U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Funding Opportunity

F25AS00099_FY 2025 Competitive State Wildlife Grant (C-SWG) Program_Funding Opportunity Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number

F25AS00099

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BASIC INFORMATION

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: F25AS00099

Assistance Listing Number(s): 15.634

Estimated Total Program Funding: $7,200,000

Expected Number of Awards: 30

Award Ceiling: $1,000,000

Award Floor: $25,000

Cost Sharing Required?
Yes
Closing Date for Applications: 02/25/2025

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

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?

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Executive Summary

The Competitive State Wildlife Grant (C-SWG) Program provides Federal cost sharing awards to help the State, Territory, and District of Columbia fish and wildlife agencies and their associations design and implement proactive conservation programs benefiting wildlife and their habitats. Proactive approaches to conservation help recipients and their conservation partners avoid more prescriptive Federal regulatory requirements associated with species listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Eligible activities include conservation planning and implementation. Planning activities include strategic enhancements to a State or Territory Wildlife Action Plan (Plan) that address best practices identified in this announcement. Implementation activities are those carried out to execute an approved Plan. Priority for use of these funds must be placed on species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) and/or their habitats.

This announcement provides complete information on preparing and submitting an application, including details on award Tiers, partnership requirements, and the maximum Federal share of an award. The award Tiers are intended to encourage partnerships dedicated to cross-jurisdictional conservation efforts supporting landscape-scale conservation. Information on the C-SWG Program and the Plan Enhancement Subprogram is provided separately. Tables showing the Tier limits and requirements are available here.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

State governments

Others (see text field entitled "Additional Information on Eligibility" for clarification)

Additional Information on Eligibility

Please note that ONLY the State, Territory, and District of Columbia fish and wildlife agencies and the four regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies (NEAFWA, SEAFWA, MAFWA, and WAFWA) are eligible to apply. All other entities including but not limited to academic institutions, non-profit or for-profit organizations, private landowners or other individuals, or local units of government are not eligible to apply.

Applications are reviewed for eligibility based on criteria provided in the "Application Review Information" section of this announcement, under "Eligibility Review."

Restrictions and Requirements for Non-U.S. Entities or Projects

- We do not fund countries supporting terrorism subject to U.S. sanctions.
- We do not fund countries under U.S. Treasury sanctions without licenses.
- You must get all required approvals for work outside the U.S. We are not responsible for your compliance with local rules.

- For projects over $500,000, you may need to comply with 2 CFR 175.105(b) before we make an award.

Cost Sharing Requirement

Cost Sharing Required?

Yes

For awards made to eligible recipients in the continental States, Hawai'i, the District of Columbia (D.C.), and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Federal share may not exceed 75 percent of the total project cost. The total project cost includes the requested Federal funds plus the required 25 percent matching share and any additional voluntary matching funds or other resources identified in your application. In accordance with 48 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1469(a), Amendment of Subsection (d), and the DOI Policy Advisory Notice on the waiver of cost sharing requirements for certain insular areas, Service Regional Directors shall waive this cost sharing requirement for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Cost sharing or matching requirements are provided in 2 CFR 200.1 and 2 CFR 200.306. You must provide detailed information about matching contributions in your application. You may meet the requirement through contributions from a third party. A third party is any individual or organization other than you as the applicant, such as a partner or subrecipient. For your proposed match to be allowable, it must meet all the criteria listed in 2 CFR 200.306(b). Each recipient is responsible for the full amount of the match identified in your application, including any amount provided by one or more third parties. You must document all third party contributions with a signed letter of commitment. The letter must detail the amount of matching cash and/or the value of any in-kind contributions identified in your application.

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.

GRANTS.GOV

This program accepts application through Grants.gov so once you receive your UEI return to Grants.gov to register with Grants.gov. Please allow for 30 days to register and set up a Workspace in Grants.gov. See Submission Instructions section below for additional details**.**

GRANTSOLUTIONS

This program accepts application through GrantSolutions.gov. You must register with GrantSolutions. See Submission Instructions.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Goals

- Intended short-term and intermediate outcomes include: 1. protection and enhancement of populations of recipient-identified animal species of greatest conservation need and their habitats through implementation of Service-approved State and Territory Wildlife Action Plans; and 2. significant advancements in the utility, accessibility, and scientific integrity of the Wildlife Action Plans.

  Long-term program outcomes may include favorable listing decisions of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). These include outcomes resulting in part from data collection and conservation actions conducted by recipients and shared with the Service and/or NMFS that lead to: 1. determinations that species are not warranted for Federal listing; 2. down-listing of species protected under the ESA (from endangered to threatened); and 3. de-listing of species protected under the ESA due to recovery (removed from Federal listing).

Program Description

References to "you" in this announcement refer to the eligible State, Territory, or District of Columbia fish and wildlife agencies or the four regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies. References to "we" or "us" in this announcement refer to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

The Competitive State Wildlife Grant (C-SWG) Program provides Federal cost sharing awards to help you and your partners implement projects for the benefit of wild animal species and their habitats. Eligible activities include:

- Implementing actions that benefit species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) and/or habitats identified in your Plan
- Surveys, monitoring, and related activities to determine whether to include species as SGCN in your Plan
- Activities to address emerging wildlife issues, and/or
- Plan Enhancement Subprogram activities consistent with one or more of the themes provided in this announcement.

Ineligible activities include wildlife education, outreach, and law enforcement activities, unless they are minor or incidental components that are critical to the success of your project. The program requires most recipients to contribute non-federal resources, as detailed in the "Eligibility" section of this announcement.

