

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Funding Opportunity

F25AS00228 Candidate Species Conservation Fund

Funding Opportunity Number

F25AS00228

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BASIC INFORMATION

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: F25AS00228

Assistance Listing Number(s): 15.660

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$500,000

Expected Number of Awards: 20

Award Ceiling: \$0

Award Floor: \$1,000

Number of awards and award amounts vary by region. The Candidate Species Conservation Fund currently does not have any regular reoccurring funding associated with any allocation or appropriations bill. Applicants are encouraged to contact their local Ecological Services program field office or the Regional Office personnel (see contact list below) before applying.

Cost Sharing Required?

No

Closing Date Explanation

Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM, ET, on the listed application due date.

This program requires the submission of applications online through GrantSolutions.gov as applicants will receive an acknowledgement of application receipt. GrantSolutions automatically generates an electronic date and time stamp in the system upon application receipt. Awards will be announced and obligated on a rolling basis throughout the fiscal year, based on regional priorities and funding (See regional contacts in the Basic Information Section for details).

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U.S. states and local governments may be required under [Executive Order 12372](#), [Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs](#) to submit their application to their State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for review. For more information, see the [Intergovernmental Review SPOC List](#).

OMB Control Number: [1018-0100](#)

Have Questions?

For additional information about this funding opportunity, please contact the appropriate FWS representative list below.

States or Territory where the project will occur	Regional Office Address	Regional Candidate Conservation Contact, Phone Number, and Email
Hawaii, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and the Pacific Trust Territories	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181	Hawaii State and Territory Contact: Lasha-Lynn Salbosa (808) 490-5451 lasha-lynn_salbosa@fws.gov
Idaho	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181	Idaho State Contact: Greg Burak (208) 378-5654 greg_burak@fws.gov
Oregon	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181	Oregon State Contact: Jennifer Siani (503) 231-6915 jennifer_siani@fws.gov
Washington	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181	Washington State Contact: Rose Agbalog (564) 200-2124 rose_agbalog@fws.gov
Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 500 Gold Avenue SW., Room 6018 Albuquerque, NM 87102	Vanessa Burge (505) 248-5420 vanessa_burge@fws.gov
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services 5600 American Blvd. West Suite 990 Bloomington, Minnesota 55437-1458	Erik Olson 612-713-5488 erik_olson@fws.gov

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 400 Atlanta, GA 30345	Rebecca Harrison (470) 925-5310 rebecca_harrison@fws.gov
Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035-9589	Sarah A. Furtak (413) 326-4687 sarah_furtak@fws.gov
Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1 Denver Federal Center Building 25 - Room 1911 Denver, CO 80225	Angela Burgess (303) 236-4263 Angela_burgess@fws.gov
Alaska	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503-6199	Nichole Bjornlie (907) 786-3523 Nichole_Bjornlie@fws.gov
California and Nevada	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2606 Sacramento, CA 95825-1846	Ashleigh Blackford (321) 474-5967 ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

Executive Summary

Listing a plant or animal as federally protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is proven to be successful in preventing extinction. However, this level of protection is America's last line of defense. Before a species may warrant listing and protections under the ESA, many voluntary conservation opportunities can be undertaken. Voluntary actions can improve conditions for species and improve habitats for at-risk, listed, and common species alike. At-risk species conservation is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) initiative promoting proactive conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants with partners before the species warrant protections under the ESA. The FWS collaborates with all partners (Federal and State agencies,

Tribes, private landowners, non-government organizations, and industries) across all landscapes to implement this initiative. The FWS's at-risk species efforts are intended to encourage and support voluntary actions that proactively conserve species and their habitats. We believe that if we work with partners to improve the status of species before they come to the FWS for review under the ESA, we may be able to reduce the impact of stressors and stabilize or increase populations. Ideally, this proactive conservation work may help us avoid listing these species, thus improving species and their habitat, while simultaneously reducing regulatory burden.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

State governments

Unrestricted (i.e., open to any type of entity above), subject to any clarification in the text field entitled "Additional Information on Eligibility"

Additional Information on Eligibility

Applicants are expected to have demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the biology of the involved candidate or at-risk species and its ecosystem, including preferably having worked with the species in the field.

