



Western Big Game Seasonal Habitat and Migration Corridors Fund - 2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

RFP GUIDANCE

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 [[Western Big Game Fund](#)].

Applicant Webinar ([Register Here](#))

Full Proposal Due Date

Review Period

Awards Announced

Thursday March 12th, 2026 3-4 PM ET

April 21, 2026, 11:59 PM ET

April-August 2026

August 2026

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals for projects that improve the quality of ungulate seasonal habitat, stopover areas, and migration corridors on federal land and/or voluntary efforts on private and Tribal land.

This year there will be two distinct funding options available – please review the RFP carefully to determine which option best suits your project.

Option A:

- Eligible projects will have been prioritized by one or several of 11 western states as a result of [Interior Secretarial Order 3362](#) (SO 3362) or Native nations. Projects will promote robust, sustainable populations of big game such as elk, mule deer and pronghorn, have positive effects on a variety of other species, and implement strategies that increase habitat connectivity and resiliency.
- Partners include the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Forest Service, and ConocoPhillips.
- Projects that can be completed in two years and are shovel/NEPA ready will be given priority.

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

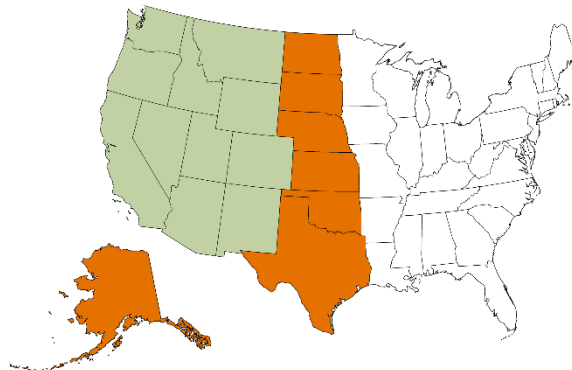
Option B Ecosystem Restoration Projects:

- Eligible projects will have been prioritized by one or several of 11 western states as a result of [Interior Secretarial Order 3362](#) (SO 3362) or Native nations. Projects will promote robust, sustainable populations of big game such as elk, mule deer and pronghorn, have positive effects on a variety of other species and implement strategies that increase habitat connectivity and resiliency. Additional consideration will be given to projects in 6 Great Plains States and Alaska that address the goals of the recently developed Action/Connectivity Plans that resulted from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) “Implementing Landscape Connectivity and Permeability Plans Across the Western Continent” project.
- Funding provided by Department of Interior (DOI) through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for States and Native Nations
- Eligible applicants include only state governments and federally recognized Tribes.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Option A: Only projects proposed in focal areas identified by states under SO 3362 in 11 western states (depicted in green) and Native Nations within Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming will be eligible.

Option B: Projects proposed in 18 states (depicted in orange and green), in focal areas identified by states under SO 3362 and Native Nations within Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming **AND** projects proposed in focal areas through the WAFWA Wildlife Movement and Connectivity Initiative – Action Plans in Alaska, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Texas will be eligible for funding.



FUNDING PRIORITIES (Applicable to both Options A & B)

All proposals must outline specifically how projects will directly address state game and fish (wildlife) department priorities as identified in [state action plans](#), or specific tribal priorities. We encourage non-government (option A) applicants to engage state and Tribal game and fish agencies, and local and tribal governments early to communicate intent and garner support. The required letters of support may take extended periods of time to obtain. For projects that are adjacent to Tribal lands, we encourage applicants to include a letter of support from relevant Tribal agencies. Similarly, projects on or adjacent to federal lands will be more competitive with letters of support from local federal land management offices.

Funding priorities to improve or restore habitat and measurably contribute to the sustainability of local and regional ungulate populations include:

1. Restoring degraded priority habitat, stopover areas, and migration corridors through activities identified in state or tribal plans, such as removing encroaching trees from sagebrush ecosystems, rehabilitating areas damaged by fire, or treating exotic/invasive vegetation to improve the quality and value of these areas to big game and other wildlife.
2. Work cooperatively with partners to implement wildlife friendly fencing measures, including potentially modifying (via smooth wire), removing (if no longer necessary), installing (if serving to direct big game movement out of harm's way), or seasonally adapting (seasonal lay down) fencing if proven to impede movement of big game through priority migration corridors or habitat.
3. Implement measures such as management agreements or other actions to improve and maintain bottlenecks within corridors and other areas within priority habitat or stopover areas.
4. Utilize other proven actions to improve priority big game seasonal habitat, stopover areas, or migration corridors across the West.

