



# NFWF

## Conservation Partners Program

### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – 2024

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: **January 11, 2024, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM ET**

Full Proposal Due Date: **February 28, 2024, by 11:59 PM ET**

#### OVERVIEW

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service ([NRCS](#)), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ([USFWS](#)), the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative ([GLRI](#)), Cargill, Nestlé, and The J.M. Smucker Co., and with additional support from the [General Mills, Walmart and Sam’s Club collaboration](#), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will award competitive grants to accelerate the voluntary adoption of regenerative agriculture principles and conservation practices on private working lands in priority geographic areas. Grant recipients will provide technical assistance to interested farmers and ranchers to develop management plans, design and implement conservation practices, share their experiences and lessons learned, 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. Funded projects will enhance wildlife habitat, soil health, water quantity and quality, and carbon sequestration while providing important social and economic benefits to agricultural producers. Up to \$12.4 million in grant funding is available under this funding opportunity.

#### PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Conservation Partners Program will fund projects that provide agricultural producers with technical assistance to voluntarily adopt regenerative agriculture systems and conservation practices on their working lands. Grant recipients will hire or support field conservation professionals who will help producers develop and implement economically sound approaches that achieve positive environmental outcomes. Grant funds may not be used to provide financial assistance to farmers and ranchers, though projects may leverage other funding for this purpose. Grant funds may not directly support other projects with existing, USDA-funded technical assistance budgets, such as those supported through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program.

Competitive projects will increase participation in Farm Bill programs as one way to advance regenerative agriculture principles. Some of these principles include: 1) minimizing chronic disturbances to the soil and biological community; 2) enhancing wildlife habitat; 3) maximizing crop diversity; 3) keeping the soil covered; 4) keeping a living root in the ground at all times; 5) efficiently managing water resources; and 6) integrating livestock into agricultural systems. Grant recipients will apply these principles to support producers in developing and advancing holistic approaches that simultaneously improve performance of agricultural operations and ecosystem functions.



Great Lakes  
RESTORATION



THE J.M. SMUCKER Co

The Conservation Partners Program encourages projects that foster participation by diverse local community members and community-based organizations. Incorporating local input into project design, integrating traditional ecological knowledge, and working collaboratively with diverse partners toward optimal solutions can ensure alignment among individual producer objectives, broader community priorities, and desired conservation outcomes.

The Conservation Partners Program will support projects that:

- Direct staff resources to help agricultural producers design and implement regenerative agriculture systems and practices, especially [those](#) that deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and/or increase in carbon sequestration.
- Foster community learning, relationship-building, and development of peer-to-peer networks to advance regional knowledge and adoption of regenerative agriculture systems and practices.
- Work with communities and producers to identify and overcome implementation barriers.
- Increase Farm Bill program participation and conservation practice implementation among agricultural producers, especially farmers and ranchers in the [Historically Underserved](#) and [Special Emphasis](#) categories.
- Generate environmental benefits, such as improvements to wildlife habitat, soil health, and water quantity and quality.
- Promote conservation systems to complement and advance producer economic interests and operational efficiency.
- Equip agricultural producers with information and data management capabilities to access ecosystem service markets.

Competitive projects will advance one or more of the following strategies:

- Crop management: Improve water quality and maximize soil carbon and wildlife values by increasing adoption of cover crops, reduced tillage, diversified crop rotations, perennial cropping systems, nutrient and pesticide management plans, precision agriculture, and other soil health practices.
- Grazing management: Promote plant growth above and below ground, improve wildlife habitat, and maximize soil carbon by establishing native grasses and optimizing stocking rates, livestock rotations, utilization rates, and plant rest and recovery.
- Irrigation improvement: Improve hydrology, in-stream flows, aquifer recharge, water conservation, and flood and drought resilience by increasing efficiency of on-farm irrigation practices and reducing agricultural runoff.
- Habitat enhancement: Enhance habitat values of working grasslands, field buffers, forests, wetlands, riparian zones, floodplains and other adjacent areas through native plantings, removal of invasive species, beneficial mowing, prescribed burning, fencing and other conservation practices.

