

2026 Applicant Webinar

Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund

Dedicated to restoring the fish and wildlife habitats and water quality of the Delaware River and its tributaries.



NFWF

General Session Agenda

1. Introduction to NFWF
2. Review of Request for Proposals
 - ✓ Grant Opportunities and Priorities
 - Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund
 - ✓ Evaluation Criteria & Compliance Requirements
4. Frequently Asked Questions
5. Using EasyGrants



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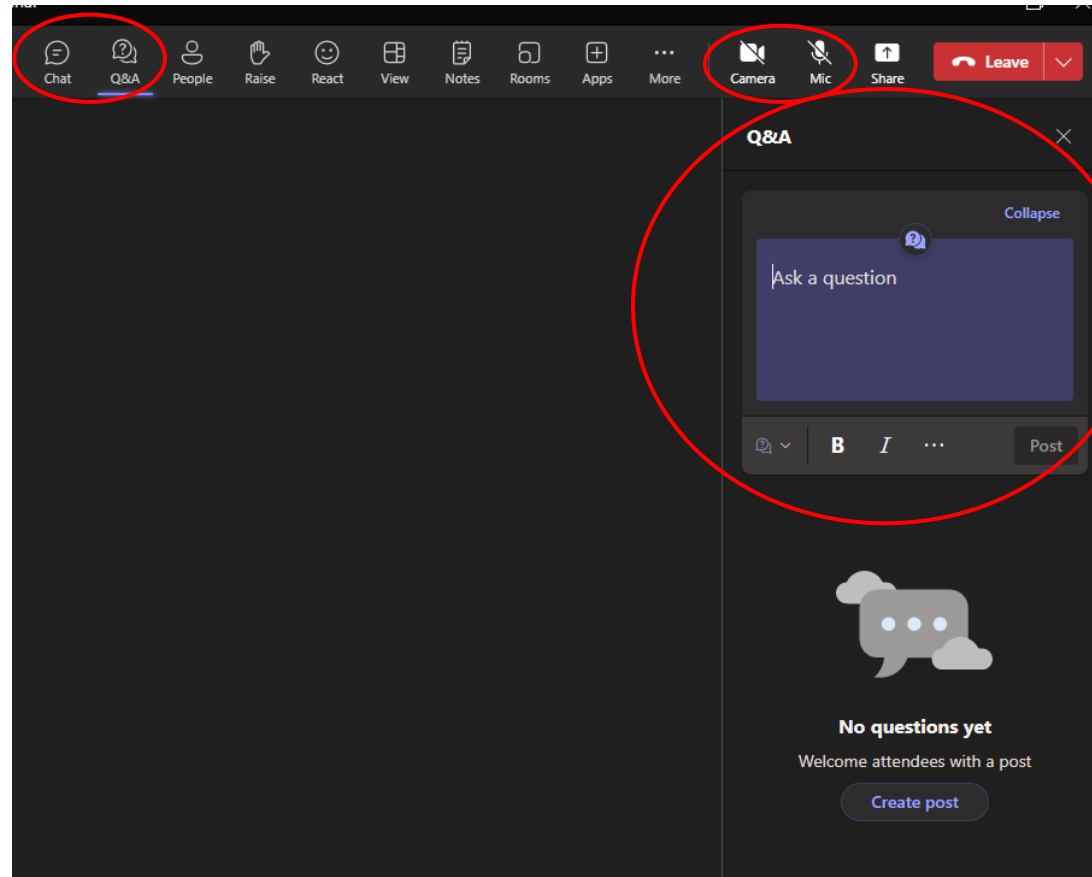


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Webinar Instructions

- To improve sound quality, please make sure your microphone is muted for the duration of the webinar content. If you want to ask a question you have two options:
 1. Enter your question into the Q&A section and click send. We will type a response or read your question aloud when we pause for Q&A.
 2. Write it down and contact us after the webinar. We have a lot of material to cover, so you may prefer to have a more in-depth discussion later.
- If you experience a technical glitch, please type it into the question box or chat, since we can't hear you. (We may not know about the glitch unless you say something!)