Community Impact and Engagement: Projects that incorporate outreach, 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, non-governmental organizations, 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 (Applicable to both Options A & B)

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the following list of metrics will be provided in Easygrants for 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 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
Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of fencing improved	Specify the number of miles of fencing improved
BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of fencing removed	Specify the number of miles of fencing removed
BMP implementation for fencing improvements	Miles of migration corridor reconnected	Specify the number of miles of migration corridor reconnected
BMP implementation for livestock fencing	Miles of fencing installed	Specify the number of miles of fencing installed
BMP implementation for prescribed burns	Acres burned	Enter # acres with prescribed burning. In the NOTES, specify if private or public land, average frequency (in yrs) for future burning, dominant vegetation burned (forest, shrubland, grassland, cropland, Phragmites marsh). If forest, note if trees were planted in past 10 yrs (Yes/No) & type of forest (Alder-maple, Aspen-birch, Douglas-fir, Douglas-fir with high productivity and high management intensity, Elm-ash-cottonwood, Fir-spruce-mountain hemlock, Hemlock-Sitka spruce, Hemlock-Sitka spruce with high productivity, Loblolly-shortleaf pine, Loblolly-shortleaf pine with high productivity and management intensity, Lodgepole pine, Longleaf-slash pine, Longleaf-slash pine with high productivity and management intensity, Maple-beech-birch, Mixed conifer, Oak-gum-cypress, Oak-hickory, Oak-pine, Ponderosa pine, Redwood, Spruce-balsam fir, Western oak, White-red-jack pine).
Improved management practices	Acres of private land under improved management	Specify the number of acres under improved management on private lands.
Improved management practices	Acres of Tribal land under improved management	Specify the number of acres under improved management on Tribal lands.

Improved management practices	Acres of public land under improved management	Specify the number of acres under improved management on public lands.
Land restoration	Acres restored on private land	Enter # acres of habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-restoration (broadleaf, conifer, redwood, grassland, shrubland, marsh, wet meadow, tidal marsh, swamp, seagrass, kelp forest).
Land restoration	Acres restored on Tribal land	Enter # acres of habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-restoration (broadleaf, conifer, redwood, grassland, shrubland, marsh, wet meadow, tidal marsh, swamp, seagrass, kelp forest).
Land restoration	Acres restored on public land	Enter # acres of habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (barren, cropland, grass, shrub) and post-restoration (broadleaf, conifer, redwood, grassland, shrubland, marsh, wet meadow, tidal marsh, swamp, seagrass, kelp forest).
Removal of invasives (woody vegetation)	Acres restored	Enter # acres of invasives removed. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Junipers, Shrubs, Grasses/forbs), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No).
Movement Success	Passage success rate	Enter the species passage success rate. Specify which species in the notes section of the metric.

ELIGIBILITY

*****To be considered for funding, all applications must be accompanied by a letter of support/acknowledgement from the director's office of the respective state or Native nation wildlife agency.*****

Option A:

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 Governments and organizations, and educational institutions.**
- Ineligible applicants include businesses and unincorporated individuals.

Option B:

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

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

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds (Applicable to both Options A & B)

- **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.
- Pursuant to the American Security Drone Act (ASDA), effective December 22, 2025, applicants proposing activities funded in whole or in part with federal funds may not use, operate, or purchase any drone or uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) included on the Covered Foreign Entities (CFE) List. This prohibition applies to both new purchases and continued use of existing UAS, including certain widely used commercial platforms, such as DJI and Autel. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all proposed and existing UAS used in connection with federally funded activities comply with applicable federal law and are not included on the CFE List. Noncompliance may affect eligibility for funding.
- 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.
- While federal agency partners are eligible applicants (option A), program funds cannot be applied to federal salary.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY AND MATCH

There are two categories of funding for this round. Please read carefully to determine which category you should apply for.

