Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund

2025-2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

NFWF is committed to operating in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. We continuously monitor legal and regulatory developments to ensure our policies, procedures, and operations align with current federal directives. We encourage all applicants to do the same.

The ability and extent to which NFWF is able to make awards is contingent upon receipt of funds from federal agencies and/or other funding partners. Final funding decisions will be made based on the applications received and the level and timing of funding received by NFWF.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information here: Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund.
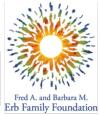
Applicant Webinar	September 18, 1-2 pm CT
Workshop for Applicants	September 29, 10a-12pm CT
Full Proposal Due Date	**Thursday, October 16, 2025 11:59 CT**
Review Period	November 2025-March 2026
Awards Announced	March-April 2026

OVERVIEW

Recognizing the need for a coordinated, public-private approach to addressing the stormwater, habitat, and public-use issues in the Southeast Michigan region, seven corporate, foundation and government funders have joined together to create the Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund (Fund). The Fund will award grants to help increase the resilience of communities and natural resources in Southeast Michigan by reducing the impact of stormwater, improving water quality, enhancing habitat, and increasing the usability of public space and natural areas. Grants will be

awarded in three categories: 1) expanding nature-based solutions and access to nature, 2) improving habitat quality and connectivity, 3) activating restored habitats and natural areas.

Administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the Fund is a public-private partnership among Cleveland-Cliffs, the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the USDA Forest Service.

The Fund was created to provide financial resources that benefit Southeast Michigan communities and wildlife habitats by supporting voluntary conservation investments. By investing in nature-based stormwater solutions, the Fund seeks to reduce flooding while also creating safe, dynamic, and enjoyable public natural spaces that improve habitat values for wildlife and quality of life for residents. By restoring the region's unique natural areas, the Fund seeks to enhance the quality and connectivity of habitat for wildlife, improve the ability of these habitats to withstand and absorb the impact of environmental stressors, and make nature more accessible for everyone.
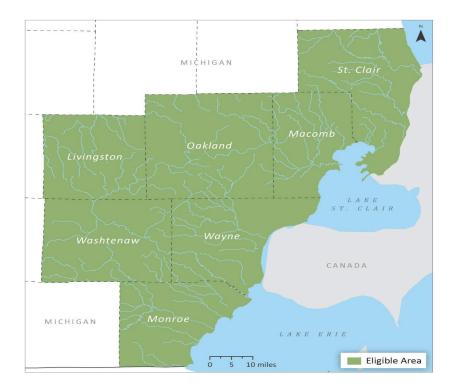
GRANT AWARD INFORMATION

Individual grants typically range from **$150,000 to $400,000**. Projects should apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work. Applicants are highly encouraged to apply the remainder of grant funding requested to support activities with significant strategic value, such as community engagement/outreach, education, operations and maintenance, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two years following finalization of a grant agreement. The standard grant period may include a third year in cases with a demonstrated need for additional time to complete critical project activities including but not limited to, final design or engineering, project establishment or maintenance, community engagement/outreach, or monitoring. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The start date indicated in an application should not precede March 30, 2026.

Match is not required. The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process. However, providing some match (non-federal and federal) is encouraged to demonstrate broad support for the project and overall impact of the work. 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 at http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/faqs.aspx.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

To be eligible for funding, projects must be located within the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan including St. Clair, Macomb, Oakland, Wayne, Washtenaw, Livingston, and Monroe counties (depicted geographically in the map below).

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Fund will award grants in the following categories:

1. *Expanding nature-based solutions and access to nature*

2. *Improving Habitat Quality and Connectivity*

3. *Activating Restored Habitats and Natural Areas*

Each applicant will need to identify one primary category that best describes the proposed project. Competitive proposals will deliver environmental and social impact, improving habitat, nature-based infrastructure, and equitable public access to natural areas. The following sections provide more information on the three funding categories.

Funding Category 1: Expanding Nature-Based Solutions and Access to Nature

Funding in this category will support nature-based solutions (NbS) projects that improve stormwater capture and storage to reduce runoff, combined sewer overflows, basement backups, and flooding through nature-based design. NbS projects should utilize natural design elements and vegetative stormwater solutions to reduce flooding and keep stormwater where it falls while delivering environmental, economic and community benefits. Proposed NbS projects must be designed with a dual purpose, to increase stormwater storage capacity while also enhancing the quality of, access to, and/or use of community natural areas.

Projects seeking funding in this category will install new NbS and/or improve and maintain the function of existing NbS installations designed to reduce local flooding. All projects must add or maintain a minimum of 100,000 cumulative gallons of stormwater storage capacity per year to be competitive. NbS project activities may include, but are not limited to, the installation or maintenance of any of the following practices: stormwater wetlands, rain gardens, targeted tree planting, bioswales, etc.