The webinar recording and slides will be posted to the website by the end of the week



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ABOUT NFWF

WHO WE ARE

- 501 (c)(3) Chartered by Congress in 1984
- 30-member Board appointed by Secretary of the Interior
- \$300-\$500 million in conservation investments per year

WHAT WE DO

- Sustain, restore, enhance the nation's natural resources
- Bring collaboration among federal agencies & private sector
- Create common ground among a variety of interests

NFWF is not an advocacy organization and does not engage in lobbying or litigation

HOW WE DO IT

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



6,800+ Grantees (these are the top 40 based on total funding)



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DWCF Overview

- 2018 = inaugural year for the DWCF
- Goal to conserve and restore natural areas, corridors and waterways on public and private lands to contribute to the vitality of the communities in the Delaware River watershed
- Major funding is provided by the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; program administered in partnership with FWS
- Program designed to deliver the Delaware River Basin Restoration Partnership and Program Framework

2026 AWARD RANGE:

\$75,000 - \$1,500,000



YOUR FWS CONTACT



Sandra Cross
Acting Delaware River
Basin Restoration
Program Manager,
Fish and Aquatic
Conservation

- Manages the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program and provides DWCF program direction and funding
- Approves and signs grantee federal compliance documentation and can offer technical assistance related to endangered species
- Interested in your events, project milestones, and opportunities for congressional engagement
- In partnership with NFWF, provides guidance on project scope changes and addressing grantee challenges

Geographic Focus

- All Projects must be implemented entirely within the Delaware River watershed, which includes portions of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and a small portion of Maryland.
- Organizations located outside the watershed may apply if the project will be conducted entirely within the watershed.
- Applicants should consult NFWF's online [mapping portal](#) to determine appropriate geographic focus areas for their proposed project activities and alignment with NFWF's Delaware Business Plan and other program priorities.



DWCF Grants

- **Purpose of all DWCF Grants:** Implement on-the-ground restoration and conservation projects that achieve the goals of the *Delaware River Basin Restoration Partnership and Program Framework* for all four Strategic Program Areas:
 1. Sustain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat;
 2. Improve and maintain water quality for fish, wildlife and people;
 3. Sustain and enhance water management to benefit fish and wildlife;
 4. Improve outdoor recreational opportunities
- DWCF grants should include **Cross-Program Activities** outlined in the Framework:
 - Engage and equip the public to support coordinated restoration and protection;
 - Facilitate resiliency of natural systems;
 - Increase scientific knowledge, monitoring and research needed for successful project implementation;
 - Provide technical assistance for restoration and conservation;
 - Conserve areas of regional significance

Strategic Program Area 1

SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

- **Focus:** conserve and restore ecological function to the important habitats for which the fish and wildlife resources in the basin depend
- **Objective:** conservation and restoration of habitats that will result in ecological, recreational, and commercial benefits

***Goal:** To sustain and restore fish and wildlife populations through conservation and restoration of their associated habitats and promote native ecosystem restoration*

Strategic Program Area 2

IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN WATER QUALITY TO SUPPORT FISH AND WILDLIFE, AS WELL AS HABITATS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE AND DRINKING WATER FOR PEOPLE

- **Focus:** non-regulatory efforts to provide additional focus on habitat protection and conservation activities
- **Objective:** to protect water quality for both drinking water and the health of the fish and wildlife resources that depend on clean water

Goal: To protect and maintain water quality through projects and non-regulatory programs aimed at improving land and watershed management and reduce pollutants that can impair water quality

Strategic Program Area 3

74 Grand Street

SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
FOR VOLUME AND FLOOD DAMAGE MITIGATION
IMPROVEMENTS TO BENEFIT FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

- **Focus:** non-regulatory efforts to support the demands on the water resources of the basin and to enhance tolerance of potential drought and flood conditions
- **Objective:** manage water use to meet drinking water needs and other human uses while still providing water to support fish and wildlife

***Goal:** To provide non-regulatory support to the management of water resources to meet the various human and ecological needs and legal requirements in the basin and restore ecological function to the watershed, river, and tributaries in order to provide enhanced tolerance of potential drought and flood conditions*



Strategic Program Area 4

IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION IN THE BASIN CONSISTENT WITH THE ECOLOGICAL NEEDS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

- **Focus:** maintaining and improving access to outdoor recreational opportunities
- **Objective:** provide high-quality recreational experiences while supporting the needs of fish and wildlife

Goal: To maintain and improve recreational opportunities which are compatible with the conservation of natural resources



Sign up for a proposal lab at the
NFWF Bookings page:



RFP Structure

- Four funding categories:
 - Implementation Grants
 - 70% of total funding
 - Capacity Building Grants
 - 10% of total funding
 - Planning Grants
 - 10% of total funding
 - Research, Monitoring, & Evaluation Grants
 - 10% of total funding
- NEW: *For all categories, 1:1 matching contributions are strongly encouraged but not required.*
- **Note:** If new staff are hired, there must be a clear plan for sustaining staff without DWCF grants in the future.