Option A:

NFWF anticipates awarding six to ten grants. Grants can range from one to three (preference given to projects that can be completed in two years) years in length. The most competitive grants will be at least \$100,000 and there is no maximum request amount. A minimum 1:1 non-federal match is required as in-kind or cash contributions. Please see the [Applicant Tip Sheet](#) for additional guidance. If meeting a 1:1 match requirement is a barrier for submitting an application, please reach out to Dani Tinnin (dani.tinnin@nfwf.org) to discuss possible paths forward.

Please note, the BLM and FS funds need to be spent on seasonal habitat and migration corridor projects taking place on or in proximity to BLM and FS lands. If your project is occurring on or in proximity to BLM or FS lands it should be indicated in the proposal clearly. The FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) funds will support these activities on private and Tribal lands. Providing project maps that include identified priority areas with a general land ownership layer and legend (i.e., BLM, Forest Service, Tribal lands, state lands, private lands) is strongly encouraged. Applicants do not need to specify which funding they are applying for, NFWF will determine applicable funding sources.

Option B:

Option B funding is set aside for ecosystem restoration projects and is only available to states and federally recognized Tribes. NFWF anticipates awarding approximately 10-25 grants with individual grants typically ranging from \$100,000 to \$2 million. Grants can range from one to three years in length. The match requirements are as follows:

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share (match)
States	90% of total project costs	10% of total project costs (11.12% of grant request), of which at least 2.5% must be cash
Federally recognized Tribes	97% of costs	3% of costs, of which at least 0.75% must be cash
		(Possibly covered for Native Nations by partnership with Native Americans in Philanthropy)



NAP: [Native Americans in Philanthropy](#) (NAP), as a part of their partnership with NFWF, will be providing match for granted Tribally-led projects up to the 10% funding set aside for Native Nation grantees in Option B. Match for Tribally-led projects funded beyond the 10% will be subject to NAP funding availability. NFWF will work with NAP to allocate funds to applicable projects, applicants do not need to add the NAP funds to the matching section of their proposal.

Federal Environmental Compliance: Projects selected for this funding (Option B) should expect to complete requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA; state and federal), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and Clean Water Act (CWA). Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating any grant-funded activities. Applicants may be asked to produce compliance documents and should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. NFWF has contracted the services of SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) to manage the environmental compliance review of selected applications. SWCA will assist grantees with NEPA and other regulatory compliance needs for your grant award.

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. Projects on Tribal lands must comply with all Tribal laws, regulations, and policies.

Field Liaisons: NFWF is contracting with [Native American Fish and Wildlife Society](#) (NAFWS) and [Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.](#) (ECT) to provide applicants and grantees with additional assistance. Our field liaisons will conduct outreach and offer assistance to applicants.

Field Liaison Contact	Email	Expertise
NAFWS	aedwards@nafws.org , smiller@nafws.org	All sectors, tribally-led projects
ECT	NationalProgramLiaisons@ectinc.com	All sectors

EVALUATION CRITERIA (Applicable to both Options A & B)

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. Full proposals will then be evaluated by review teams representing the relevant funders and technical experts based primarily on the extent to which they meet the criteria listed below. Each of the criteria will be evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is insufficient, 2 is significantly deficient, three is satisfactory, four is excellent and five is outstanding. For more information on review scoring see Appendix.

Funding Program Goals and Priorities – Project contributes to the funding program’s overall habitat and species conservation goals, and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities outlined in the RFP.

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 of 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.

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. A complete full proposal budget should include budget narratives to provide justifications for costs. 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 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.

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 range of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

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 the 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.

Spatial Data – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF’s online mapping tool accurately represent the location(s) of 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.

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.

Technical Merit – Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical, and achievable work plan/timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design, and implementation to ensure activities are technically sound and feasible. 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. Proposal notes any pre- and post-performance monitoring necessary and how it will be implemented. 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. This ensures long-term sustainability and success of the project, integration into local programs and policies, and community acceptance of proposed restoration actions.