Competitive NbS proposals will focus the majority of the on-the-ground work on installing and/or maintaining NbS practices that are predominantly vegetative. If projects incorporate structural NbS elements, such as pervious surfaces, living roofs, etc. these elements will need to complement NbS practices that focus on natural vegetative solutions and should not be proposed as the focus of a project. Proposals should also incorporate activities designed to enhance public natural areas which may include but are not limited to, installing or enhancing trails or paths, active recreational opportunities or direct engagement, passive recreation such as benches or play areas with pervious surfaces, community gardens, educational signage, pollinator gardens, etc. Projects that do not include enhancements to public natural areas or public access will not be considered for funding.

Preference will be given to projects of sufficient size and scope to significantly reduce runoff and contaminant discharge (i.e., reduction of nutrients, pollution, and sediment) and increase NBS function at a regional or significant scale (at least 100,000 gallons stormwater storage/year). Proposals seeking funds for improvements to existing NBS projects should outline their authority to access and maintain those sites.

Small, isolated projects (e.g., rain barrels, cisterns, a single parking lot) without a connection to a larger nature-based infrastructure plan or suite of proposed installations will not be competitive. Proposals are encouraged to utilize native or non-invasive, urban-adapted plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for pollinators and other native wildlife or diversify and sustain the urban canopy. Applicants must include a maintenance plan (see Long-term Operation, Maintenance and Monitoring section) and are encouraged to build in training/capacity needs to maintain infrastructure after the life of the grant. Preference will be given to projects that align with NBS and/or community plans, municipal sustainability, resilience, open space plans or approved watershed management plans (see Evaluation Criteria section for more detail).

All applications proposing new NbS installations must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage added annually (gallons/year). Applications proposing NBS maintenance or enhancement must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage capacity (gallons/year) when NbS functions optimally as a result of maintenance activities. Applicants are encouraged to use the EPA stormwater calculator tool, found by clicking here: https://www.epa.gov/water-research/national-stormwater-calculator to estimate design retention capacity. For tree planting projects, applicants are encouraged to use i-Tree, found by clicking here: https://planting.itreetools.org/ to calculate gallons of storm water taken up annually by tree planting (use a 20-year tree age for measuring stormwater benefits in i-Tree). To inform selections of native or non-invasive, urban-adapted plants and tree species for NbS installations, consider the following references: SEMCOG Low Impact Development Manual; MSU native plant guide.

Funding Category 2: Improving Habitat Quality and Connectivity
Funding in this category will support habitat restoration projects, including in-stream, riparian, upland, and wetland habitat, that improve the quality and connectivity of habitats throughout Southeast Michigan. Habitat projects must be designed to restore habitat while also meaningfully improving public access to and/or use-opportunities of natural areas throughout the region.

Projects seeking funding in this category will restore habitats throughout Southeast Michigan to achieve a range of ecological benefits, such as improving water quality in waterways and the Great Lakes, reducing erosion, increasing the complexity, connectivity and quality of habitat, benefiting species of concern, and enhancing biodiversity and supporting healthy populations of native species. Habitat project activities may include, but are not limited to, creation/restoration of pollinator habitat, streambank stabilization, invasive species control for invasive plants, native plant restoration, construction of in-stream structures to improve geomorphological processes and habitat for fish and aquatic organisms. Proposals should also incorporate activities designed to increase connectivity between natural areas and habitats, such as restoring contiguous habitats or parcels adjacent to protected and/or restored natural areas, connecting natural areas via trail systems, and restoring habitat in strategic locations to provide more ecologically significant and improved access to critical habitats for priority species (e.g., threatened and endangered species, NFWF priority species such as brook trout, waterfowl, lesser yellow-legs and other migratory and marsh-nesting birds, pollinators, etc.). See the Great Lake Business Plan for additional program priority details. Proposals must improve public access to and use of natural areas, which may include construction of trails, public access points, and infrastructure enabling use of waterways and habitats, such as paddle craft launches, and wildlife viewing areas, etc.

Projects that do not include enhancements to public natural areas and/or improve access to or use of natural areas will not be considered for funding. Preference will be given to projects designed to improve habitat for multiple species of conservation concern. Small, isolated projects lacking strategic relevance for priority species, regional habitat connectivity, or restoration of rare or critical habitats will not be competitive.