Implementation Grants

- Approximately 70% of total program funding available
- Range: \$75,000 to \$1,500,000 each
- Shovel-ready conservation and restoration projects that result in quantifiable benefits for fish, wildlife, and people within the Delaware River Watershed
- Note: up to \$1M available for projects that directly benefit priority at-risk and ESA species

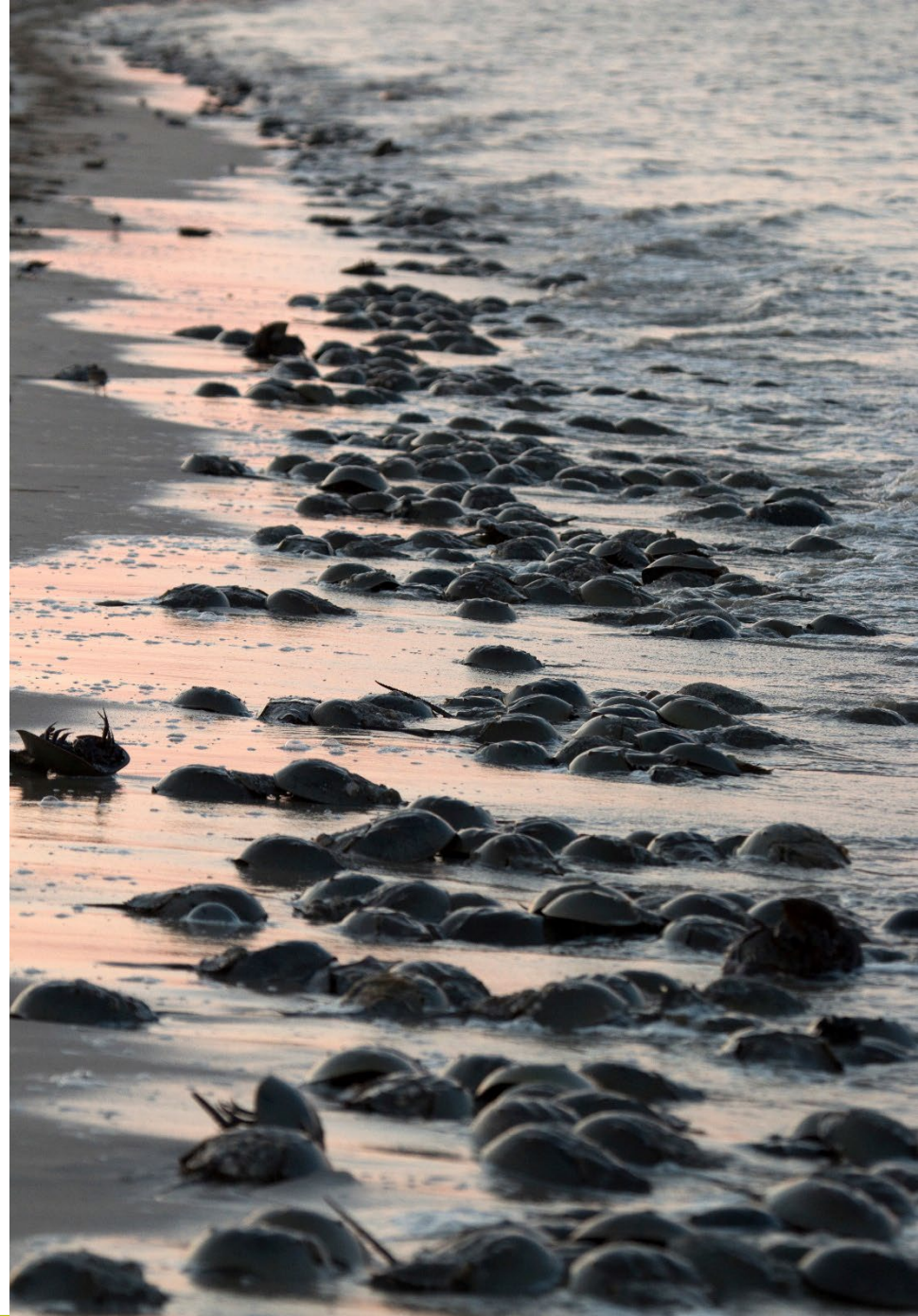


Capacity-Building Grants

- Approximately 10% of total program funding available
- Range: \$75,000 to **\$250,000** each
- Build capacity within the Delaware River watershed, strengthening the ability of local communities, organizations, and partners to collaboratively enhance fish and wildlife habitat and improve access to nature
 - Increase knowledge and experience of practitioners
 - **Enhance skills and abilities of organizations**
 - **Support the intentions of existing coalitions and partnerships**
 - Increase support to deliver work on the ground

Planning Grants

- Approximately 10% of total program funding available
- Range: \$75,000 to \$500,000 each
- Engagement, planning and prioritization; feasibility, suitability, or alternatives analyses; site assessment and conceptual design; and final design and permits.
- Set-the-stage for projects that can compete for larger, nationally competitive funding sources and/or have watershed wide impacts.



