

A group of people is seen from behind, walking through a lush green field. In the foreground, there are tall green grasses and small purple flowers. The people are dressed in casual outdoor attire, including hats and long-sleeved shirts. One person on the left is carrying a large white bag. The background is filled with dense green trees and a chain-link fence is visible on the left side. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a clear day.

Five Star Program 2026 Applicant Webinar

Dedicated to improving water quality, watersheds and the species and habitats they support through locally-led conservation, outreach, education, and training

Webinar Instructions

- To improve sound quality, all participants will be muted for the duration of the webinar. If you want to ask a question you have two options:
 1. Enter your query where it says “Enter a question for staff” and click send. A NFWF staff member 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.
- We may ask you to raise your “hand” in the webinar dialogue box to confirm participants can hear us.
- If you experience a technical glitch, please type it into the question box, since we can’t hear you. (We may not know about the glitch unless you say something!)

The webinar will be available on our website and sent to registrants next week

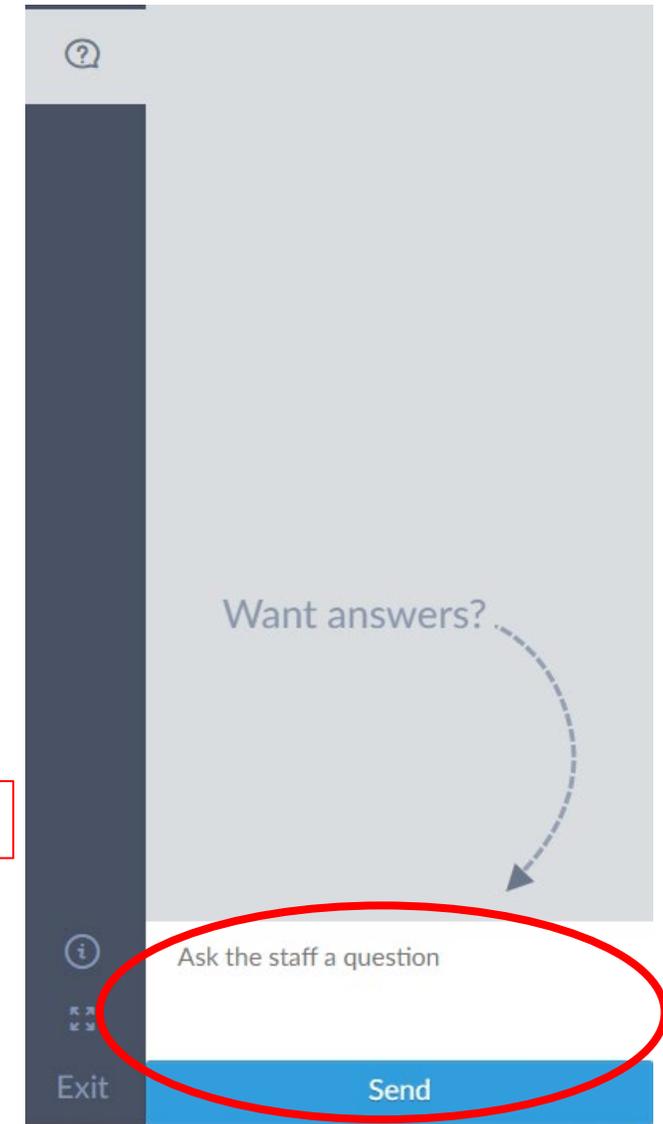


← **Raise Hand**

← **Question**

← **Chat (receive only)**

← **Handouts**



General Session Agenda

1. Introduction to NFWF

2. Program Details

- Program Overview
- Timeline
- Program Priorities
- Geographic Priorities
- Evaluation Criteria
- Guidelines
- WRI



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3. Proposal Narrative

4. Submitting a Competitive Proposal

- Easygrants Guidance (Mapping, Budget and Metrics)

5. Tips and Applicant Support



Introduction to NFWF

WHO WE ARE

- Chartered by Congress in 1984
- 30-member Board appointed by Secretary of the Interior
 - Includes FWS Director & NOAA Administrator

WHAT WE DO

- Sustain, restore, enhance wildlife
- Bring collaboration among federal agencies & the private sector

HOW WE DO IT

- Leverage private money with public funding
- On-the-ground conservation projects through competitive grant making

