



# NFWF

## Conservation Partners Program 2024

### Applicant Frequently Asked Questions

#### 2024 Funding Opportunity

- **How much funding does a typical grant receive?**
  - This year, we anticipate that average grant size will range from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000. Given the greater availability of funding, NFWF is seeking to award projects that achieve high cost-effectiveness on large acreages.
- **What should my project start date be?**
  - We expect to award grants in May; therefore, the project start date should be no sooner than May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- **What is the typical duration of a grant?**
  - Typical grant duration is three years, and all funds (including match) must be spent between project start and end dates.

#### NRCS Alignment

- **What does NRCS alignment mean?**
  - We encourage you to communicate and coordinate with your NRCS State Conservationist as you formulate your proposal. When evaluating projects, reviewers will consider projects' alignment with NRCS priorities (Are you addressing priority resource concerns?) and capacity needs (Where and what kind of technical assistance is needed?).
  - There should be an evident connection to Farm Bill conservation programs in the proposal. This may include promoting programs, helping producers with signup and contracting, assisting with practice design and implementation, and monitoring.
  - To avoid "double dipping," please ensure that any technical assistance capacity supported through your project is not substantively contributing to projects that are currently receiving USDA funds for technical assistance. For instance, CPP funds cannot be used to support a new conservation agronomist whose primary responsibility is to deliver a separate Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project with an existing budget for technical assistance and project delivery.

## Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Practices

- **How must projects include CSAF practices?**
  - NFWF and our funding partners are prioritizing projects that further the promote and help producers adopt and implement [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry \(CSAF\) greenhouse-gas-mitigating and carbon sequestration activities](#). Projects do not need exclusively focus on these practices, but CSAF practices should be present in the proposal and key to the project.

## 2024 Funding Priorities

- **Is there an acreage minimum for projects?**
  - There is no acreage minimum for projects, however, we are looking to fund projects that will achieve the greatest on-the-ground impact in a cost-effective manner. This likely means thousands to tens of thousands of acres. Reviewers will consider projects' geography, e.g. Western rangeland vs. Eastern cropland, and conservation strategy, e.g. grazing management vs. wetland restoration, when evaluating project scale.
- **Is funding pre-allocated for each geographic priority?**
  - No, we encourage applicants to apply for the geography that most closely corresponds to the proposed project. We evaluate each proposal independently, and there is no inherent advantage in applying to one geography over another.
- **Are you able to apply if you do not fall under one of the geographic priorities?**
  - Geographic focus is somewhat fluid, however, projects far afield of the main priority areas will not be considered for funding. We are seeking to fund projects in the Northern Great Plains/Prairie Potholes, Southern Great Plains, Upper Mississippi River Basin, and Great Lakes Basin.
- **What if your project overlaps two or more of the priority geographies?**
  - Please select the priority geography that contains the largest portion of your project footprint. There is room in the project narrative to explain how project activities will meet the key strategies of each priority geography.

## Matching Contributions

- **Are matching contributions required?**
  - Matching contributions are not required, but higher match ratios, particularly from non-federal sources, may be more competitive. Underserved/Special Emphasis organizations are encouraged to contact NFWF about any match barriers.
- **Can landowner cost-share be used as match?**

- No, the landowner portion of cost-share required to obtain funding from Farm Bill conservation programs such as EQIP is not an eligible source of match for this funding opportunity.
- **Are state or local government cost-share funds eligible as match under CPP?**
  - Yes, any state or local government funds are eligible so long as they are 1) not already being used to match any other federal source, 2) spent within the grant period of performance, and 3) reasonably contributing to the project's outcomes.
- **Are there limitations on the source of grantee match?**
  - No. Reviewers may give greater weight to matching funds from non-federal sources, but applicants are nevertheless encouraged to list federal match to illustrate the full scope of partner contributions.

### **Project Budget**

- **Can projects use for-profit organizations as subcontractors?**
  - Yes, both non-profit and for-profit organizations can serve as subcontractors.
- **What percentage of the budget is allowed to subcontractors?**
  - There is no set limit on how much of a budget can be allocated to subcontractors, however, the budget narrative should clearly demonstrate the capacity need that the subcontractors would fulfill.
- **Are demonstration areas eligible expenses?**
  - Yes, however, we are looking for projects that drive on-the-ground impacts by prioritizing direct technical assistance to farmers and ranchers in addition to more indirect approaches. Demonstration areas have largely served as a tool to facilitate peer-to-peer learning in previous awards.

**If you have further questions regarding this funding opportunity, please contact:**

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