Cost Sharing Requirement

Cost Sharing Required?

No

GET READY TO APPLY

Required System Registrations

Unique Entity Identifier and SAM.gov Registration

Before applying, all **applicants** except individuals applying as a natural person **must be registered in SAM.gov**. During the SAM.gov registration the entity will obtain their Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

The SAM.gov registration process can take several months. If your organization is not already registered in SAM.gov, begin the registration process as soon as possible.

To register in SAM.gov, go to the [SAM.gov website](#) and use the available resources to complete registration.

- **Financial assistance registrants** must review and certify compliance with the SAM.gov "Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications".
- **Already registered?** You already have a Unique Entity ID. Before applying, check that your "Financial Assistance General Representations and Certifications" on SAM.gov is complete. Remember to renew your registration every year to keep it active while you have an award or application in progress. You can update your registration whenever you need, including during renewal.
- **Need help?** For additional information and contact information on the [SAM.gov Help page](#).

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Goals

- While candidate species receive no protection under the Endangered Species Act, one of our main goals is to encourage actions that will eliminate the need to list these species in the future. Toward that end, we provide technical assistance and leverage funding to support conservation of candidate and other at-risk species.

Program Description

I. Program Description

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is to provide a means by which the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved, to provide a program for the conservation of such endangered species and threatened species, and to take appropriate steps to achieve the purposes of treaties and conventions set forth in the ESA. Section 2(a)(5) of the ESA authorizes the use of Federal financial assistance to encourage the states and other interested parties to develop and maintain conservation programs to safeguard the Nation's heritage in fish, wildlife and plants for the benefit of all citizens.

The FWS Ecological Services Program provides Federal financial assistance on a competitive basis to states, landowners, educators, non-profit organizations, researchers and other potential partners to secure information about candidate and other at-risk species to avert listing of species pursuant to the ESA, and to help conserve the ecosystems upon which these species depend.

II. Program Objective The principal objective of this Candidate Species Conservation funding opportunity is to accomplish conservation tasks for high priority candidate species (based on our annual Candidate Species Assessments) or other at-risk species in the United States, such that identified threats to the species may be reduced or eliminated.

These efforts are based on cooperative relationships with states, non-governmental organizations, private landowners and those interested in habitat restoration or undertaking candidate and at-risk species research, surveys and monitoring, or educational outreach efforts.

III. Program Priorities This opportunity will help to support the Administration's priorities of the Build Back Better framework, integrate climate change mitigation, and advance racial justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as support the America the Beautiful initiative.

Projects should show a clear conservation benefit that will help prevent listing of a candidate or at-risk species, remove identified threats and improve status, or contribute information on the species' response to changes in the environment. Priority will be given to proposals that (1) enhance partnerships with states, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, Federal agencies, and others, and (2) leverage our resources and authorities with those of our partners.

Species eligible for this funding opportunity include those that are candidates for ESA listing status (50 CFR 424.15), included in the FWS's National Listing work plan (linked below), or otherwise identified as priority at-risk species. Candidate species with a Listing Priority Number of 1-6 are given precedence for funding. A full list of candidate species is available

through the FWS's website: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/candidate-species>. At-risk species are those that have a reasonable potential to be considered for listing. At-risk species can be found on the National listing workplan, state endangered species list, and/or have a state heritage rank of G1 or G2, as a few examples. The FWS has prioritized the national listing work plan by assigning species a priority Bin number. The at-risk species with a priority Bin number of 3 or 4 are especially considered for funding— see <https://www.fws.gov/project/national-listing-workplan> for a list of species on the work plan and a description of the prioritization methodology."