NFWF IS

- An implementer – we fund projects

NFWF IS NOT

- An advocacy or litigation organization and does not fund these activities



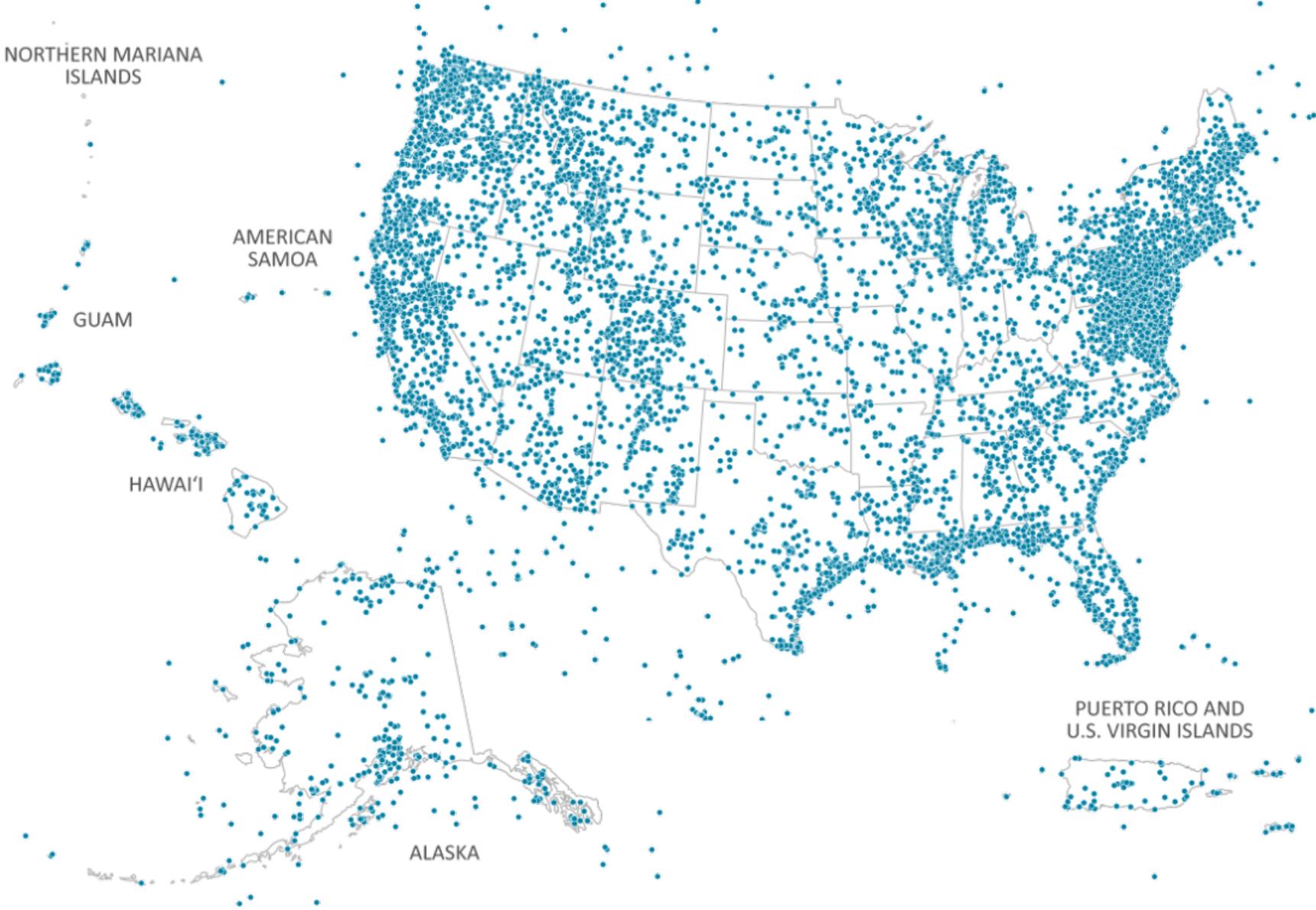
Public-Private Partnerships



6,800+ Grantees

- ALLIANCE for the Chesapeake Bay
- Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
- Coastal Conservancy
- Conservación de Islas
- manomet
- NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
- THE CONSERVATION FUND
- TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND
- VIRGINIA TECH.
- THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE
- Conservation Resource Alliance
- DUCKS UNLIMITED
- HAWAIIAN WILDLIFE FEDERATION
- MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
- NYC Parks
- Save the Sound
- THE FRESHWATER TRUST
- WATER OF COLORADO
- Walker Basin Conservancy
- AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY
- CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
- ESCAMBIA COUNTY FLORIDA
- ISLAND CONSERVATION
- Audubon
- North Carolina Coastal Federation
- Department of Land and Natural Resources
- TROUT UNLIMITED
- Walker River Irrigation District
- VB CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH
- Great Basin Land & Water
- CPRA
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- STROUD WATER RESEARCH CENTER
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of Nevada, Reno
- Washington State Department of Transportation