Funding Category 3: Activating Restored Habitats and Natural Areas
Funding in this category will support grants that activate restored habitats and natural areas, including those previously funded by GLRI or NFWF, by investing in long-term habitat stewardship, public access, engagement capacity and programs to help all people get out into nature. Projects should invest in needed on-the-ground stewardship or restoration to maintain habitat quality while also enhancing site access and stewardship capacity. All proposals should describe the rationale or plan for selecting the project location, the activation elements proposed and identify the user groups that will be served by the project and how they will be meaningfully engaged in the project. To do this work well, we see long-term sustained commitments to community and municipal engagement as critical. All applicants will be asked to provide, or develop with NFWF funding, a longer-term community and partnership framework that is already a part of the organization or partner org's strategic operations or current priorities (not just project level). Projects should support public-private partnership development – both with partners at the community level and with municipalities to support project sustainability and long-term impact through direct investments such as maintenance.

All applicants submitting a proposal under this funding category should reach out to NFWF staff to discuss project activities prior to submitting a proposal. Funding will support the strategies that encompass the following elements and directly prioritize multiple benefits.

- **Habitat stewardship:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations and implement stewardship activities to enhance long-term, sustainable habitat stewardship, including adaptive management, invasive species control and direct community engagement. Manage habitat or natural areas to improve and protect habitat quality and enhance resilience of restored project sites and public access infrastructure. This priority must enhance multiple benefits and will not be competitive as stand-alone investments.
- **Access to nature:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations to activate restored habitat and natural areas through strategic, direct engagement of communities and user groups that encourage public use, enhance public health, increase accessibility, and remove barriers for all people to get outside and into nature. These can include education opportunities in natural areas, programs and experiences, conservation-oriented workforce development programs, enhancing volunteerism and long-term stewardship of sites, training the next generation of conservationists and nature enthusiasts, increasing use of natural areas through supported activities, events, and programs.
- **Public access opportunities:** Add new or enhance existing infrastructure that improves public access, accessibility and engagement in previously restored habitat or natural areas. Public access improvements may include but are not limited to construction of trails, nature-based or nature-compatible recreation, public access points, and infrastructure enabling use of waterways and habitats, such as paddle craft launches, wildlife viewing areas, gathering spaces etc. This priority must complement other strategies and will not be competitive to stand alone. Activation is the key; this is not intended to fund park beautification such as boardwalks or pavilions without on-the-ground restoration or

community engagement components, or supplement basic park operations and maintenance such as infrastructure repairs, mowing, garbage collection etc.

Project should be designed to span up to 3 years or 3 field seasons to increase sustainability and long-term success. Proposed projects should be of sufficient size, scope, or unique ecological value to necessitate a strategic re-investment in the previously restored habitat. Projects should not request funding to support the following activities: long-term transportation to sites, stand-alone parking lots or other infrastructure that is not required for project success, planned or sustained site maintenance activities such as cleaning, mowing, annual repairs to existing infrastructure, etc.

PROJECT METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund 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 metrics are shown in the table below). ***Additional guidance to assist applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes is available at https://www.nfwf.org/semichigan.*** All grantees should review this document when selecting metrics as a part of their Easygrants application. If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact Aislinn Gauchay aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metrics *Required metric	Additional Guidance
Nature-based Infrastructure	*Volume stormwater storage added	Enter the gallons of stormwater storage added annually. In the NOTES section, include the design retention capacity of the nature-based infrastructure installed or maintained and indicate the method or model used to estimate annual stormwater storage added.
Nature-based Infrastructure	Sq ft of nature-based infrastructure	Square feet of nature-based infrastructure installed. Include details on plant species selected, seed mixes, etc.
Nature-based Infrastructure	# trees planted	Enter # of trees planted. In the NOTES, 1) include the size (diameter) and species of trees planted and 2) specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, redwood, swamp--either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate.
Riparian Restoration	miles restored	Enter the number of riparian miles restored, including riparian buffers. In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), the dominant vegetation being planted (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp), and the average width of the