Priority will be given to projects that aid in improving the conservation status of a species so as to preclude the need to list. These projects could include, but are not limited to, activities that will secure scientific information about candidate or at-risk species and their habitat, implement restoration actions that will lead to removing threats to the species, or help prevent extinction of a species. This opportunity addresses the Presidential priority articulated in *Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad* by supporting biodiversity efforts.

Funds may be provided via cooperative agreements or project grants. Land acquisition or easement purchase is not allowed under this Notice of Funding Opportunity. Projects for NMFS-managed species are not included in this funding opportunity

Projects that involve construction for build-outs, alterations, upgrades, and renovations need to be reviewed for compliance with 2 CFR Part 184.

Legislative Authority

Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 Administrative Provisions, Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. §1531 et. seq., Candidate Species Conservation Fund.

Type of Award

Projects will be funded through:

Funding Instrument

CA (Cooperative Agreement)

G (Grant)

Recipient should expect the Federal agency to have substantial involvement in the project.

Selection of "Cooperative Agreements" will require entry of a substantial involvement statement. If you are awarding cooperative agreements, you must also insert a description of the substantial involvement the FWS expects to have in the performance of the agreement, or reference where the potential applicant can find that information elsewhere in this document. Here is suggested text to use to begin the substantial involvement statement: "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will be substantially involved in projects under this funding opportunity. In particular, the FWS will be responsible for the following: [insert list the specific project-related activities to be performed by FWS staff]." If the program may also award procurement contracts related to this announcement, you must state that and provide any available details on contract procedures and/or announcement(s) here.]

Under a cooperative agreement, there is a participatory relationship between the FWS and the recipient during the award, with shared performance responsibilities. Examples of activities qualifying as substantial FWS involvement include:

- Participate and collaborate jointly with the recipient in carrying out the scope of work, including training recipient personnel or detailing Federal personnel to work on the project effort.
- Review and approve one stage of work before the next stage can begin.
- Help select project staff
- Reserve the right to end activity if detailed performance specifications are not met immediately.

Limit recipient discretion with respect to the scope of work, organizational structure, staffing, mode of operations, and other management processes, coupled with close monitoring or operational involvement during performance under the award. Substantial FWS involvement does not include

- awarding funds,
- assigning a project officer,
- reviewing and approving reports,
- processing payments, monitoring to ensure the project is completed on time or performing any other routine administrative or monitoring activities.

PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Application Content and Format

Application Documents

Applicants must submit the following forms with their application as specified below. Instructions for accessing and submitting application forms are provided in the [Submission Instructions](#) section of this document below. For instructions on completing form fields, see the form instructions on the [Grants.gov Forms Repository](#).

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance Note: For applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Representative's signature (or electronic equivalent) on the Application for Federal Assistance form also represents their certification of the statements in Appendix A to 43 CFR 18-Certification Regarding Lobbying	Required from all applicants
SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs	Required for non-construction projects
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	Required if requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funds <u>and</u> the applicant has used or plans to use funds other than Federal appropriated funds for lobbying related to the proposed project.

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
Project Abstract Summary (OMB 4040-0019). Must include, in plain language: • Award purpose, • Activities to be performed, • Expected deliverables or outcomes, • Intended beneficiaries, Subrecipient activities (if known or specified at time of award)	Required from all applicants

Project Narrative

Project Narrative

The application package should be a separate document discussing the proposed project in detail. The document should include the following sections.

Project Title

Description of Entities Undertaking the Project. Provide a brief description of the applicant organization and all participating entities and/or individuals. Identify which of the proposed activities each organization, group or individual is responsible for conducting or managing. Provide complete contact information for the individual within the organization that will oversee/manage the project activities on a day to day basis. Please provide credentials demonstrating that project participants have the necessary biological and scientific education and experience to be able to complete the project satisfactorily.

Statement of Need. Explain why the project is necessary and how it fulfills the purpose of the program.

