

## Request for Quotations

### ***Contract to Conduct On-the-Ground Monitoring to Assess NFWF Impact on Grassland Passerines in the Great Plains***

#### **OVERVIEW**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Contractor to assist in monitoring NFWF's impact on grassland passerines in the Great Plains. Significant investments have been made by NFWF on grasslands conservation, restoration and management strategies through the Northern Great Plains, Southern Plains Grasslands Program and will be made through the Grasslands Resilience and Conservation Initiative. NFWF is using grassland passerines as an indicator species for intact functioning grasslands in the region and is soliciting proposals to measure population densities in relation to NFWF supported conservation interventions throughout the Great Plains. For more information on past efforts and focal species please refer to the [Northern Great Plains Business Plan](#).

#### **BACKGROUND**

Building on ten years of data collection in the Northern Great Plains, NFWF seeks to expand its monitoring efforts to determine the effectiveness of grasslands conservation strategies on grassland passerine populations throughout the Great Plains. Given the downward trend in grassland bird populations over the past 50 years, NFWF, through its investment in partner efforts, seeks to slow and ultimately halt the decline of grassland birds. To measure progress of this effort, NFWF is seeking a qualified contractor to design, implement, analyze and synthesize the collection of bird data associated with grassland conservation strategies.

NFWF is seeking a qualified applicant to continue and expand monitoring efforts in the current business plan geography while a new, likely larger Business Plan is developed for implementation beginning in 2027. In addition to the identified monitoring needs, the successful contractor may be expected to help scope and potentially identify new indicator species in an expanded grasslands geography outside the Northern Great Plains.

The following conservation strategies were coupled with bird monitoring over the ten-year duration of the Northern Great Plains Business Plan (NGP Business Plan):

- Increase connectivity of core native grasslands by restoring a minimum of 300,000 acres of degraded habitat adjacent to native grasslands by 2026. Restoration activities include returning cropland to native grass, prescribed fire, removal of woody invasive species and wet meadow/riparian restoration efforts.
- Improve management on 5,000,000 acres of working land in core areas by 2026. Management agreements with landowners are an effective tool for implementing habitat improvements at large scales through prescribed grazing, infrastructure to facilitate rangeland management, and behavior modifications

NFWF's bird-related goals were put in terms of increasing densities in breeding ranges and further delineated by NGP Business Plan Focal Areas. The following species were included:



# NFWF

- Baird's sparrow (*Centronyx bairdii*) - increase population density at NFWF sites in the Missouri-Milk River Grassland focal area above baseline of 1.04 birds per acre
- Sprague's pipit (*Anthus spragueii*) - increase population density at NFWF sites in the Missouri-Milk River Grassland focal area above baseline of 0.22 birds per acre
- Chestnut-collared longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) - increase population density at NFWF sites in the Missouri-Milk River and Dakota Grassland focal areas above baseline of 6.09 birds per acre
- Thick-billed longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) - increase population density at NFWF sites in the Missouri-Milk River and Thunder Basin-Powder River Grassland focal areas above baseline of 0.68 birds per acre
- Lark bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) - increase population density at NFWF sites in the Missouri-Milk River, Thunder Basin-Powder River and Dakota Grassland focal areas above baseline of 12.4 birds per acre

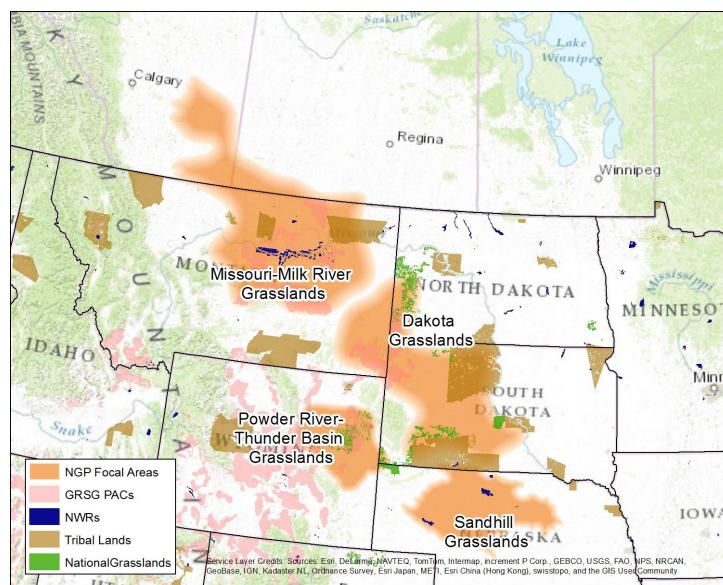


Figure 1: Northern Great Plains Focal Area as identified in the 2016 Business Plan.

Monitoring will help NFWF understand:

- 1) How the individual indicator species are responding to NFWF interventions at investment sites versus the broader landscape
- 2) Which restoration activities have the greatest impact on abundance and occupancy of indicator species

Overall, NFWF has a desire to apply these results to other unmonitored investment sites as appropriate to understand the cumulative impact of NFWF investment across the region in the future.