Conservation Plan and/or Indigenous Knowledge – Project builds off and contributes to one or more existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, Tribal resource management, or species recovery plans and/or is informed by Indigenous Knowledge. Project establishes partnerships, capacity, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan. Proposal articulates the degree to which the project will advance outcomes and goals set forth in a plan.

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.

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, Native Nation, 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 (Applicable to both Options A & B)

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, the Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and the 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 sufficient 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.



Quality Assurance – If a project involves significant monitoring, data collection or data use, grantees will be asked to prepare and submit quality assurance documentation (www.epa.gov/quality). Applicants should budget sufficient time and resources to complete this task.

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.

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 two funding options "Funding Opportunity - Big Game Migrations Option A" and "Funding Opportunity – Big Game Migration Option B: Ecosystem Restoration Projects for States and Federally Recognized Tribes" 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.

There is a pre-recorded webinar available [here](#) which provides in-depth instructions on how to navigate Easygrants and submit an application online.

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

Seth Gallagher, Program Director, Grasslands and Mountain West (seth.gallagher@nfwf.org)
Dani Tinnin, Manager, Rocky Mountain Regional Programs (dani.tinnin@nfwf.org)



Margaret Card-Silache, Coordinator, Rocky Mountain Regional Programs (margaret.card-silache@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.

APPENDIX: EVALUATION CRITERIA – BENCHMARKS AND REVIEW PROCESS

Following is the process that will be used to review proposals and determine final awards.

Every proposal will be evaluated by a minimum of three reviewers (usually five or more), including at least one NFWF program staff member, at least one external, technical expert, and at least one representative from a funding agency partner. All reviewers agree to comply with a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality policy and receive training on reviewing proposals.

Proposals will be reviewed, evaluated, and scored based on the extent to which they meet the criteria of the categories below, which correspond to the evaluation criteria listed in the RFP and the questions in the proposal sections and narrative. Reviewers consider the degree to which the proposals align with these criteria when determining the score for each category and provide written comments on their assessments. Each of the criteria will be evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is insufficient, 2 is significantly deficient, three is satisfactory, four is excellent and five is outstanding.

The benchmarks below that are associated with the criteria are intended as a guide for reviewers and applicants may consider them when preparing their proposals. It is important to note that a score of 1 or 2 for any individual criterion can result in a proposal being turned down for funding regardless of high scores in other categories.

Once all of the proposals are reviewed based on the extent to which they meet the criteria, final funding decisions will be based on proposal scoring as well as additional factors applied to the overall slate of funded projects, which may include: geographic distribution of projects, variety of program priorities addressed, representation of project type and applicant, alignment with available funding, and performance on prior and/or current NFWF grants.



Program Goals and Priorities	
Scale	Description
1	Project does not address program priorities nor does it align with agency funding priorities.
2	Project somewhat addresses one program priority but does not align with agency funding priorities. Project lacks specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success.
3	Project addresses one or more program priorities and aligns somewhat with agency funding priorities. Project has at least one specific, quantifiable performance metric to evaluate project success.
4	Project addresses two or more program priorities and aligns with agency funding priorities. Project has more than one specific, quantifiable performance metric to evaluate project success.
5	Project addresses three or more program priorities and aligns with agency funding priorities. Project has multiple specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success.
Technical Merit	
1	Significant concern that project is not technically sound or feasible as proposed. The proposal omits a work plan/timeline. Project does not engage technical experts in planning, design, and/or implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant omits information on how proposed work will lead to other projects.
2	Some concern that project may not be technically sound and feasible. The proposal includes a limited work plan/timeline. Project negligibly engages technical experts in planning, design, and implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant notes that efforts may lead to other projects but does not justify the assertion.
3	Project is likely technically sound and feasible but lacks sufficient detail. The proposal includes a basic work plan/timeline. Project engages some technical experts in project planning, design, and implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant includes basic information on how efforts could lead to other projects.
4	Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear work plan/timeline but some details are questionable. Project engages technical experts in project planning, design, and implementation. For Planning proposals, the applicant demonstrates how efforts will lead to implementation projects, but some justification is unclear.
5	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. For Planning proposals, the applicant clearly and logically demonstrates how efforts will lead to implementation projects.
Conservation Plan or Indigenous Knowledge	