NFWF Conservation Investments (1984 – 2024)



- 23,300 Investments
- 7,000+ Organizations
- All 50 states





Five Star

- One of NFWF's longest-running programs - started in 1998
- Seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations
- The goal of the program is to meet conservation needs while also providing meaningful educational outcomes in communities
- Over 1,000 projects in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have been funded through this program





Program Overview

- Projects involve ecological improvements as well as community outreach, education and stewardship activities
- Increase access to the benefits of nature, reduce negative environmental impacts, and engage local communities in project planning, outreach and implementation
- Engages a variety of community partners to develop, implement and sustain the project



Program Overview

Grant Size

- Award amounts range from \$30,000 to \$150,000
- Average grant in 2025 was \$54,000

Funding Partners

- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- FedEx
- Southern Company
- Arconic



Program Timeline

RFP Live:
Tuesday,
February 24



**Applicant
Webinar:**
Wednesday,
March 4



**Full Proposal
Due Date:**
Thursday,
May 14



**Review
Committee
Meetings:**
May -
October



**NFWF Board
Review:**
November
2026



**Award
Announced:**
Mid to late
November
2026





Program Priorities

All applications should include:

1. On-the-Ground Restoration
2. Environmental Outreach, Education, and/or Training
3. Community Partnerships





Program Priorities

On-the-Ground Restoration

- Developing, creating, improving, and/or protecting public spaces such as parks
- Enhancing community tree canopy
- Addressing key species and habitats linked to watershed or conservation plans
- Restoring migratory bird habitat
- Creating and/or enhancing community agriculture spaces
- Developing/implementing trash and litter prevention programs to protect waterways



Program Priorities

Environmental Outreach, Education, and Training

- Engaging the public in hands-on, outdoor experiences that build awareness and promote stewardship
- Engaging communities in restoration activities in public spaces
- Providing training on how to use data to design environmental programs
- Improve understanding to prevent litter and pollution impacts to local waterways





Program Priorities

Partnerships

Must involve five or more partners (public and/or private entities) including the applicant

- Directly engaging community partners to achieve ecological and educational outcomes
- Advancing local watershed/conservation plans or coordinating a partnership to develop and/or implement new plans
- Provide training, partnership meetings and/or presentations to build support for the project





Geographic Priorities

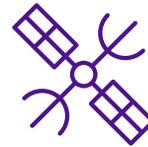
Projects in the locations listed in the RFP will be prioritized

- Projects must be within or adjacent to these locations
- Funding is not currently available for locations outside of the geographic priorities
- The RFP will be updated if locations are added
- Some locations prioritize specific activities



Planting for Good

This initiative will leverage **trees**, team members, and **technology** to help communities grow their urban canopy, lessen the impact of heat, better prepare for floods, and improve air quality and access to nature.



Help cities plant with precision

Conservation partners using GIS, data analytics, and remote collaboration to maximize impact, monitor progress, and enable scalable planting.



Improve tree survivability

Leveraging nature-based solutions to help cities become more resilient in the face of extreme heat, increased flooding, and lessening air quality.



Engage community members

Engage community members with local conservation partners to help plant, monitor, and improve tree survivability.



Program Guidelines

Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, local governments, municipal governments, Tribal governments and organizations and educational institutions
- State agencies, Federal agencies and for-profit corporations make great partners but should **not** be applicants

Grants

- \$30,000 - \$150,000 each, average grant size for the last round was **\$54,000**
- Projects should be 12-18 months, starting no earlier than January 2027

Match

- Minimum 75% non-federal match is required
- Match can be cash or in-kind goods and services

Restrictions

- No political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, terrorism or litigation
- No support for legal requirements (mitigation, permit conditions, settlement agreements, etc.)

