



Southern Plains Grassland Program

2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Tuesday, November 14th by 11:59 PM Eastern / 9:59PM Mountain**
Applicant Webinar ([View Recording](#)): Wednesday, August 30th, 2023, at 10:30 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 provide important financial and technical resources for voluntarily improving 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 will aim to increase the ability of grasslands to store carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide other key benefits to address climate change. The Southern Plains Grassland Program anticipates awarding approximately \$3 million in grants. Major funding partners include Sysco, Burger King, Cargill, Walmart Foundation, 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 voluntarily 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 voluntary 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.
- 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.

Capacity Building (Funding available in New Mexico)

- Increase capacity for implementation of priority conservation activities through partner positions. Applications are encouraged which support new full-time or part-time partner positions at applicant organizations such as foresters, wildlife biologists, rangeland specialists, and/or other natural resource professionals that will work in conjunction with NRCS personnel in New Mexico on a daily basis to carry out the provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Duties of IRA partner positions include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Providing technical assistance in the development of conservation plans and checkouts of completed practices.
 - Preparing and/or monitoring various contract management reports.

- Preparing and issuing correspondence to participants such as annual practice reminders, deferral letters, preapproval letters, and eligibility letters.
- Providing assistance with the application process such as reviewing documents for completeness, verifying control of land, irrigation history, signature authority, required electronic registrations, and troubleshooting eligibility/vendor issues.
- Assisting with contract management by uploading and maintaining documents in electronic systems; removing expired contracts from active contract filing cabinets; and ensuring appropriate signatures on documents.
- Assisting with the completion of reviews and audits by compiling documentation needed to support audit samples.

Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

- Additional funding is available in this RFP specifically for capacity building and technical assistance that aligns with NRCS priorities. Projects working on private, working lands should provide technical assistance to interested producers to develop management plans, design and implement conservation practices, and participate in Farm Bill programs, especially the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). A particular emphasis should be placed on promoting, designing, and implementing [climate-smart agriculture and forestry \(CSAF\) conservation practices](#) and reducing the Farm Bill practice contracting and implementation backlog. Successful projects will also seek to increase conservation program participation and practice adoption among [Historically Underserved](#) and [Special Emphasis](#) producers and forestland owners.
- Please ensure the project is in alignment with NRCS goals and priorities by conferring with the NRCS State Conservationist and their staff in the state in which your project is located. A list of NRCS state contacts can be found [here](#).

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 from this list 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) 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	Enter the number of acres with managed grazing (i.e., grazing approaches to optimize stocking rates, livestock rotations, utilization rates, and plant rest and recovery, including development of grazing infrastructure). In the Notes, describe the practice. Note whether prescribed burning is included as a management practice
Grassland restoration*	Acres restored	Enter # acres of habitat restored on private, public, or tribal lands. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and postrestoration (grassland).
Riparian and meadow restoration	Acres with restored hydrology	Enter the number of riparian and meadow acres restored, including riparian buffers. In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), the dominant vegetation being planted (Shrub, Grass), and the average width of the riparian buffer.
Habitat Restoration	Habitat Restoration - Removal of invasives (woody vegetation) Acres restored	Enter # acres of invasives removed. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Junipers, Shrubs, Grasses/forbs, etc.), desired dominant vegetation (i.e. native grasses), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No). Note whether prescribed burning is included as part of the restoration project.

SECONDARY PROJECT BENEFITS

Applicants are encouraged to report on additional project benefits that support wildlife populations and rural agricultural communities.

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
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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)
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

*Note that there are separate metrics based on land ownership type (private, federal, or tribal lands) for some of the metrics listed above.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

This Program desires to support projects that meaningfully engage and benefit low-income and historically disadvantaged communities 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 historically disadvantaged communities 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, Native Nations and Indigenous-led 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 costeffective 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.
- 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.
- 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.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

The Southern Plains Grassland Program will award approximately \$3 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.

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.

Partnership and Community Impact – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with diverse local community members, leaders, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the proposed project. This ensures long-term sustainability and success of the project, integration into local programs and policies, and community acceptance of proposed restoration actions. Non-traditional partners or communities are enlisted to broaden the sustained impact from the project. Describe the community characteristics of the project area, identify any communities impacted, describe outreach and community engagement activities and how those will be monitored and measured. Use demographic data to support descriptions and submit letters of support from community partners and/or collaborators demonstrating their commitment to the project and engagement in project activities as proposed.

Cost-Effectiveness – Cost-effectiveness analysis identifies the economically most efficient way to meet project objectives. Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of effective direct/indirect costs across all categories in the proposed budget according to the type, size and duration of project and project objectives. Project budgets will be compared to similar projects to ensure proposed costs across all budget categories are reasonable for the activities being performed and the outcomes proposed.

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.

Partnership – An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and the project is supported by a 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 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, Native Nation, 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.)

OTHER

Applicant Demographic Information – 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 (available in Easygrants). This information will not be shared externally or with reviewers and will not be considered when making grant decisions. For more details, please see the tip sheet and the Uploads section of Easygrants.

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.

Environmental Services – NFWF funds projects in pursuit of its mission to sustain, restore and enhance the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats for current and future generations. NFWF recognizes that some benefits from projects may be of value with regards to credits on an

environmental services market (such as a carbon credit market). NFWF does not participate in, facilitate, or manage an environmental services market nor does NFWF assert any claim on such credits.

Intellectual Property – Intellectual property created using NFWF awards may be copyrighted or otherwise legally protected by award recipients. NFWF may reserve the right to use, publish, and copy materials created under awards, including posting such material on NFWF’s website and featuring it in publications. NFWF may use project metrics and spatial data from awards to estimate societal benefits that result and to report these results to funding partners. These may include but are not limited to: habitat and species response, species connectivity, water quality, water quantity, risk of detrimental events (e.g., wildfire, floods), carbon accounting (e.g., sequestration, avoided emissions), environmental justice, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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 preapplication 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 (View Recording)	Wednesday, August 30, 2023 at 10:30 AM Mountain Time
Full Proposal Due Date	Tuesday, November 14, 2023 by 9:59 PM Mountain Time
Review Period	December 2023
Awards Announced	March 2024

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through 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 *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
- Daley Burns, Manager Rocky Mountain Regional Programs, daley.burns@nfwf.org
- Kailie Todd, Regional Programs Coordinator kailie.todd@nfwf.org

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.