Research, Monitoring, & Evaluation Grants

- Approximately 10% of total program funding available
- Range: \$75,000 to \$500,000 each
- High-performing science that is inclusive, adaptive, innovative, and accountable
- Projects should have significant potential to transform the Delaware River watershed's future in areas including conservation and restoration action, monitoring, research, evaluation, and public access
- Prioritize projects that address cross cutting issues that are barriers to, or represent unique opportunities for, accelerating habitat improvement for fish, wildlife, and people in the Delaware River watershed



DWCF Species

NFWF Priority species from Delaware Business Plan:

- Eastern brook trout
- Alosine species like American shad, Alewife and river herring
- Golden-winged warbler
- Wood thrush
- Cerulean warbler
- Saltmarsh Sparrow
- Red knot

FWS Endangered Species Act species:

- Red knot
- Bog turtle
- Black rail
- Dwarf wedgemussel
- Northern Long-eared Bat
- Atlantic Sturgeon
- Shortnose Sturgeon

FWS At-risk species:

Birds

- American oystercatcher
- Ruddy turnstone
- Whimbrel
- Eastern whip-poor-will

Freshwater mussels

- Brook floater
- Green floater
- Tidewater mucket
- Yellow lampmussel

Pollinators

- Native bumblebees
- Monarch butterfly
- Frosted elfin
- Septima's Clubtail

Turtles

- Spotted turtle
- Wood turtle

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Eligibility

- ✓ Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations; federal, state, interstate, local and municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions.
- × Ineligible applicants include unincorporated individuals, businesses, and international organizations

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds:

- Support of ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements
- Support of political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations



Overall Evaluation Criteria

All Proposals:

- Conservation Outcomes
- Technical Merit
- Partnership and Community Impact
- Cost-Effectiveness



Overall Proposal Guidelines

- All DWCF awards include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) funding, so your project must comply with the requirements of NEPA, ESA, NHPA, and other relevant state and federal legislation.
 - You are **strongly** encouraged to budget for time/resources to complete these requirements!
- Projects should be completed within 3 years of award
- Provide measurable outputs and outcomes, choose your metrics wisely and provide details requested (see Metrics Guidance document – **updated in 2026!**)
- If you haven't thought about permits and compliance yet, START NOW!
- Review Letters of Support Best Practices and start collecting your letters of support (write templates for your partners)
- Pursuant to OMB rules, indirect is allowed – please review the policy on our website (<https://www.nfwf.org/grants/application-information/indirect-cost-calculator>)
- Complete your budget narratives! Please review guidance on our website (<https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/nfwf-detailed-budget-narrative-guide.pdf>)