Project Purpose. Include a description of the proposed activities, list of targeted species, how the proposed project fits within the context of the overarching recovery strategy for the species, and how the proposed project will contribute towards the recovery of the species. How will the project address the Regional recovery priorities as outlined by the appropriate local FWS Field Office and/or Regional contacts. What recovery actions identified in the proposal have been implemented during the previous 5 fiscal years, if known? What progress has been made to date? How will the proposed project amplify implementation of ongoing recovery actions, implement actions that were previously unimplemented, and/or result in an important innovation towards achieving recovery for this species?

Project Objectives. Objectives state the desired outcome of the proposed project in terms that are specific and quantified. Objectives are meant to be realistic targets and/or benchmarks that are achievable. Objectives are written in an active tense and use action verbs such as construct, survey, train, research, establish, repair, conduct, provide, and acquire.

Timetable or milestones. Describe significant milestones in completing the project and any accomplishments to date.

Methodology. Describe what the proposed project activities are and how they will achieve the stated milestones, including what deliverables will be provided to the FWS at the close of this project.

Project Location. Include a map of the project site/location, describe in detail where the work will be done, applicable habitat type(s) and number of acres to be affected, and relevant ecosystem/watershed characterization.

Coordination with State and/or other Federal agencies, or other partners. Describe how funding this project complements other FWS and/or partner programs and authorities to address the protection and conservation needs of the targeted species. Have other sources of funding been sought to support the proposed action(s), and how does the proposed project leverage other funding to address high priority conservation needs.

Duration. Proposed project should include a maximum of 3 years to spend the funds. The proposal must include a discrete activity(ies) (each activity included in the proposal must have an identified starting point and end point).

Partial Funding The project proposal should indicate whether partial funding of the project is practicable, and, if so, what specific portion(s) of the project could be implemented with what level of funding. A project proposal that is a part of a longer-term initiative will be considered; however, the proposed project's objectives, benefits, and tasks must stand on their own, as there are no assurances that additional funding would be awarded in subsequent years for associated or complementary projects.

Criteria for Success, What incremental improvements would this funding be expected to produce beyond what has already been achieved for the species, and what will be measured to determine the success of the project. For example the linear distance of stream bank restored; number of mussels successfully re- introduced?

Information to support environmental compliance review requirements – the FWS has the responsibility for making the final determination regarding compliance with Federal laws.

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – provide any information that may be relevant to compliance with NEPA.
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) – provide any information that may be relevant to compliance with the ESA.

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) – provide any information that may be relevant to compliance with NHPA, such as locations of historic or cultural properties.
- Other Permits – list and provide the current status of any other required Federal permits

Information on Key Personnel. Principal investigator or Recipient project lead.

Supporting Information. Any additional supporting information may also be submitted (for example, copies of relevant permits currently or previously held that authorize similar activities for the targeted species).

SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs.

If the program will fund non-construction projects or wants applicants requesting funding for both construction and non-construction activities to use the SF-424A form, select the SF-424A checkbox. The form number and title and the following standard text will be inserted. Enter any additional program-specific instructions for completing the form in the text field below the standard text.

SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs

Applicants must complete and submit the SF-424A Budget Information form for Non-Construction Programs or Projects. All required application forms are available with this announcement in GrantSolutions. Federal award recipients and subrecipients are subject to Federal award cost principles in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 200. Applicants must show funds requested from this Federal program separately from any other Federal sources of funding. In “Section A – Budget Summary” on the SF-424A form enter the funding requested from this Federal program in the first row. Identify any other Federal funding sources and amounts in the required Budget Narrative (see below). In the SF-424A “Contractual” category total, do not combine estimated subawards and contractual costs. Use the “Contractual” category to reflect estimated contractual costs only. Enter estimated subaward costs in the SF-424A “Other” category. Provide a separate description and total estimated costs for both contractual and subaward costs in the required Budget Narrative (see below).

