



NFWF

Conservation Partners Program 2026 Applicant FAQ

Funding Opportunity

- **How much funding does a typical grant receive?**
 - This year, we anticipate that average grant sizes will range from \$250,000 to \$750,000. Given the greater availability of funding, NFWF is seeking to award projects that achieve high cost-effectiveness on large acreages.
- **What should the project start date and duration be?**
 - Awards will be announced in mid-November or early December. The project start date can be before that, however, the project start date cannot be before October 1, 2026. Typical grant duration is three years, and all funds (including match) must be spent between project start and end dates.

NRCS Alignment

- **What does NRCS alignment mean?**
 - We encourage you to communicate and coordinate with your NRCS State Conservationist as you formulate your proposal. When evaluating projects, reviewers will consider projects' alignment with NRCS priorities (Are you addressing priority resource concerns?) and capacity needs (Where and what kind of technical assistance is needed?).
 - There should be an evident connection to Farm Bill conservation programs in the proposal. This may include promoting programs, helping producers with signup and contracting, assisting with practice design and implementation, and monitoring.
 - To avoid "double dipping," please ensure that any technical assistance capacity supported through your project is not substantively contributing to projects that are currently receiving USDA funds for technical assistance. For instance, CPP funds cannot be used to support a new conservation agronomist whose primary responsibility is to deliver a separate Regional Conservation Partnership Program project, where there's already a budget for technical assistance and project delivery.
- **Do practices need to adhere to NRCS practice standards?**
 - Generally, yes, NRCS practice standards should be used as guidance. However, we do recognize there are projects with innovative conservation practices for which there is not a given NRCS practice standard.

Matching Contributions

- **Are matching contributions required?**
 - Matching contributions are not required, but higher match ratios may be more competitive.

- **Can landowner cost-share be used as match?**
 - No, the landowner portion of cost-share required to obtain funding from Farm Bill programs (e.g. EQIP) is not an eligible source of match for this funding opportunity.
- **Are there limitations on match sources?**
 - We prefer matching funds to be from non-federal sources, however, federal match can be listed in order for us to understand the full scope of partner contributions. Match must meet the following criteria:

Non-Federal Matching Contributions:

- Verifiable from the grantee's records
- Not included as contributions for any other Federal award
- Reasonable and necessary for accomplishment of project or program objectives
- Committed directly to the project and used within the period of performance
- Allowable under [OMB 2 CFR 200 Cost Principles](#)

Federal Matching Contributions:

- Verifiable from the grantee's records
- Reasonable and necessary for accomplishment of project or program objectives
- Committed directly to the project and used within the period of performance

Funding Priorities

- **Is there an acreage minimum for projects?**
 - No, however, we are looking to fund projects that will achieve the greatest impact on a cost-competitive basis. This likely means thousands to tens of thousands of acres. Reviewers will consider projects' geography, e.g. Western rangeland vs. Eastern cropland, and conservation strategy (grazing management vs. wetland restoration) when evaluating project scale.
- **Is funding pre-allocated for each geographic priority?**
 - No, we encourage applicants to apply for the specific geography that best corresponds with your project. We evaluate each proposal independently, and there is no inherent advantage in applying to one geography over another.
- **Can you apply if we do not fall under one of the geographic priorities?**
 - Projects outside the listed priority areas will not be considered for funding. Please refer to additional [NFWF programs](#) as they may have TA funds available in your region.
- **What if our project overlaps two or more of the priority geographies?**
 - Please select the priority geography that contains the largest portion of your project footprint. Use the project narrative to explain how project activities will meet the key strategies of each priority geography.

Project Budget

- **Is financial assistance to adopt practices an eligible expense?**
 - No, funds cannot be used to provide financial assistance to farmers and ranchers, though projects may leverage other funding for this purpose.
- **Can projects use for-profit organizations as subcontractors?**
 - Yes, non-profit and for-profit organizations can serve as subcontractors for a proposed project.
- **What percentage of the budget is allowed to subcontractors?**
 - There isn't a set limit on how much of a budget can be allocated toward subcontractors. Overall, the proposal should clearly demonstrate how funding both the subcontractor(s) and applicant organization efficiently addresses project goals.

Metrics

- **Does "government agency" cost-share or financial assistance refer only to federal government agencies?**
 - We are interested in state, local, and federal agency cost-share. Please use the metric notes to describe the source of cost-share.