## SCOPE OF WORK

### Tasks

- 1. Create a monitoring and data analysis work plan to assess grassland nesting birds (with particular emphasis on indicator species) presence and response to restoration efforts (density, occupancy etc.).**

The goal of this contract is to adapt and implement a monitoring approach that will allow for expanded implementation and to quantify the impacts of NFWF investments on migratory birds throughout the Great Plains region. A successful contractor will work with NFWF and a selected subset of grantee restoration/management sites to examine outcomes of NFWF investment. Site monitoring should include at a minimum measure of habitat quality (i.e. ratio of invasives to natives and % plant cover), bird species density, and occupancy.

The plan should include: 1) recommended sampling methodology for grassland passersines 2) detailed annual timeline for monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities (see schedule for reporting needs); and 3) pre-monitoring coordination with NFWF to select sites and confirm approach and post-monitoring coordination with NFWF to review data and identify additional needs for reporting and/or data manipulation.

As mentioned, pre-monitoring analysis will be required to determine 1) the number of sampling sites required to assess habitat conditions in each land cover type of NFWF's investment sites; 2) the most efficient spatial extent of those sites across the geographic footprint of NFWF's investment sites; 3) the number of points or transects in each sampling site; and 4) the frequency of visits to each sampling site. To maintain flexibility as new regional Business Plan is in development, the offeror should coordinate with NFWF staff at the initiation of the contract to review investment sites and select monitoring locations.

- 2. Implement monitoring and evaluation of grassland passerine response to restoration and management efforts at investment sites.**

The general methodological approach for monitoring should follow standard point-count methodologies for grassland birds and be consistent with regional monitoring efforts, such as (but not limited to) the <https://www.birdconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025.2-Field-Protocol-for-Spatially-Balanced-Sampling-of-Landbird-Populations.pdf> Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR). Using these standardized protocols will ensure data gathered across projects are compatible with other monitoring efforts. We provide here a brief summary of our monitoring needs, as well as some key considerations to help the offeror understand what is needed, and key things to keep in mind while developing the monitoring plan.

- In general, bird population surveys need to be conducted before and after project completion to set baseline population estimates. Post-project implementation surveys should continue to be

conducted as restored habitat matures. Sampling should be done at consistent time intervals relative to project completion.

- NFWF also utilizes a control-treatment sampling design for grassland birds. The offeror will also need to establish transects on public or private lands where NFWF funds such conservation interventions as improved grazing management, removal of invasive woody plants, or grassland restoration.
- All birds should be identified to species when possible, or at least correctly assigned to a bird guild associated with each habitat type.
- If monitoring birds with passive acoustic recording units (ARU's) and/or other related technologies are included in the approach to monitoring, please articulate the need (or not) for equipment purchase in the proposal.
- Habitat condition and vegetation data should be included at monitoring points.

**Deliverables:**

- A written monitoring and data analysis approach (annual) that describes the methods used to determine site selection, sampling intensity and frequency across investment sites to implement protocols.
- Field implementation of monitoring approach
- Coordinate with other regional or national monitoring efforts to ensure data collection methodology is aligned, data is shared appropriately to and from NFWF/offeror, and stakeholder coordination is reflected in final reporting.
- Upon the completion of each sampling season NFWF expects an analysis and summary of results to be delivered within one hundred twenty days of the completion of survey activities. These analyses are required for NFWF partner and board of trustee updates and presentations. Summaries should include site-specific analysis of data collected regarding counts, abundance estimates, indicator species status, and comparative analysis with previous datasets to identify population trends.
- A formal, annual report should be delivered to NFWF summarizing the full sampling year's outcomes needs to be submitted by May 1st or each year. This report should be a detailed analysis accompanied by sharing of raw and analyzed data with NFWF. The analysis should offer site-level insights and document observable trends across NFWF investments if appropriate. Indicator species status and response should be called out specifically as well as other key insights gleaned from survey and evaluation activities. Offeror should recommend timing for delivery of annual report in their protocol/schedule.
- Raw data provided should include spreadsheets, text files or a database. Spatial data detailing accurate location of point counts is also required. Delivery of data and acceptable software will be determined in consultation with NFWF.
- Any additional quantitative tools that could support future monitoring efforts, such as code written in an open-source programming language like R or Python, or other software used for analyses.
- A one page project summary updated annually that includes the efforts to date and key take away outcomes.

**Schedule:**

- NFWF anticipates a start date of March 1, 2026 and end date of December 30, 2028 for the overall contract.