Budget Narrative

Applicants must describe and justify items and costs listed in their budget. The budget narrative must identify the following cost items: total estimated costs, non-Federal cost share, third-party contributions, and any pre-award costs. Total project cost is the sum of all allowable costs, including required and voluntary cost share and third-party contributions.

Budget items must be:

- Reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary
- Compliant with [2 CFR §200 Subpart E](#) cost principles

Indirect Costs: Applicants must indicate in their budget narrative how they will charge indirect costs, including the rate to be applied:

- De Minimis Rate: If eligible, state if your organization is opting to use the de minimis rate of up to 15% of total modified direct costs. Entities that do not have a current Federal negotiated indirect cost rate (including provisional rate) may propose to use the de minimis rate. For more information, refer to [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#).

- **Negotiated Rate:** State if you will negotiate with your cognizant agency. If your organization has previously negotiated a rate, attach a copy of the most recently negotiated rate agreement (active or expired).

This program has a mandated cap on indirect costs or approved rate deviation.

Use of CESU awards (as applicable) are allowed under this program with an indirect rate of 17.5%.

The applicant's participation as a CESU member must be verified by reviewing the current regional CESU agreement found at <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/> if the applicant is requesting the use of the CESU 17.5% indirect rate. These awards must be issued as Cooperative Agreements.

Data and Evaluation Costs: Applicant budgets may include costs related to data and evaluation as relevant per 2 CFR §200.455.

The costs related to data and evaluation are allowable. Data costs include (but are not limited to) the expenditures needed to gather, store, track, manage, analyze, disaggregate, secure, share, publish, or otherwise use data to administer or improve the program, such as data systems, personnel, data dashboards, cybersecurity, and related items. Data costs may also include direct or indirect costs associated with building integrated data systems—data systems that link individual-level data from multiple State and local government agencies for purposes of management, research, and evaluation. Evaluation costs include (but are not limited to) evidence reviews, evaluation planning and feasibility assessment, conducting evaluations, sharing evaluation results, and other personnel or materials costs related to the effective building and use of evidence and evaluation for program design, administration, or improvement.

Budget narratives must be sufficiently detailed to show that the project is cost effective and that costs are both necessary and reasonable for accomplishing the purposes of the proposed project. Indicate whether partial funding of the project is practicable and, if so, what specific portion(s) of the project could be implemented with what level of funding. The budget narrative should provide sufficient detail for reviewers to understand how costs were estimated. Reviewers must be able to clearly see that costs are realistic and are commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. Applications will be disqualified if reviewers cannot determine that applications meet this threshold.

Other Required Information

Conflict of Interest and Unresolved Matters Disclosures: If any actual or potential conflict of interest exists related to this project at the time of application, the applicant must provide sufficient information to support a program determination of significance per [2 CFR 1402.112](#). Refer to [2 CFR 200.112](#) Conflict of Interest and [2 CFR 200.113](#).

Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement:

Applicants must state in their application if the activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel proposed in this application overlap with those in any other Federal proposal or award or not. If no overlap exists, include a statement to that effect. If any overlap exists, provide:

- **Activities:** Description any overlapping activities.
- **Costs:** Description of any overlapping costs.

- Time: Description of any overlapping key personnel time.
- A copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity.
- Details on when any overlapping proposal was submitted, to whom, and the expected date of the funding decision.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

Address to Request Application Package

Applicants can request application packages through the appropriate contact listed above in the Basic Information section.

Submission Dates and Times

Closing Date for Applications: 09/30/2025

Closing Date Explanation

Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM, ET, on the listed application due date.

This program requires the submission of applications online through GrantSolutions.gov as applicants will receive an acknowledgement of application receipt. GrantSolutions automatically generates an electronic date and time stamp in the system upon application receipt. Awards will be announced and obligated on a rolling basis throughout the fiscal year, based on regional priorities and funding (See regional contacts in the Basic Information Section for details).

