

NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS 2025

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Wednesday, February 19th, 2025, by 11:59 PM ET / 9:59 PM MT**
Applicant Webinar ([Register Here](#)): Thursday, December 12th, 2024, 3:00 PM ET / 1:00 PM MT

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to voluntarily conserve and restore grasslands and wildlife species in the Northern Great Plains. The goal of the Northern Great Plains program is to maintain and/or improve interconnected grasslands in focal areas to sustain healthy populations of grassland-obligate species while fostering sustainable livelihoods and preserving cultural identities including tribal cultures and food sovereignty. The Northern Great Plains program anticipates awarding approximately \$22 million in grants in 2025. Major funding partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Bureau of Land Management, Bezos Earth Fund, Marathon Oil, Altria Group, Occidental Petroleum Corporation, and Margret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The following are the Northern Great Plains focal areas; Dakota Grasslands, Missouri-Milk River Grasslands, Nebraska Sandhills, and the Powder River-Thunder Basin Grasslands. A digital business plan map can be accessed [here](#).



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

All proposals must specifically address how projects will directly and measurably contribute to the accomplishment of one or more of the program priorities as identified in the [Northern Great Plains Program Business Plan](#). Projects that increase organizational capacity and utilize innovative and community-based approaches are encouraged.

The Northern Great Plains Program seeks projects that address the following desired outcomes:

Demonstrate successful models for grassland habitat conservation that:

- Increase grasslands connectivity through voluntary, permanent conservation efforts that maintain working ranches and restrict sub-division and sod-busting activities (conservation easements, grass banking, etc.). Projects in areas at high risk of tillage will be more competitive.
- Strengthen tribal buffalo culture and food sovereignty through the restoration and improvement of grassland habitats on reservations and other tribal lands.
- Increase grassland connectivity through habitat restoration efforts (e.g., re-seeding, removal of woody invasives, prescribed fire). Strategies that complement the [NRCS Great Plains Biome Framework](#) are encouraged.
- Improve voluntary management at large scales that facilitates persistent long-term behavioral changes that benefit grasslands and focal species (e.g., conversion of expiring Conservation Reserve Program to managed grazing systems, installation of grazing management agreements etc.).

Improve population levels and related outcomes for grassland species in targeted focal areas including:

- Improve landscape permeability for pronghorn by removing and modifying fence and installing structures to minimize mortality at road crossings and bottleneck sites.
- Sustain populations of greater sage-grouse through voluntary restoration of meadows and removing or marking fence around key leks in Sage Grouse Focal Areas.
- Projects that help identify and address limiting factors for grassland obligate songbirds specifically: Baird's sparrow, Sprague's pipit, chestnut-collared and thick-billed longspurs, and lark buntings.
- Promote black-footed ferret conservation through the distribution of sylvatic plague vaccine in targeted prairie dog colonies.

Capacity Building

- 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](#).
- Implementation practices associated with this capacity funding should align with NRCS [Conservation Practice Standards](#).

Community Impact and Engagement: Projects that incorporate outreach to communities, foster community engagement, and pursue collaborative management leading to measurable conservation benefits are encouraged. When possible, projects should be 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, maintenance, and sustainability post-grant award.

PROJECT METRICS

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

Project Activity	Recommended Metric	Additional Guidance
Greater sage-grouse population	# of leks	Report the number of Greater sage-grouse leks on your project (if applicable)
Conservation easements - general	Acres protected under easement	Enter the number of acres protected in perpetual/long-term conservation easements (> 30 years) - Please specify length of the easement in the notes. Do not include easement acres under the Greater sage-grouse easement metric.
Conservation easements – sage grouse	Acres protected under easement	Enter the number of acres protected under perpetual/long-term conservation easement (>30 years) specifically for Greater sage-grouse, specify length of easement in the notes section.
Instream restoration -	# Structures	Enter the # structures installed and specify structure