Evaluation Criteria

Conservation Outcomes	Technical Merit	Partnership and Community Impact	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alignment with program goals and priorities• Quantifiable performance metrics• Appropriate monitoring of activities and outcomes• Project long-term sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technically sound and feasible• Engages technical experts• Logical and achievable work plan and timeline• Sound compliance approach (permits, NEPA)• Accurate spatial data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborates with local community• Partners help sustain impact of project• Describes outreach and community engagement activities• Includes letters of support from community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allowable and reasonable costs• Matching contributions• Cost effective



Evaluation Criteria

Conservation Outcomes

- Clearly addresses all three program priorities: On-the-Ground Restoration; Environmental Outreach, Education, and Training; and Community Partnerships
- Ecological, educational, and community benefits measured by quantifiable performance metrics
- Plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period
- Maintained to ensure benefits are sustained over time





Evaluation Criteria

Technical merit

- Engages technical experts in planning, design and implementation
- Technically sound and feasible activities and timeline, including permitting and environmental compliance if needed
- Accurate spatial data for all project activities submitted with application



Evaluation Criteria

Partnership and Community Impact

- Collaboration with local communities and partners to develop, implement, and sustain project
- Describes outreach and community engagement activities and how these will be monitored and measured
- Incorporates supporting data
- Include letters of support from partners

Budget and Cost-Effectiveness

- Costs are allowable, reasonable, and proportional to expected outcomes
- Cost effective
- Meets or exceeds match requirements

A woman wearing a light-colored bucket hat, a grey long-sleeved shirt, dark blue pants, and blue gloves is smiling and holding a black bucket. She is standing in a field with several wooden stakes and a black strap. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the image, containing the text "Questions?".

Questions?



Proposal Narrative

- Download the template from Easygrants
- Proposals should be **no more** than **6** pages
- Keep the formatting – same font, font size and margins and charts
- Do **not** delete the text or tables provided in the narrative
- Ensure consistency

Proposal Narrative: Project Context

1. Specify the total acres the project will restore/impact and explain the need for the project.

- Provide detail and context

2. Specify the ecological impacts of the project and how it will contribute to watershed health.

- Identify the target watershed/focal species/habitat
- Describe the project's connection to the watershed and explain the need for the project
- Explain how the project activities will support established watershed, conservation or species plans in the region

Proposal Narrative: Project Context

- 3. Specify who will be involved in the planning and implementation phases of the project, including each partner and number of community members directly engaged or impacted.**

- 4. If the project is located in one of areas prioritizing tree canopy enhancement (Miami, FL; Memphis, TN; Oakland, CA; or Pittsburgh, PA), propose and describe the type of day-long community service event for up to 50 employees of our corporate sponsor and the partnership's capacity to carry out this event. *Answer only if applicable.***
 - Include information about the potential activities and location, if known.

Proposal Narrative: Conservation and Outreach Activities

5. For each on-the-ground activity included in the metrics section, identify and describe each activity that the partnership will undertake and how each activity will meaningfully advance the project's conservation outcomes. If the project is focusing on agriculture, please also include goals for expected pounds of food produced and donated.

- Describe each restoration activity and the conservation metric corresponding to that activity
- Include all the metrics entered into Easygrants and describe how these activities will come together into the project

6. For each outreach and capacity activity identified in the metrics section, describe each activity that the partnership will undertake and explain how each activity will meaningfully advance capacity outcomes.

- Describe each outreach activity and the metric corresponding to that activity
- Remember to include all the metrics entered into Easygrants and describe how these activities will come together into the project

7. What are the long-term community and conservation outcomes for this project and activities for measuring progress?

Proposal Narrative: Collaboration & Sustainability

8. Complete the table to describe how all partners are involved in the project. The project must have at least five partners contributing a variety of expertise to the project. Add rows as needed.

- Fill in table with the organization name, qualifications, and contributions of each partner contributing to the project
- All projects must involve five or more partners, including the applicant's organization

9. Describe how the project partnership will build capacity to expand community stewardship locally. Discuss the connections the partnership has with the target audiences and how this will influence future efforts.

- Identify and describe each partner and their role in the community
- Describe how the project will grow community stewardship and how that will be measured

10. Explain the plan for monitoring project achievements beyond the project period, including how the partnership will ensure the sustainability of project results.

- Identify and describe the long-term goals and how they will be monitored, measured and achieved
- Describe how the project and partnerships will be sustained

Proposal Narrative: Partnership Table

Partner (organization or individual)	Qualifications (project-related expertise)	Contribution(s) (goods or service provided)
Jones County Master Gardeners COMMUNITY GROUP	Restoration coordination, horticultural training	Training and coordinating volunteers for restoration
US Fish and Wildlife Service FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	Horticulture	Providing seedlings for restoration
Lincoln Financial Group CORPORATION	Volunteers	Restoration project will be part of Lincoln’s volunteer workday program
Calhoun Middle School EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION	Volunteers	Students will plant seedlings during one day of restoration
Jones County Parks Department LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Property Owner	Donating supplies, technical support and meals
CA Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation NGO	Grant funding	Funding to cover site planning and design

A woman with brown hair, wearing a green jacket and blue gloves, is kneeling in a field of dry straw. She is smiling and holding a clump of dark soil in her hands. In the background, several other people are working in the field, some using tools like shovels. The scene is outdoors, likely a farm or a field being prepared for planting. A semi-transparent dark grey banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "Questions?".