Submission Instructions

Simplified Application Procedures for Certain Applicants and Applications

Certain applicants may be eligible to apply following the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) simplified application procedures. These procedures remove the requirement to register in and apply through the Department of the Interior's grants management system. You may be eligible to follow our simplified application procedures if all the following apply:

Your proposal requests \$200,000 or less from the FWS and, in the event an award is made, would not be expected to exceed that amount over the life of the award from the FWS, AND

You are not requesting funds to purchase land or for a major construction project, AND

Your proposed project can be completed within three years or less, AND

You are NOT a State, an Institution of Higher Education (except [Minority Serving Institutions](#)), or a large Nonprofit Organization (i.e., received more than \$10M from Department of the Interior bureaus and offices combined in the past three years)

Minority Serving Institutions meeting all other criteria are eligible to follow the simplified application procedures. If you and your project meet the above criteria and you do not want to

register in and apply through the Department of the Interior's grants management system, do not follow the application instructions below. Instead, please contact us (see contact information below) to confirm your eligibility and request alternate application instructions. If you and your project do not meet the above criteria, follow our standard application instructions below.

Applicants using simplified application process can request application packages through the appropriate contact listed above in the Basic Information section.

Apply Through GrantSolutions

To apply through [GrantSolutions](#), follow these steps:

1. **Register your organization.** Send an e-mail to help@grantsolutions.gov with:
 - Subject: New Organization Request
 - Entity name (organization or individual applying as a natural person)
 - Entity type
 - SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (not required for individuals)
 - Employer Identification Number (individuals, do not include your SSN)
 - Address
 - Contact details (First and last name, e-mail, phone)This information should be the same as entered on the entity's SAM.gov profile.
2. **Assign system user roles.** Follow the [GrantSolutions "Recipient user" registration instructions](#). Submit a separate Recipient User Account Request form for each official to be assigned a system role. At minimum, the Authorizing Official (ADO) and Principal Investigator/Program Director (PI/PD) must be assigned.
3. **Log in.** GrantSolutions requires users to log in through Login.gov. Each user must create a [Login.gov](#) account. For instructions, see the [GrantSolutions Training Resources web page](#).
4. **Find and apply to this Funding Opportunity.** After logging in, click on either the "Begin an application" link (first time applicants) or the "Funding Opportunity" link to go to the "Competing Announcements-Application Kits" list screen. Search the list for this Funding Opportunity's title and number. Click on the associated "Apply" link. Follow the prompts from there. Required applications forms are provided with the Funding Opportunity in GrantSolutions unless otherwise indicated on the Required Forms table above.
5. For detailed instructions, see the [GrantSolutions Training Resources web page](#).
6. **Need help?** Find help topics and contact information on the [GrantSolutions Contact Us page](#).

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Eligibility Review

During the eligibility review, the application is checked for timely submission, completed packages (see [Application Documents](#) above) and alignment with the requirements of this announcement. The Federal agency may remove an application if it does not pass the eligibility review.

Application packages will be screened to ensure all required forms and application elements have been provided and both applicants and projects meet all basic eligibility criteria described above. The FWS will review the SAM.gov Exclusion database, status of applicants' administration of other grants, including Single Audit submissions, past performance, financial strength and management capabilities, and procedures and methods for monitoring subrecipients or vendors. Applicants in poor standing may not be considered for funding. If there are any questions about the ability of the project to be completed in compliance with Federal laws and regulations, additional information may be requested from the applicant. A project may be disqualified if FWS staff determine the project cannot meet Federal requirements. Incomplete applications will be returned for corrections. Corrections must be submitted within two weeks of the returned application. Applicants that do not respond within two weeks with corrected materials will be disqualified. The FWS, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured.

If an applicant selected for funding hasn't finished their SAM.gov registration (see [2 CFR 25.200](#) and [2 CFR 25.110](#)) when the federal agency is ready to make an award, we may decide that the applicant is ineligible for the award and choose to grant it to someone else. Please refer [2 CFR 25.205](#) for more information.