Resources

UPDATED: Applicant Tip Sheet

UPDATED: Proposal Narrative

UPDATED: DWCF Toolbox

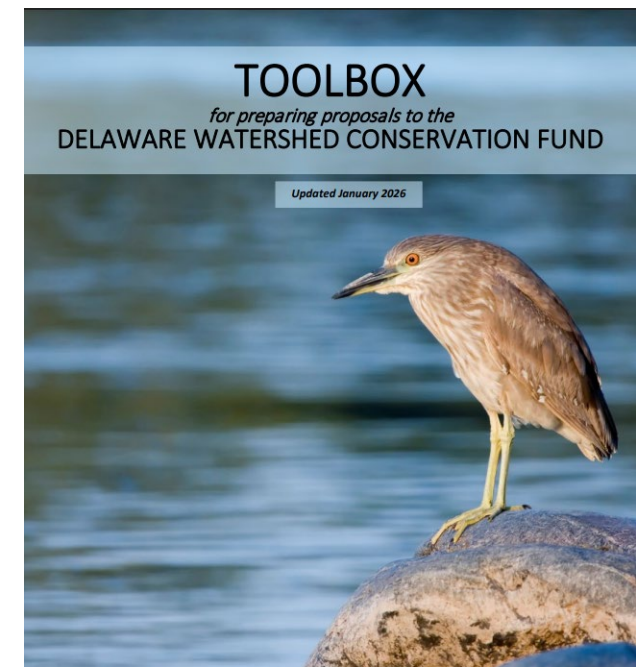
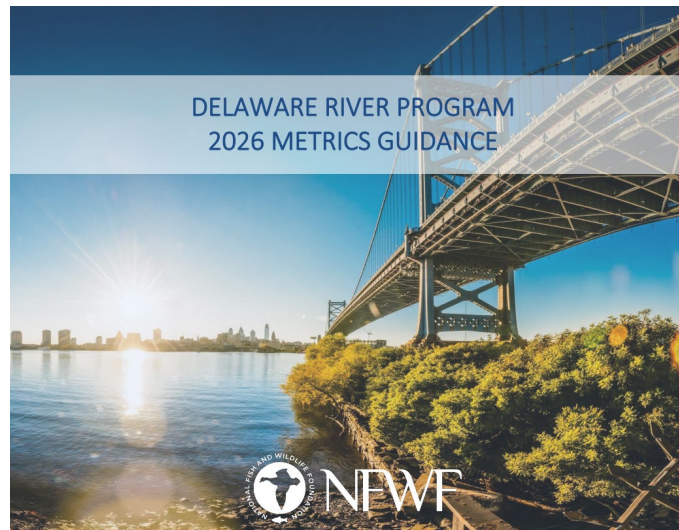
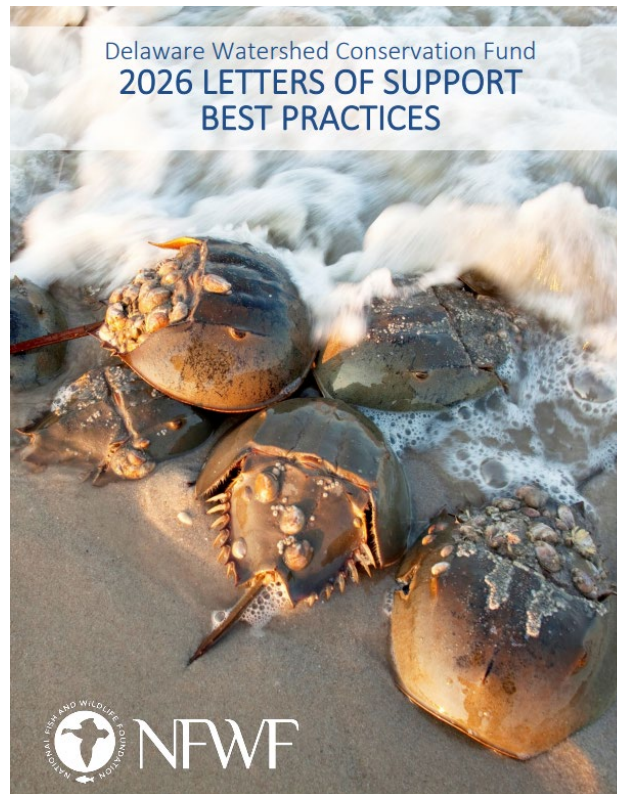
- FieldDoc Platform
- Species-specific plans

UPDATED: Letters of Support Best Practices

UPDATED: Metrics Guidance

Proposal Tools Webinar

Proposal labs



Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund 2026 RFP Full Proposal Tip Sheet

Sections:

- [Request for Proposals Summary](#)
- [Program Contact Information](#)
- [Program Quick Links](#)
- [Applying for a DWCF Grant](#)
- [Easygrants Tips & Tricks](#)
- [DWCF Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Summary

- Program Name: Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF)
- Geographic Focus: Delaware River Watershed (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland)
- Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday, March 26th, 2026, by 11:59 PM EST
- Awards will range from \$75,000 to \$1,500,000
- Total Funding Available: Contingent on program appropriations
- Matching contributions are encouraged but not required for this funding opportunity. Projects that offer 1:1 match from Non-Federal sources will be more competitive.
- Proposals must address one of four [Strategic Program Areas](#):
 - Sustain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat
 - Improve and maintain water quality
 - Sustain and enhance water management
 - Improve outdoor recreational opportunities
- Eligible Applicants: non-profit 501(c) organizations; federal, state, interstate, local and municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions
- Applications will be submitted through [Easygrants](#), which works best in Google Chrome

Program Contacts



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Frequently Asked Question – 1

Q: How much funding is available this year?

A: 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.



Frequently Asked Question – 2

Q: What is the earliest date match can be incurred and count towards a project?

