NCRF program priorities listed in the [NCRF RFP](#), then you should apply only to NCRF. The NCRF and ATBC teams will coordinate together during the proposal review process to ensure any proposals that should be considered in the other program are identified.





Long-Eared Owl

## Frequently Asked Question – 11

**Q:** We have privacy concerns when it comes to submitting a pre-proposal. How will the data provided in the proposal be used and distributed?

**A:** The Foundation will not share identifying information about any particular entity or project and proposal content will be kept confidential. All reviewers are subject to a confidentiality clause in order to participate and are not allowed to share any proposal details outside of their own personal review.

# Final Tips for Applicants

1. Print/download the tip sheet and use it as a reference
2. Re-read the RFP and reference the linked-information provided
3. These are competitive grants; projects should address all criteria, respond to all requirements and have a “wow” factor
4. Include lots of context and details—do not assume reviewers know about or understand your project!
5. Submit your pre-proposal ON OR BEFORE April 20<sup>th</sup>
6. Note that NFWF staff will not be in the office at 11:59 pm on April 20<sup>th</sup>!
7. Reach out if you need help

## RESOURCES:

- Tip Sheet
- Bookings Link (Proposal Lab)
- Webinar Recording
- FAQ Document
- Letters of Support Guide
- Quick Reference Guide
- NFWF Staff
- Field Liaisons





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# Questions?

**Pre-proposals are Due  
Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>!!**

Full Proposals invited June 16

Awards will be announced in  
November

[www.nfwf.org/challenge](http://www.nfwf.org/challenge)

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# How to Apply to NFWF – Easygrants System

**easygrants.nfwf.org**

1. Log in with existing email and password
  - Register now if you do not have one – this will allow for time to familiarize yourself with the system
  - If you have trouble logging in, use the help feature
2. Turn off your pop-up blockers
3. Download and use the tip sheet available on the program webpage
4. You can work on the narrative offline – download the template and upload when you're finished
5. Please be as specific as possible with mapping AND providing location information on your project
6. Click save frequently
7. Make sure all your check marks are green; do not click SUBMIT until you are completely finished



# Submitting a Proposal

## Step One: Create an Account



NFWF

Enter your login ID and password and click **Log In** below. If you have forgotten your password, click **Forgot your password?** below.  
If you are a first time visitor to this system, click **Register here** below.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Log In

[New User?](#)

Login ID / Email

Password

☒ Remember Me

[Forgot Password?](#)

Log In

For the optimal Easygrants experience, please:

- [Use a Supported Browser](#)
- [Enable Pop-ups](#)
- [Allow Cookies](#)
- [Only Use One Tab](#)
- [Get Adobe Reader](#)
- [Log Out and Close Browser for Security](#)


For Technical assistance, please contact us via [e-mail](#) or phone 202-595-2497.

[Download Adobe Reader](#)

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# Let's try it...

 **NFWF**

My Tasks - Tess Questions - Home

[My Tasks](#) [My Grants](#) [Profile](#) [Apply For Funding](#)

[Home](#)

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