Questions?

Easygrants: Project Title and Description

Project Title

- Short, descriptive name that distinguishes your project
- Include the state abbreviation at the end of the title
- Don't call your project "Five Star Project"

Example: "Whatcom Stream Stewards Program: Engaging Community in Restoration, Education and Stewardship (WA)"

Project Description (Two sentences)

- **First sentence:** state the main activity/method being used to address a specific species/habitat and location
- **Second sentence:** expected outcome and main metrics that will be completed from the investment and relevance to conservation

Example: Restore 15 acres of riparian habitat to improve water quality and habitat for chinook salmon, bull trout and steelhead salmon in Puget Sound. Project will engage 5 local resource management partners and 2,500 volunteers to plant 5,000 trees and remove 6 acres of invasive vegetation.

Easygrants: Budget Functions

- Use the green plus sign to add line items to the budget
- Use the pencil to edit line items in the budget
- Use the 'notes' feature to add a narrative description for each section of the budget

	Budget 
▼ <u>Personnel</u>	\$0.00
▼ Personnel  	\$0.00
Person 1 Staff  	\$0.00
▶ <u>Travel</u>	\$0.00
▼ <u>Equipment</u>	\$0.00
Equipment  	\$0.00
▼ <u>Materials and Supplies</u>	\$0.00

- Learn more:
 - <http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/budget-instructions.aspx>
- Indirect Costs:
 - <http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/indirect-policy.aspx>

Easygrants: Mapping the Project Location

- Use the mapping tool to draw your project location or upload a shapefile
- Map the location(s) where on-the-ground project work will occur
- **Be as specific as possible!**
- You should not select an entire state or county as your project location unless your project spans the entire region



Easygrants: Metrics

- Load program metrics using the “Five Star Metrics” template from drop down menu
- Select at least one metric for each of the three program priorities (a minimum of 3 metrics)
 - Include the “orgs contributing to goal” metric to capture the partnerships
 - Select only the most relevant metrics from the list for your project
 - If awarded, progress will need to be tracked, so avoid including too many metrics
- Only add metrics for activities that will be completed within the start and end date of the project
- Each metric’s “target value” should always be greater than the “starting value”
 - **Most starting values SHOULD BE 0.00**
- If none of the available metrics apply to your project, please contact NFWF to discuss

The screenshot displays the 'Select Metric' dialog box in the Easygrants application. The dialog has a search bar and two dropdown menus: 'Show: Show All Templates' and 'Show All Strategies'. Below these is a table with the following columns: 'Add', 'Metric', 'Strategies', and 'Required'. The table lists several metrics, each with a checkbox in the 'Add' column. A red box highlights the first three rows of the table. The 'Metrics' tab in the left sidebar is circled in red. The 'Select Metric' button in the bottom right corner of the dialog is also circled in red.

Add	Metric	Strategies	Required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - Monitoring - # sites being monitored	Planning, Research, Monitoring	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - Land, wetland restoration - Acres restored	Habitat Restoration	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - Building institutional capacity - # of orgs contributing to goals	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - Outreach/ Technical Assistance - # social media posts	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - Outreach/ Technical Assistance - # internships/fellowships	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - Outreach/ Technical Assistance - # of signs installed	Capacity, Outreach, Incentives	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - BMP implementation for stormwater runoff - Acres with BMPs	Habitat Management	Recommended
<input type="checkbox"/>	Five Star - Improved management practices - Acres under improved management	Habitat Management	Recommended

Tips - Easygrants System

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. Make sure all your check marks are green; do not click SUBMIT until you are completely finished



Final Tips for Applicants

1. Print or 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
5. Make sure project demonstrates a clear ecological need and benefit
6. Submit your full proposal ON OR BEFORE May 14th
7. Reach out if you need help

RESOURCES:

- Tip Sheet
- Bookings Link (Proposal Lab)
- NFWF Staff



Applicant Support

Proposal Lab Sessions with NFWF Staff

- Schedule a 20-minute session using this QR Code
- Intended for discussion or specific concepts and ideas; please send general inquiries via email:
 - Easygrants questions: easygrants@nfwf.org
 - Application questions:
 - Zoey.Apelt@nfwf.org
 - Ericka.Popovich@nfwf.org
 - Sydney.Godbey@nfwf.org

Full RFP and supporting materials available here:
www.nfwf.org/programs/five-star-program