		riparian buffer. Indicate the miles of riparian habitat restored along priority waterways. Include miles of invasive species control, bank stabilization, and native vegetation restoration. Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.
Instream Restoration	miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored. Miles of stream/channel restored or naturalized, INCLUDE installation of in-stream habitat structures and stream geomorphology restoration activities (impoundment removal, naturalize stream channel, etc.). Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.
Instream Restoration	# structures installed	Enter the # of in-stream habitat structures installed, replayed, upgraded or repaired for improvement of in-stream habitat (if stream project). If the project is installing a water lever control structure in a wetland context, please indicate in the NOTES.
Fish Passage Improvements	# passage barriers rectified	Enter the # of in-stream barriers removed or rectified as part of THIS grant to improve aquatic organism passage and/or flooding. If multiple barriers exist at one specific location, please list "1" and list each individual barrier in the notes. Provide the barrier name(s) or ID(s) will be removed.
Fish Passage Improvements	Miles of stream opened	Enter total # of miles opened to improve aquatic organism passage. Only include the miles of main stem & smaller tributaries connected until the next barrier upstream (or headwaters), but NOT lakes, ponds, or distance downstream from the barrier removed. Include the TU conservation portfolio ID if within a brook trout patch.
Floodplain Restoration	Acres restored	Enter # of floodplain acres restored. In the NOTES, indicate % of vegetation on the pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%) and the dominant vegetation being restored (Broadleaf, Conifer, Redwood, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp).. Specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species.
Wetland Restoration	Acres restored	Enter # acres of WETLAND (Include acres of invasive species control, native vegetation restoration, and habitat structure/quality improvement, NOT riparian or instream) habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (Marsh, Tidal marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp) and indicate % of vegetation on pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%). This is a footprint metric intended to capture all wetland acres where on-the-ground interventions

		are occurring. Enter the total number of acres restored. Include acres of invasive species control. Specify acres within this habitat type re-treated for invasive species.
Removal of invasives	Acres restored	Enter # acres of invasives removed. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Forest understory, Junipers, Shrubs, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation-- excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Swamp), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No). This can include new treatment or re-treatment.
Erosion Control	Lbs sediment avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually. In the notes, indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Lbs P avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of phosphorous prevented from entering system annually. In the NOTES, please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
BMP implementation for nutrient or sediment reduction	Lbs N avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of nitrogen prevented from entering system annually. In the NOTES, please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
Nature-based infrastructure	Acres of natural areas**	Enter the acres of neighborhood natural areas and habitat created or improved
Nature-based infrastructure	Miles trails developed/improved**	Enter the number of miles of trails or river walks developed or improved
Nature-based infrastructure	Access pts developed/improved**	Enter the number of public access points developed/improved
Volunteer participation	# of volunteer hours**	Enter the # of volunteer hours in this project
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.
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.

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Outreach/technical assistance	# people reached**	Provide total # of people reached by grant activities throughout the period of performance. People reached should reflect the number of community members (volunteers, local groups, residents) meaningfully engaged in the project design, implementation, or who utilize the project's on-the-ground assets post-implementation. If the applicant will be measuring public use of grant investments post-implementation, please indicate the method of measurement to validate the use estimate (e.g. trail counters, volunteer observations, etc.)

***All proposals should select at least two of these*

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 or complexity of the project being proposed and the funding being requested. If the applicant is a government entity or municipality, close partnership with at least one non-profit and/or community organization is required for projects to be competitive.

- Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and for-profit businesses. While these entities may not be the primary recipient of grant funds, they may be partners or contractors.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds
- NFWF funds and matching contributions are strictly prohibited from being used for several reasons to include, for example, political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities, or in violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. See OMB Uniform Guidance for additional information.

- **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 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.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. The Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund advisory team, comprised of the Fund's administrators and funding partners, and a panel of technical reviewers, comprised of subject-matter experts and key stakeholders from state agencies, communities, academia etc., will use the following criteria as a strong basis for project selections. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic distribution of projects, and balance among project types and grant size.

Conservation Outcomes	Budget	Technical
• Alignment with program goals and priorities • Quantifiable performance metrics • Appropriate monitoring of activities and outcomes • Partnership & community engagement • Project long-term sustainability	• Allowable and reasonable costs • Cost effective • Matching contributions	• Technically sound and feasible • Logical and achievable work plan and timeline • Engages technical experts • Accurate spatial data • Sound compliance approach (permits, NEPA, QAQC) • Past grantee success • Transferable

Strategic Value

Fund partners will consider the following criteria, listed in order of relative importance, when reviewing proposals and determining which will receive grant funding. Note that this list is not necessarily comprehensive of all factors that considered when reviewing proposals and some criteria might be weighted more heavily than others on a case-by-case project basis.

- **Partnership and Community Impact** – The applicant organization partners and engages collaboratively with 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. 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 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.

- **Program Goals and Priorities:** Project contributes to the program's overall goals for nature-based stormwater infrastructure, habitat restoration, enhancing public space, and engaging communities. Project has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities.

- **Technical Merit and Budget**: Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan, timeline for implementation and budget. Budget is clear, detailed, cost-effective (see Implementation section below) and appropriate for work proposed. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design implementation and maintenance.

- **Spatial Data** – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF's online mapping tool accurately represents 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.

- **Matching Contributions** – Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised, spent, and acquired 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.