## **PROJECT SCALE**

The Conservation Partners Program seeks to foster systems change and achieve environmental and social benefits at the landscape level. As such, it supports projects that generate impact on the order of thousands or tens of thousands of acres, with a strong preference for projects on the larger end of the

scale. Projects that propose outcomes in terms of smaller acreages are not likely to compete well in the proposal review process.

## **GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

This funding opportunity will provide grants for projects that align geographically with the following program priority categories:

- Northern Great Plains/Prairie Pothole Region
- Southern Great Plains
- Upper Mississippi River Basin
- Great Lakes Basin

### **1) Northern Great Plains/Prairie Pothole Region**

This geography includes the region of historic tallgrass, mixed grass, and shortgrass prairie spanning portions of Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Priority will be given to projects in the Prairie Pothole region of western Minnesota and eastern North and South Dakota ([see map here](#)). Key objectives for this category include:

- Improve soil health and maximize soil carbon on grazing lands and crop lands.
- Sustain and enhance conservation and economic values associated with working grasslands.
- Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment runoff to local waterways.
- Enhance habitat quality and connectivity for waterfowl, shorebirds, pollinators, and many other species that depend on the grassland–wetland complexes of the region.

Priority strategies include: crop management, grazing management, and habitat enhancement. Under crop management, priority will be given to projects focused on lands with wheat in active rotation, particularly in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.

### **2) Southern Great Plains**

This geography includes portions of Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming ([see map here](#)). Key objectives for this category include:

- Improve soil health and maximize soil carbon on crop lands and grazing lands.
- Sustain and enhance conservation and economic values associated with working grasslands.
- Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, and pesticide runoff to local waterways.
- Conserve and sustainably manage limited water resources.
- Enhance habitat quality and connectivity for birds, pollinators, and other species that depend on grassland complexes in the region.

Priority strategies include: crop management, grazing management, irrigation improvement, and habitat enhancement. Under crop management, priority will be given to projects focused on lands with wheat in active rotation, particularly in Kansas, Oklahoma and Colorado. Proposals that contribute to the goals of an established [Sentinel Landscape](#) will receive special consideration.

### **3) Upper Mississippi River Basin**

This geography includes the [NRCS's Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative](#) (MRBI) states upstream of the Ohio River confluence with the Mississippi River. Priority will be given to projects focused within [MRBI Focus Area Watersheds](#). Key objectives for this category include:

- Improve soil health and maximize soil carbon on crop lands, pastures, and other grazing lands.
- Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment runoff to local waterways.
- Enhance habitat for migratory birds, fish, and other aquatic species.

Priority strategies include: crop management, grazing management, and habitat enhancement. Under crop management, priority will be given to projects on lands with corn in active rotation in Ohio. Proposals that contribute to the goals of an established [Sentinel Landscape](#) will also receive special consideration.

### **4) Great Lakes Basin**

This geography includes the U.S. portion of Great Lakes watersheds ([see map here](#)). Key objectives for this category include:

- Improve soil health and maximize soil carbon on crop lands, pastures, and other grazing lands.
- Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment runoff to local waterways.
- Engage landowners in conservation and regenerative agriculture planning and peer-to-peer learning.
- Reduce Farm Bill practice contracting and implementation backlog.

Priority strategies include: grazing management, crop management, and habitat enhancement. Special consideration will be given to projects working to engage growers and support conventional and organic dairies in Michigan's lower peninsula, the Lake Michigan watershed of Indiana and the western Lake Erie watershed of Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. Proposals working in the "thumb" of Michigan are encouraged to propose technical assistance strategies incorporating small grain producers. Additionally, priority will be given to applicants that build upon established relationships with landowners through previous local work, incorporate partnerships with local entities and/or connect to demonstration farms or other efforts that align with regenerative agriculture priorities in the region.