Prior to making an award, the DOI checks the anticipated recipient and their key project personnel against the current list of prohibited or restricted persons or entities in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Exclusions database. We are prohibited from making an award if a recipient or any key personnel are found ineligible, prohibited, restricted, or otherwise excluded from receiving or participating in an award, as their ineligibility condition applies to this program.

If removed from consideration for ineligibility, the Federal agency will notify the applicant in writing.

Merit Review

Importance/ Relevance and Applicability of the Proposal to Program Objectives and Priorities **Maximum Points: 30**

This criterion addresses whether the proposed work addresses the **Program Objectives and Priorities** identified in Section A2 of this document.

If the proposal addresses the continuation of previously funded or ongoing work, reviewers should consider whether the applicant provides an adequate justification for the continuation of the same work (e.g., what benefit would additional results have).

Scoring: 0-30 points

0 = no importance/relevance to the stated very limited potential to contribute to species conservation, no implementation of conservation actions

10 = moderately important/relevant, reasonably likely to make some meaningful contribution to species conservation by contributing information on the species redundancy, resiliency, or representation, or improves the species redundancy, resiliency, or representation

20 = extremely important/relevant, extremely likely to make a significant contribution to the conservation of a candidate or at-risk species.

30 = extremely important/relevant, extremely likely to make a significant contribution to the

conservation of a candidate or at-risk species, or reduce the extinction risk.

Technical/Scientific Merit

Maximum Points: 30

For proposals addressing management and outreach, this criterion addresses whether the Methodology in the Project Narrative are appropriate for achieving the stated Project Objectives, whether the Methodology will result in successful execution of the project, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the time line specified. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient information is provided to evaluate the design of the project relative to the stated goals/objectives.

For proposals addressing research and monitoring, this criterion addresses whether the Methodology in the Project Narrative is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate for achieving the stated Project Objectives, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the time line specified. Reviewers will consider the sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically, and if such information is sufficient, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results, and if data collection is proposed, the inclusion of quality assurance considerations.

For all applications, reviewers will consider whether the proposal includes an effective mechanism for evaluating the project's success in meeting the stated goals and objectives, such as whether the Project Objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely). Reviewers will also evaluate whether application instructions contained in this document were followed and if all required elements were submitted.

Score: 0-30 points

0 = completely unsound and/or unlikely to meet the Project Objectives, application instructions were not followed.

15 = intermediately sound, and/or reasonably likely to meet the Project Objectives, application instructions generally followed.

30 = extremely sound and highly likely to meet the stated Project Objectives, application instructions followed thoroughly.

Overall Qualification of Applicants

Maximum Points: 20

This criterion addresses whether the applicant possesses the necessary expertise, experience, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will consider previous related experience and qualifications of the project's PM or PI, Co-Manager(s), or Co-Investigator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and cooperators. Reviewers will also consider the extent to which the applicant complied effectively with the application instructions in this NOFO.

Scoring: 0-20 points

0 = completely unqualified and/or lacking the resources or capacity to accomplish the project application instructions were not followed

10 = intermediate level of relevant expertise and experience and adequate resources and capacity to accomplish the project, application instructions were generally followed

20 = extremely qualified and experienced, has all necessary resources and demonstrated capacity

to accomplish the project, application instructions followed thoroughly.

Project Costs

Maximum Points: 20

Reviewers will evaluate the budget to determine if it is sufficiently detailed, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be adequately justified and appropriately allocated. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient detail was provided to evaluate how costs were estimated.

Scoring: 0-20 points

0 = unrealistic and lacking sufficient detail 10 = adequately detailed and realistic

20 = extremely detailed and realistic

Emphasis to Leverage Funds/Cost Share Contributions

Maximum Points: 10

Projects will be prioritized based on how they leverage funds, weight will be given to confirmed cost share contributions.

Scoring: 0-10 points

0 = applicant cost share is <10% of overall budget

5 = applicant cost share is between 10% - 30% of overall budget 10 = applicant cost share >30% of overall budget.