  - Availability of match should not be the primary factor when an applicant decides whether or not to submit an application to the Fund. Match is not required. However, providing some match (in-kind, volunteer/staff time, equipment, cash, etc.) is encouraged to demonstrate project impact and partner investment where possible. The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process. If you are concerned about match or wish to discuss potential matching contributions, please contact Traci Giefer at traci.giefer@nfwf.org.

- **Plan or Strategy Alignment**: Project advances an existing local, regional, watershed, tribal, state or federal plan or strategy. Applicants are encouraged to align their proposed projects with regional and local efforts and demonstrate how they would complement and connect to other previous and ongoing work in the region in the proposal narrative. Types of relevant plans or strategies may include, but are not limited to, watershed plans, municipal or regional domestic action plans, sustainability plans, nature-based

infrastructure strategies, such as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments [Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan](), the [Detroit Sustainability Action Agenda](), state wildlife action plans, federal or regional wildlife or natural resource strategies, such as [Lakewide Action and Management Plans](), [Michigan's Forest Action Plan](), Joint Venture plans, [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region Coastal Program Strategic Work Plan](), [Great Lakes Business Plan]() and other existing local strategies.

- **Regional Collaboration & Geographic Distribution of Projects:** The Fund will take the location of proposed project sites into consideration when evaluating proposals to ensure investments represent the regional scope of the Fund and are distributed throughout the region. Projects proposing work that extends to the regional scope, has established communication or collaboration plans to share key findings or project design with regional stakeholders, or connects partners from throughout the region will be more competitive.

Qualifications

- **Organizational Capacity:** Applicant organization demonstrates capacity and experience commensurate with the scale or complexity of the project being proposed and the funding requested.

- **Funding Need**: Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

- **Past Success:** Project team has a proven track record of success in implementing practices with specific, measurable results.

- **Partnerships**: If the organization does not have the capacity or history of successes needed to constitute a competitive application alone, we highly encourage organizations to identify and collaborate with partner organizations to increase capacity and improve project design and outcomes. These partnerships may include multiple organizations needed to implement the project and authentically engage local stakeholders but elevate one higher capacity organization to act as the applicant and pass-through entity for project funding if needed. Partnerships should also ensure additional funds are leveraged and that the project will be maintained after the life of the grant. (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.) If the applicant is a government entity or municipality, close partnership with at least one non-profit and/or community organization is required to make projects competitive.

Implementation & Maintenance

- **On-the-Ground Implementation:** Funding categories 1 and 2 only will apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work, with the option of using the remaining funds for planning, permitting, final design, engineering, outreach, education, operation

and maintenance (if the project's primary focus is improving or maintaining NbS, this would be considered on-the-ground work), or monitoring.

- **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.

- **Timeliness:** Project has completed or nearly completed planning, design and engineering to the extent that on-the-ground implementation can begin shortly after the grant is awarded.

- **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 and Maintenance:** Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. Plans described in the proposal include how the organization will ensure long-term efficacy and sustainability of the project features including but not limited to, increasing or sustaining organizational capacity for long term maintenance, secure or plans to secure future funding for this activity, and partnerships established to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

- **Regional Connectivity & Scalability:** Project has the potential to catalyze additional efforts in communities or settings throughout Southeast Michigan where it has not been broadly deployed. Additionally, projects with regional scopes and partnerships that seek to improve regional collaboration and advance or establish regional strategies will be more competitive.

- **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.

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OTHER

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), and carbon accounting (e.g., sequestration, avoided emissions).

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 award 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. Requests for monthly advances will not be considered.

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.

WEBINARS AND WORKSHOPS
Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to view both webinars prior to submitting an application.

2026 Funding Opportunity Webinar
September 18, 1-2pm CT
Register Here.
The funding opportunity webinar provides important information about 2026 fundinfg priorities, in-depth review of the proposal narrative and highlighting priority project elements, tips for submitting competitive proposals, and FAQs. A recording of this webinar will be uploaded at www.nfwf.org/chi-cal.

Workshop for Applicants
September 29, 10 am-12pm CT
Register here
This workshop will provide an opportunity for applicants to connect with NFWF and our field liaisons to discuss proposal concepts and troubleshoot issues prior to the end of the open RFP period. This workshop is not required, rather it should be viewed as an opportunity to receive technical assistance and support from NFWF should it be needed. Applicants should come prepared with a clear project idea, at minimum, and have specific questions or guidance to request from the NFWF team.

Easygrants Instructional Webinar
The pre-recorded Easygrants webinar found here covers in-depth instructions for navigating Easygrants.

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 page.

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

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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.