## **PROJECT METRICS**

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure consistency of project data across numerous grants, the Conservation Partners Program application includes a list of standard metric options for describing project impacts and reporting outcomes (Table 1). Applicants should select the metrics most relevant to their proposed projects, and **all applicants are required to include the following metrics:**

- # jobs created and/or # jobs sustained

- # of mgmt plans with BMPs
- # participants receiving gov't agency cost share or financial assistance
- Dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance
- Acres covered by government agency cost share or financial assistance
- Acreage of project footprint

As part of interim and final performance reporting, grant recipients may be required to submit additional field-level implementation data using a template to be provided by NFWF. NFWF may use this information, as well as information in the proposal's Easygrants metrics, to estimate and track anticipated and actual project outcomes in terms of carbon and water benefits. These benefits will not be used as carbon or water credits, but rather for narrative purposes and demonstration of the values provided by various projects and conservation practices.

The Conservation Partner Program encourages projects that engage organizations and producers in one or more of the NRCS' [Underserved](#) and [Special Emphasis](#) categories. Applicants are encouraged to use the metrics notes fields to indicate the extent that the overall values for the # people and # jobs metrics are expected to include people in the Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.

Table 1. Standard metrics available for selection in the application with required NOTES.

Strategy	Recommended Metric	Instructions
Capacity, Outreach, Incentives	# jobs created	Enter the # of individuals hired to directly work on the project (non-volunteers). Jobs should be directly engaged in grant activities, funded by the grant, and shouldn't have existed prior to the grant. In the notes, provide the FTE for the jobs created. If applicable, in the NOTES section report the number of new jobs created for people in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
	# jobs sustained	Enter the # of paid jobs that are partially or fully sustained through this grant. Jobs should have existed prior to the grant, be funded by the grant, and be directly engaged in project activities. The starting value for this metric should be zero. If applicable, in the NOTES section report the number of jobs sustained for people in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
	# participants receiving gov't agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the number of participants enrolled in government cost share or financial assistance programs. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP), how you will track enrollment, and if applicable note the number of participants in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.

	Dollar value of government agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the dollar value of federal, state, or local government agency cost share or financial assistance. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP).
	Acres covered by government agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the number of acres enrolled in government agency cost share or financial assistance. In the NOTES section, specify which program(s) (e.g., NRCS EQIP). If applicable, number should be equal to or less than “Acreage of project footprint” metric.
	# workshops, webinars, meetings	Enter the number of workshops, webinars, and meetings held.
	# people reached	Enter the number of participants who attended the workshop, webinar, and/or meetings. In the NOTES, specify the percent of participants out of the total targeted. If applicable, note the number of people in the Historically Underserved or Special Emphasis categories.
Habitat Management	Acreage of project footprint	Enter the total number of unique acres impacted by one or more project conservation activities. Only count an acre once, even if multiple activities or treatments will occur on that acre during the project. For crop management projects involving wheat, please indicate the total project acres in active wheat rotation in the NOTES section.
	Acres with conservation tillage	Enter the number of cropland acres with conservation tillage practices. Acres with conservation tillage under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standards - <a href="#">No Till (329)</a> and/or <a href="#">Reduced Till (345)</a> . Please describe conservation tillage practices in the NOTES section.
	Acres with cover crops	Enter the number of cropland acres with cover crops practices. Acres with cover crops under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Cover Crop (340)</a> . Please describe the cover crop practices in the NOTES section.
	Acres with enhanced nutrient mgt	Enter the number of cropland acres with enhanced nutrient management practices other than or in addition to conservation tillage or cover crops. Acres with enhanced nutrient management practices under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Nutrient Management (590)</a> . Please describe the nutrient management practices in the NOTES section.