1	Project is entirely unrelated to an existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, Tribal resource management, or recovery plan, nor is it informed by Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Proposal does not include or explain current capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan.
2	Project is somewhat related to one existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, Tribal resource management, or recovery plan and/or includes incorporation of IK. Proposal notes but does not describe current capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan.
3	Project contributes to one existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, Tribal resource management, or recovery plan and/or is informed by IK. Proposal describes how project utilizes capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan. Proposal articulates the degree to which the project activities are connected to outcomes and goals set forth in a plan.
4	Project contributes significantly to one or more existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, Tribal resource management, or recovery plans and/or is informed by and incorporates IK. Proposal describes how project ensures capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan. Proposal articulates the degree to which the project will advance outcomes and goals set forth in a plan(s).
5	Project meaningfully advances one or more existing conservation, restoration, resilience, stewardship, Tribal resource management, or recovery plans and/or is guided by IK. Proposal describes how project establishes and adaptively manages capacity, partnerships, and/or processes necessary to develop or implement a plan. Proposal articulates outcomes and goals set forth in a plan(s) that will be achieved.
Partnership and Community Impact	
1	The project is not supported by a partnership or lacks capacity. The applicant does not engage or contribute to the capacity of local community members, leaders and other relevant or impacted stakeholders.
2	The project appears to be supported by a partnership with sufficient capacity, but proposal lacks details. The applicant acknowledges but does not engage local community members, leaders and other relevant stakeholders in the project. Project does not develop partner capacity, advance Tribal, Native, and Indigenous led efforts, or boost the conservation workforce (e.g., AmeriCorps and 21 st Century Conservation Service Corps).

3	The project is supported by a narrow but adequate partnership. The applicant informs, partners with, and engages with some local community members, leaders, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the project. Project is likely to do one of the following: develop partner capacity, advance Tribal, Native, and Indigenous led efforts, and/or develop the conservation workforce (e.g., AmeriCorps and 21 st Century Conservation Service Corps).
4	The project is supported by a comprehensive partnership with necessary expertise and capacity. The applicant partners with, elevates, and engages collaboratively with local community members, leaders, organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the project but may omit some key constituencies. Project directly engages partners or communities and broadens the sustained impact from the project. Project is likely to do more than one of the following: develop partner capacity, advance Tribal, Native, and Indigenous led efforts, and/or develop the conservation workforce (e.g., AmeriCorps and 21 st Century Conservation Service Corps).
5	The project is supported by a robust partnership with necessary expertise and capacity. The applicant partners with, elevates, and engages collaboratively with or directly represents a variety of local community members, leaders, organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement the project. Project engages partners and communities—or are applicants themselves—thereby broadening the sustained impact from the project. Project develops partner capacity, advances Tribal, Native, and Indigenous led efforts, and/or develops the conservation workforce (e.g., AmeriCorps and 21 st Century Conservation Service Corps).
Budget	
1	Amount requested is not proportionate to proposed outcomes and project is not cost-effective. Costs are not allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. Match is insufficient. Costs are not justified.
2	Amount requested does not seem proportionate to proposed outcomes and project is likely not cost-effective. Some costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget does not include enough detail to determine overall cost effectiveness. Match contributions are unclear. The costs are not reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed.
3	Amount requested is somewhat proportionate to proposed outcomes. Costs are mostly allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget includes some details, but overall cost effectiveness is unclear. Match contributions are likely sufficient but lack details. The costs are somewhat reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed.

4	Amount requested is proportionate to proposed outcomes. Costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget includes sufficient details to assess overall cost effectiveness. Match is sufficient and most details are clear. The costs are largely reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed.
5	Amount requested is proportionate to proposed outcomes. Costs are allowable, reasonable, and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's Budget Instructions cost categories. The budget includes robust detail enabling a clear picture of overall cost effectiveness. Match is sufficient, detailed, and fully eligible. Costs are reasonable for the area where work is being performed and for the tasks being proposed. The budget and match include sufficient detail and justification to instill confidence that proposed outcomes will be achieved.