A: For 2026 applicants may have a match look back period that begins on January 1, 2025, assuming all other match conditions are met.

- Project start date should still reflect when proposed project activities will begin
- Project cannot start before July 1, 2026
- Any match incurred prior to your project start date should be noted in your application, including when the match was spent

This policy is pending and subject to change as our cooperative agreement with U.S. FWS has not yet been executed, but we anticipate being able to provide this match flexibility.

Frequently Asked Question – 3

Q: There are a few metrics we'd like to select that really showcase the potential impact of our project, but they seem complicated to calculate. Where do we begin?

A: Metrics should be reasonable, achievable, and tell a story about your project. There is a “toolbox” for DWCF applicants that offers some resources for establishing project context and calculating project impact.

Add metric notes! They help provide a clearer picture of your project for reviewers, and [you will be required to enter them in later!](#)



Frequently Asked Question – 4

Q: What about design and planning?
Can we request funding for these kinds of activities?

A: Yes! Design and planning are eligible projects. To make your proposal more competitive, make sure to articulate its ultimate potential and that the proposal shows how there is future possibility for the project, that the groundwork is underway, and partners and agencies have been contacted.

Frequently Asked Question – 5

Q: I'm not sure what category my project idea fits best under - can I select multiple categories for a single proposal?

A: Applicants should only select one project category. If you aren't sure where your project fits, come into a proposal lab to discuss!



Frequently Asked Question – 6

Q: Should project partners submit a single proposal or will NFWF consider multiple proposals from the project partners?

A: One of the evaluation criteria for NFWF's proposal review is the strength of the partnership assembled to implement the project.

- It would be beneficial for partners to ensure that proposals are well coordinated, fully supported and complementary. Whether a single, larger proposal is submitted or multiple is up to the partners.
- It would NOT be ideal for competing proposals addressing the same project or approach to be received.
- Reach out to program contacts to discuss specific circumstances if needed.



Frequently Asked Question – 7

Q: Is the budget narrative really all that important?

A: Yes! The budget narrative allows reviewers to understand what will be accomplished through grant funds, and what portion of the project will be covered by matching funds. You will be required to complete a budget narrative if you are selected for funding, and this can delay contracting. Save yourself some time and include the budget narratives from the beginning!



Frequently Asked Question – 8

Q: I want to apply for a continuation of previously funded work – is a continuation of work eligible/competitive under the DWCF?

A: Yes! Applicants proposing a continuation of work should be able to speak to lessons learned through the first phase of work funded and provide justification for why additional funding is needed.



Final Tips for Applicants

1. Print/download the tip sheet and use it as a reference
2. Re-read the RFP and reference the linked-information provided
3. These are competitive grants; projects should address all criteria, respond to all requirements and have a “wow” factor
4. Include lots of context and details—do not assume reviewers know things about your project!
5. Don’t skimp on the metrics notes. Read the new Metrics Guidance documents for specific metric instructions.
6. Submit your proposal ON OR BEFORE March 26th!
7. Note that NFWF staff will not be in the office at 11:59 pm on March 26th!
8. Reach out if you need help.

RESOURCES:

- Metrics Guidance
- Letters of Support Best Practices
- Toolbox



Proposals are Due
Thursday, March 26th!!

Awards will be announced in
mid to late August 2026

Questions?

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How to Apply to NFWF – EasyGrants System

www.easygrants.nfwf.org

1. Log in with existing email and password
 - Register now if you do not have one – this will allow for time to familiarize yourself with the system
 - If you have trouble logging in, use the help feature
2. Turn off your pop-up blockers!!
3. Download and use the tip sheet available on the program webpage
4. You can work on the narrative offline – download the template and upload when you're finished
5. Please be as specific as possible with mapping AND providing location information on your project
6. Click save frequently
7. Input budget line-item narratives!
8. Input metric notes!
9. Save a PDF of your proposal before you submit
10. Make sure all your check marks are green; do not click SUBMIT until you are completely finished.



Submitting a Proposal

Step One: Create an Account



Enter your login ID and password and click **Log In** below. If you have forgotten your password, click **Forgot your password?** below.
If you are a first time visitor to this system, click **Register here** below.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Log In

[New User?](#)

Login ID / Email

Password

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[Forgot Password?](#)

Log In

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[Change Password](#)

Peer Reviewers: To view the proposal you are reviewing please click the "Third Party Review" link. Please do not click View PDF, as it will open a copy of the review you are submitting and not the proposal.

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Thank you!