Acres of conservation crop rotation	Enter the number of acres on which a resource conserving crop rotation is implemented to build soil health, reduce erosion, and improve water quality. Acres under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Conservation Crop Rotation (328)</a> .
Acres with managed grazing	Enter the number of acres with managed grazing (i.e., promoting plant growth above and below ground, improving wildlife habitat, and maximizing soil carbon through grazing approaches that optimize stocking rates, livestock rotations, utilization rates, and plant rest and recovery, including development of associated grazing infrastructure). Acres under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Prescribed Grazing (528)</a> . Please describe the grazing practices in the NOTES section.
Lbs N avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of nitrogen prevented from entering waterways annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section.
Lbs P avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of phosphorous prevented from entering waterways annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section.
Lbs sediment avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering waterways annually and indicate method of calculating reduction in NOTES section.
Acres burned	Enter the number of acres prescribed fire was applied to. Acres burned under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Prescribed Burning (338)</a> . In the NOTES section, specify if private or public land, the average frequency (in years) at which prescribed burning is expected to occur in the future, and the vegetation being burned (shrubland, grassland, cropland, Phragmites marsh).
Acres with improved irrigation water management practices	Enter the number of acres with improved irrigation water management practices implemented to reduce water and energy use. Acres under this metric should comply with the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards - <a href="#">Irrigation Pipeline (430)</a> , <a href="#">Irrigation System, Microirrigation (441)</a> , <a href="#">Irrigation System, Sprinkler (442)</a> , <a href="#">Pumping Plant (533)</a> , <a href="#">Irrigation Water Management (449)</a> .
Acres feet of water conserved	Enter the number of acre feet of water conserved and indicate method of calculating water conservation in the NOTES section.

	# BMPs implemented	Enter the number of BMPs implemented. In the NOTES section, specify the percentage of BMPs implemented out of the total recommendations developed.
Habitat Restoration	Land restoration-Acres restored  <i>*for grassland restoration projects</i>	Enter the number of acres of GRASSLAND habitat restored. Grassland acres restored under this metric should comply with the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards - <a href="#">Conservation Cover (327)</a> , <a href="#">Forage and Biomass Planting (512)</a> , <a href="#">Silvopasture Establishment (381)</a> , <a href="#">Range Planting (550)</a> , <a href="#">Wildlife Habitat Planting (420)</a> . In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grassland, shrubland, herbaceous wetland, wet meadow) and post-restoration (grassland).
	Wetland restoration-Acres restored	Enter the number of acres of WETLAND habitat restored. Wetland acres restored under this metric should comply with the NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Wetland Restoration (657)</a> . In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to and following restoration (barren, cropland, deciduous forest, coniferous forest, shrubland, grassland, herbaceous wetland, wooded wetland, wet meadow).
	Land restoration-Acres of field buffers created	Enter the number of acres of FIELD BUFFER created. Acres of field buffer created under this metric should comply with the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards - <a href="#">Field Border (386)</a> , <a href="#">Filter Strip (393)</a> , <a href="#">Contour Buffer Strips (332)</a> , <a href="#">Grassed Waterway (412)</a> , <a href="#">Vegetative Barrier (601)</a> , <a href="#">Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (380)</a> , <a href="#">Hedgerow Planting (422)</a> , <a href="#">Herbaceous Wind Barriers (603)</a> . In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland, shrubland), and the dominant vegetation being planted (grassland, deciduous forest, shrubland, wooded wetland).
	Riparian restoration – acres of riparian areas restored	Enter the number of riparian acres restored, including riparian buffers. Riparian acres restored under this metric should comply with the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards - <a href="#">Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)</a> , <a href="#">Critical Area Planting (342)</a> , <a href="#">Riparian Forest Buffer (391)</a> . In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), the dominant vegetation being planted (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Wet meadow), and the average width of the riparian buffer.
	Land restoration-Acres of trees planted	Enter the number of acres of TREES planted. Acres of trees planted under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)</a> . In the NOTES section, specify the



		landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland, shrubland), the average number of trees per acre planted, and forest type (broadleaf, conifer, redwood, swamp--either broadleaf or conifer, shrub).
	Acres restored on private lands through silvicultural manipulation	Enter the total acres of existing forest that will be restored through silvicultural manipulation. Acres restored under this metric should comply with NRCS Conservation Practice Standard - <a href="#">Forest Stand Improvement (666)</a> .
	Land restoration-Removal of Invasives-Acres restored	Enter the number of acres restored by removal of INVASIVE SPECIES. Acres restored under this metric should comply with the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards - <a href="#">Brush Management (314)</a> , <a href="#">Herbaceous Weed Control (315)</a> . In the NOTES section, specify: the vegetation type being removed (herbaceous, shrub, or tree), average frequency (in years) the treatment is expected to occur in the future, and whether the removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes, No).
	Acres with restored hydrology	Enter the number of acres with restored hydrology. Acres restored under this metric should comply with the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards - <a href="#">Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats (643)</a> , <a href="#">Wetland Restoration (657)</a> .
Planning, Research, Monitoring	# mgmt plans with BMPs	Enter the number of completed management plans into which Best Management Practices (BMPs) were incorporated. In the NOTES section, specify the number of acres for which management plans will be developed.