# structures installed	installed	type in the NOTES section (i.e., Zeedyk, beaver analogs or similar structures)
Land restoration - general	Acres restored	Enter the acres associated with any practice that restores grasslands to a functional condition (seeding crop to grass, removing conifer, specify restoration practice in the notes section). Do not include acres restored for Greater sage-grouse. In the NOTES specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-restoration (grassland)
Land restoration – sage grouse	Acres restored	Enter the number of acres associated with upland restoration activity (re-seeding, conifer removal etc.) specifically for Greater sage-grouse, report the specific restoration practice in the NOTES section and specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-restoration (grassland)
Riparian restoration-sage grouse	Acres restored	Enter acres associated with mesic wet meadow restoration practices (Zeedyk structures, beaver mimicry etc. note practice type in notes section) specifically for Greater sage-grouse. In NOTES section, specify the acreage and restoration state (dry vs. wet) pre- and post-implementation.
Riparian restoration	Acres restored	Enter acres associated with mesic wet meadow restoration practices (Zeedyk structures, beaver mimicry etc. note practice type in notes section). In NOTES section, specify the acreage and restoration state (dry vs. wet) pre- and post-implementation.
BMP implementation for fencing improvements – sage grouse	Miles of fencing improved	Enter miles of fence removed or improved for Greater Sage-grouse to minimize collision (fence markers, fladry etc., report practice in the NOTES section).
BMP implementation for fencing improvements - pronghorn	Miles of fencing improved	Enter miles of fence removal or modification completed for improved pronghorn passage (raising the bottom wire, drop fence, etc. report specific practice in the notes section)
Improved management practices	Acres under improved management	Enter the number of acres under improved management. Include any practice that improves grassland function (grazing management, changed behaviors, infrastructure development to facilitate managed grazing)
Black-footed ferret disease control	# Acres protected from disease	Enter the number of acres treated for the control of sylvatic plague and the conservation of Black-footed ferrets (specify control measures implemented in the NOTES section)



Black-footed ferret disease control	# Sites protected	Enter the number of sites protected from disease for the conservation of Black-footed Ferrets
Research	# Studies used to inform management	Enter the number of studies completed whose findings are used to adapt management and/or inform management decisions.
Project footprint	Acreage of project footprint	Enter the total number of 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.
Economic benefits	# 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.
Economic benefits	# 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.
Incentives	# participants receiving gov't agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the number of participants receiving federal, state, or local government cost share or financial assistance
Incentives	\$ value of gov't agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the dollar value of federal, state, or local government agency cost share or financial assistance.
Incentives	Acres covered by gov't agency cost share or financial assistance	Enter the number of acres covered by federal, state, or local government agency cost share or financial assistance.
Outreach/ Education/ Technical Assistance	# people with changed behavior	Enter the number of producers implementing new conservation practices with or without federal, state, local, or private financial assistance. This should be equal to or greater than the “# of farmers receiving gov't agency cost share or financial assistance” metric.
BMP development	# Acres covered by conservation plans	Enter the number of acres that are receiving conservation planning and other technical assistance.
BMP development	# mgmt plans with BMPs	Enter the number of management plans into which Best Management Practices (BMPs) were incorporated



ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, U.S. Federal government agencies, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal agencies, and educational institutions.
- Ineligible applicants include businesses and unincorporated individuals.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- **Equipment:** Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible and cost-effective or use matching funds to make those purchases. NFWF acknowledges, however, that some projects may only be completed using NFWF funds to procure equipment. If this applies to your project, please contact the program staff listed in this RFP to discuss options.
- 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 Northern Great Plains program will award approximately \$22 million in grants this cycle to 20-25 grants. Grants may be up to three years in length.

Matching contributions (non-federal and federal) are encouraged to demonstrate broad support for the project and overall impact of the work. The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process.

Match can be any combination of in cash and/or in-kind goods and services (for example external/partner services, volunteers, or grantee in-kind, materials and services donated, etc.) or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. No priority will be given to higher cash percentages versus other sources of match. 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](#). Full information on how to document match, including a description of acceptable sources of match, is available [here](#).

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 as identified in the [Northern Great Plains Business Plan](#), and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities outlined in the Request for Proposal.

Technical Merit – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design, and implementation to ensure activities are technically sound and feasible.

Spatial Data – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF’s online mapping tool accurately represent the location(s) conservation activity(ies) at the time of proposal submission. Successful projects will be required to submit improved spatial data for each conservation activity within the period of performance as necessary.

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.

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

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, tribe, and/or local, state, and federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in the completion of the project.)

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. Both federal and non-federal funds may be counted towards match. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

Procurement – If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF’s express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support – Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF’s financial support for the grant in press releases, publications, and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

Receiving Award Funds – Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

Compliance Requirements – Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to



initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state, or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

Permits – Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state, or local requirements. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

Federal Funding –The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the NFWF [Northern Great Plains Program](#) page for the most current dates and information.

Full Proposal Due Date	Wednesday, February 19 th , 2025, by 11:59 PM ET
Applicant Webinar (Register Here)	Thursday, December 12 th , 2024, 3:00 PM ET
Review Period	February 2025 – May 2025
Awards Announced	May 2025

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through NFWF’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.
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.

There is a pre-recorded webinar available [here](#) which provides in-depth instructions on how to navigate Easygrants and submit an application online. Please also join our applicant webinar on January 11th to learn more about the programmatic components of this funding opportunity and to ask questions of NFWF staff.

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

Seth Gallagher, Program Director, Grasslands and Mountain West (seth.gallagher@nfwf.org)

Daley Burns, Manager, Rocky Mountain Regional Office (daley.burns@nfwf.org)

Kailie Tinnin, Rocky Mountain Regional Coordinator (kailie.tinnin@nfwf.org)

Or book some time with us [here](#)

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.