## REQUIRED EXPERTISE AND PROPOSED STAFF

The proposed team must include 1) a senior staff member with expertise in study design, population biology, bird ecology, and spatial data; 2) a staff member who has on-the-ground restoration experience to ground truth the evaluation protocols and incorporate a practical understanding of grassland nesting bird restoration actions and species response. Junior staff can be used to support the senior staff member in the implementation of monitoring activities in the field using established protocols. When you submit your cost proposal please identify the individuals who will work on this project and their previous experience working with NFWF. NFWF reserves the right to approve or reject any staffing selections that are made after this contract is awarded. The contractor selected to conduct the surveys should have the following qualifications:

- Experience conducting grassland bird surveys and proficient in the identification of grassland passersines from a distance with the aid of optical and/or acoustic monitoring equipment
- Experience with ocular habitat assessment in grasslands
- Proficiency in habitat mapping and interpretation of aerial photographs
- Proficiency with accurate field and data entry, and proofing with computer software
- Have staff located within the Great Plains region and/or able/willing to travel to project sites for survey work

## CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Offerors should organize their Proposal Narrative based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** The Scope of Work must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved. This section should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and program stakeholders and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach for conducting the tasks should clearly describe the proposed methods necessary to conduct the project. The section must demonstrate that those methods are robust and appropriate for conducting the project and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty associated with conducting the project. Weight: 20%
3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** This section should clearly describe which tasks each member of the team will conduct and how their training and experience provide the requisite experience to do so successfully. Weight: 20%
4. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience in the bird ecology grassland restoration in the Great Plains. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered. If subcontractors are to be used, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well. Describe how that past performance is applicable to this evaluation.  
Weight: 20%



5. **Budget.** The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. You must use attached Contractor Budget Template. You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed, but should not make any other changes. If applicable, please include the proposed budget for equipment purchase in the proposal separate from the Contractor Budget Template. Weight: 30%

#### **ELIGIBLE OFFERORS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, and local, state and Indian tribal governments.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the offeror warrants and represents that it does not currently have any apparent or actual conflict of interest, as described herein. In the event an offeror currently has, will have during the life of the contemplated contract, or becomes aware of an apparent or actual conflict of interest, in the event an award is made, the offeror must notify NFWF in writing in the Statement of Quotations, or in subsequent correspondence (if the issue becomes known after the submission of the Statement of Quotations) of such apparent or actual conflicts of interest, including organizational conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the contractor, the contractor's employees, or the contractor's subcontractors in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests, or otherwise. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the offeror, the offeror's employees, or the offeror's future subcontractors in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the NFWF Contracting Officer will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the offeror to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies NFWF may result in the proposal not being selected for award.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the Offeror warrants and represents that it is eligible for award of a Contract resulting from this solicitation and that it is not subject to any of the below circumstances:

Has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an Contract with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Was convicted (or had an officer or agent of such corporation acting on behalf of the corporation convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal or State law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or



Is listed on the General Services Administration's, government-wide System for Award Management Exclusions (SAM Exclusions), in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 C.F.R Part 180 that implement E.O.s 12549 (3 C.F.R., 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 C.F.R., 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension," or intends to enter into any subaward, contract or other Contract using funds provided by NFWF with any party listed on the SAM Exclusions in accordance with Executive Orders 12549 and 12689. The SAM Exclusions instructions can be found here: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

## **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Proposals must be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in three distinctly labeled and separate documents: 1) Technical Proposal, 2) Budget, and 3) Evidence of Financial Stability. Interested parties should submit proposals electronically to NFWF Margaret Card-Silache [Margaret.Card-Silache@nfwf.org](mailto:Margaret.Card-Silache@nfwf.org) using the requirements below:

### **1. Technical Proposal**

- Format: Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF with a font size no smaller than 11 pt.
- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, DUNS number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Narrative: Concise (10-page limit) description of the work plan and a summary of the applicant's expertise and experience, organized by the Criteria for Competitive Applications.
- Biographies: Resumes and/or Vitae of key staff and their role in the proposed work area.
- References: List two clients who have received services from the applicant that is similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.

**2. Budget:** The budget proposal must be submitted using the provided Contractor Budget Template.

**3. Evidence of Financial Stability:** The applicant shall provide proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements, credit ratings, a line of credit, or other financial arrangements sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's capability to meet the requirements of this solicitation.

## **SELECTION PROCEDURE**

A panel of NFWF staff will review the proposals. Offerors may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Only one award will be made for this project. If multiple institutions are involved, they should be handled through subcontracts.

## **SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

<b>January 23, 2026</b>	Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Margaret Card-Silache <a href="mailto:Margaret.Card-Silache@nfwf.org">Margaret.Card-Silache@nfwf.org</a> . NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all offerors have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be sent to NFWF <b>no later than 5:00 PM [Mountain Time] January 23, 2026</b> .
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<b>January 26, 2026</b>	NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website at <a href="https://www.nfwf.org/programs/northern-great-plains-program">https://www.nfwf.org/programs/northern-great-plains-program</a> .
<b>February 5<sup>th</sup> 2026</b>	Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to Margaret Card-Silache ( <a href="mailto:Margaret.Card-Silache@nfwf.org">Margaret.Card-Silache@nfwf.org</a> ) <b>by 5:00 PM [Mountain Time] February 5, 2026</b> . Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.
<b>February 26, 2026</b>	Contract award to selected Offeror
<b>December 30, 2028</b>	Deliverables Due