Review and Selection Process

This program reviews proposed budgets to ensure:

- figures are correct
- estimated costs are necessary and reasonable and clearly linked to project narratives
- avoid obviously unallowable costs
- identify costs requiring prior approval
- ensure indirect cost rates are applied correctly
- confirm cost sharing requirements are reflected in the budget.

This program reviews applications for potential overlap or duplication between the proposed project and any other funded or proposed project. Depending on the circumstances, DOI may choose to not make an award.

To be considered for funding please refer to Program Description above.

The FWS may review the status of applicants' administration of other grants, including Single Audit submissions, past performance, financial strength and management capabilities, and procedures and methods for monitoring subrecipients or vendors. Applicants in poor standing may not be considered for funding. The FWS may review all proposed activities for eligibility, including consistency with the objective and purposes of the ESA, the requirements outlined in this NOFO, substantiality in character and design. Activities not eligible will be removed from consideration. This includes activities that are not considered to achieve conservation.

Risk Review

Prior to making an award, the program assesses the risk posed by the applicant per [2 CFR 200.206](#). If an award will be made, the program may apply special conditions corresponding to the risk assessed. For awards over the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), the program reviews eligibility and financial integrity information in the applicant's SAM.gov records per [2 CFR 200.206\(a\)](#). The program also assesses financial management capabilities, project delivery experience, staffing resources, past performance, administration and reporting compliance records, and overall project complexity and potential challenges.

AWARD NOTICES

Notices of Federal Award are sent electronically via GrantSolutions or e-mail. These notices outline the terms, conditions, and payment instructions per [2 CFR 200.211](#). The Notice of Federal Award signed by an authorized Grants Officer is the legal instrument obligating financial assistance to a recipient. Any other prior notice is not an authorization to begin work. If the program allows pre-award costs per [2 CFR 200.458](#), beginning performance before receiving a Notice of Federal Award is at the applicant's own risk.

Anticipated Project Start Date: 06/01/2025

Anticipated Project End Date: 05/31/2028

Award dates and number of awards vary by region. Awards will be announced and obligated on a rolling basis throughout the fiscal year, based on regional priorities and funding.

POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration and National Policy Requirements

For award administration and national policy requirements, see the [DOI General Terms and Conditions](#). Infrastructure projects require the use of American iron, steel, manufacture products, and construction materials per [2 CFR 184](#).

See the [FWS General Award Terms and Conditions](#) for national policy requirements for FWS awards. Special terms and conditions will be detailed in award notices.

Reporting

The recipient's Notice of Award will detail all reporting requirements, including frequency, due dates, and instructions for requesting extensions. In general, but not limited to, recipients must:

- Submit Federal Financial reports and Program Performance reports.
- Use the [Federal Financial Report \(SF-425\) form](#) for financial reporting,
- Monitor award activities and report on program performance per [2 CFR 200.329](#),
- Promptly notify the awarding program in writing of any issues, delays, or conditions impairing award objectives per [2 CFR 200.329\(e\)](#),
- Disclose any conflicts of interest related to their award that arise during the award period per [2 CFR 1402.112](#),
- Report on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest per [2 CFR 200.330](#), and

- Report all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award per [2 CFR 200.113](#).
- Report any matters related to recipient integrity and performance to SAM.gov per [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).
- If the Federal share of the award is more than \$100,000 and the recipient makes or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection to the award, disclose those activities using the Disclosure of Lobbying (SF-LLL) form per [43 CFR 18.100](#).
- Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA) requires certain recipients to report information on executive compensation through SAM.gov and information on all sub-awards, subcontracts, and consortiums over \$30,000 to the [FFATA Subaward Reporting System \(FSRS\)](#).

Other Information

Other Information

FWS website for at-risk species: <https://www.fws.gov/initiative/protecting-wildlife/species-risk>

FWS website for Candidate Conservation: <https://www.fws.gov/program/candidate-conservation>