## ELIGIBILITY

### Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions. To be competitive, applicant organizations must demonstrate capacity and experience commensurate with the scale of the project being proposed and the funding being requested.
- Individuals, federal government agencies, and for-profit entities are not eligible to apply for grant funding.

### 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.

- 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.
- Funds may not be used to provide technical assistance for Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects.

### **FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH CONTRIBUTIONS**

Approximately \$12.4 million in grant funding is available under this funding opportunity. Typical grant awards will range from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000, with an estimated average grant size of approximately \$500,000.

Matching contributions are not required. However, the ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process, and projects that offer higher match ratios with contributions from non-federal sources may be more competitive. Matching contributions may include cash, in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found by [clicking here](#). To be eligible, matching contributions must be spent or applied during the period of performance indicated in the application. The landowner portion of cost-share required to obtain funding from Farm Bill programs is not an eligible source of match for this funding opportunity.

Organizations relevant to any of NRCS's Underserved/Special Emphasis Categories that are unable to provide significant non-federal matching contributions are encouraged to contact NFWF prior to submitting a proposal. Discussing challenges and setting expectations will help ensure matching contributions do not become an undue barrier during the review process.

### **PROJECT PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE**

Grant period of performance will typically be three years following finalization of the grant agreement.

### **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.

**Priorities** – Project addresses one or more of the funding opportunity priorities and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success.

**NRCS Coordination** – 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](#).

**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.

**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.

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

**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 and Expansion** – Project has potential to apply lessons learned to other communities and catalyze broader practice adoption.

**Communication** – Project includes a 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. Project includes plans for securing future funding needed to implement long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

**Past Success** – Applicant has a proven track record of success in implementing other relevant projects with specific and measurable results.

**Partnership** – Relationships are in place to implement the project and the project is supported by relevant stakeholders, constituents, and communities. Project identifies key partners (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant), the roles they will play in implementation, 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 project completion.)

## **OTHER**

**Applicant Demographic Information** – In an effort to better understand diversity in our grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic 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.

**Procurement** – If the applicant chooses to identify specific 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 Acknowledgment 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. Grantees 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 applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

**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.

**Underserved/Special Emphasis Categories** – The historically underserved farmer and rancher categories include those with limited resources, beginning farmers/ranchers, socially disadvantaged (American Indians or Alaska Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics) and veterans. More information on the underserved categories can be found [here](#). The special emphasis categories are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian American, Black, Disability, Women, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Hispanic, and Veterans. More information on the special emphasis categories can be found [here](#).

**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.

## TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the [Conservation Partners](#) program page on the NFWF website for the most current dates and information.

Applicant Webinar:	January 11, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET Register for the webinar using <a href="#">this link</a> .
Full Proposals Due:	February 28, 2024 by 11:59 PM ET
Review Period:	March-May
Awards Announced:	Mid-Late May

After award announcements, NFWF staff will work with grantees to prepare grant agreements and other necessary paperwork, all of which will be completed electronically using the Easygrants system. Additional information about the grantee's organization and its finances may be solicited during this time. Once grant agreements are finalized, funds will typically be paid to grantees on a reimbursable basis. Funds may be advanced to qualified grantees on an as-needed basis.

## 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 NFWF's 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 *Conservation Partners Program – 2024* 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](#) page.

For more information or questions about this funding opportunity, please contact:

Greg Pilchak  
Working Lands Program Director,  
Central Regional Office  
[greg.pilchak@nfwf.org](mailto:greg.pilchak@nfwf.org)  
202-938-0640

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 #, email address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.