This announcement contains instructions to apply for both a traditional C-SWG Program and a Plan Enhancement Subprogram award. The maximum Federal share of awards, scoring criteria, and application requirements differ for each, so we recommend you read this announcement carefully to make sure your application is eligible and complete. You may submit one or more applications to the C-SWG Program and the Plan Enhancement Subprogram concurrently. However, you cannot request funding for the same project from both the C-SWG Program and the Plan Enhancement Subprogram. You must submit a separate application for each project, and you must meet all the requirements described in this announcement in each application.

Although intended as Service policy and not regulation, you may wish to review the Service Manual Part 517 FW 10 for more information, including steps for identifying and documenting emerging wildlife issues.

C-SWG Program

This program supports the design and strategic implementation of proactive conservation actions that can help avert more prescriptive Federal regulatory requirements associated with listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). A core principle of the C-SWG Program is the utilization of effective partnerships that demonstrate a spirit of cooperation and sharing of knowledge and resources to achieve shared conservation goals.

We encourage you to engage with partners in planning, executing, and evaluating your conservation project. Award recipients commonly partner with other fish and wildlife agencies, Tribes, Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, and international entities. Awards issued under the C-SWG Program often include objectives for direct management of SGCN and their habitats, biological research, monitoring, and conservation planning.

General information on the State Wildlife Grant Program is available here. Answers to frequently asked questions are provided toward the end of this section below. We encourage you to contact your CI Regional Office if you have additional questions about this announcement.

Plan Enhancement Subprogram

This Subprogram supports Plan improvements recommended in the following reports: *Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans* (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2012) and *Leading At-Risk Fish and Wildlife Conservation: A Framework to Enhance Landscape-Scale and Cross-Boundary Conservation Through Coordinated State Wildlife Action Plans* (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2021). These include Plan updates that substantially improve the utility, accessibility, and/or scientific integrity of your Plan, especially those that are urgent or time sensitive. Routine or general Plan modifications that you would normally implement through a Major or Minor Revision are not prioritized for funding under this Subprogram. We strongly recommend that you contact your CI Regional Office for guidance prior to developing your Plan Enhancement application. Plan modifications proposed under this Subprogram must be explicitly linked to at least one of the following themes:

Climate Adaptation: We support the compilation of climate adaptation information and development of climate-smart strategies for conservation of SGCN and/or their habitats. Such activities may include but are not limited to:

- Identifying best management practices to address climate-related threats to SGCN, their habitats, or ecological processes that affect them;
- Identifying climate-resilient priority conservation areas for SGCN/habitats;
- Implementing large-scale climate change vulnerability assessments for multiple SGCN/habitats; or
- Aligning Plan strategies with the report, *Advancing the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy into a New Decade*, or with another peer-reviewed, published climate adaptation strategy.

Classification and Prioritization: We support projects that will result in improved Plan classification and prioritization methods, especially those that advance large-scale, multi-jurisdictional SGCN conservation. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Revising Plan criteria for identifying or prioritizing SGCN/habitats, or working with other jurisdictions to adopt a unified SGCN/habitats selection or ranking procedure;
- Adopting a unified nomenclature, standard lexicon, or other approach for classification or prioritization of Plan elements. For example: NatureServe's natural heritage methodology, N. Salafsky's unified conservation threats and actions, or the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List.

Mapping: We support use of digital mapping technologies and techniques to delineate geographic areas presenting the best opportunities for conservation. Partnerships of two or more fish and wildlife agencies may use program funds to align and unify geospatial information or systems across jurisdictional boundaries. We encourage use of a common platform that can be shared across fish and wildlife agencies and/or regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies.

Database Enhancements: We support efforts to develop, expand, or enhance databases for housing, analyzing, and/or sharing Plan element or project performance information.

Plan Accessibility: We support efforts to improve the accessibility of Plan information. You may use funds to digitize Plan information, making it readily available to conservation partners and the public. You may repackage and deliver Plan data to local or regional entities engaged in land-use planning or development, so that data is more accessible and relevant to towns, counties, industry, or others.

Plan Evaluation: We support efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of a Plan, to determine the degree to which your agency or division is meeting your Plan's goals and objectives, and/or to develop strategies to improve your Plan.

The Office of Conservation Investment

C-SWG Program and Plan Enhancement Subprogram awards are administered through the Service's Office of Conservation Investment (CI). CI's mission is to work through partnerships to conserve and manage fish and wildlife and their habitats for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations. CI's vision is of healthy, diverse, and accessible fish and wildlife populations that offer recreation, economic activity, and other societal benefits, in addition to sustainable ecological functions. CI's guiding principle is that society benefits from conservation-based management of fish and wildlife and their habitats, and opportunities to use and enjoy them. The C-SWG Program and Plan Enhancement Subprogram align with CI's mission, vision, and guiding principle.

Wildlife TRACS (Tracking and Reporting Actions for the Conservation of Species) is the accomplishment reporting system used by CI to capture the results of conservation actions and related activities funded by our grant programs. As outlined in this announcement, Project Statement information and performance data must be entered into TRACS as authorized under 2 CFR 200.102(c), 200.202, 200.301, and 200.329. Because this is a competitive program, and we typically select a portion of the applications we receive each year, we recommend that you do not enter TRACS information before you receive a notice of an award.

Adaptive Management

Whether you apply for a traditional C-SWG Program or Plan Enhancement Subprogram award, we encourage you to design and manage your project within an adaptive management framework. Adaptive management in the context of natural resources conservation involves the integration of design, management, and monitoring to systematically test your assumptions in order to adapt and learn. Adaptive management is a form of structured decision-making that requires careful goal setting, identifying management objectives and causal hypotheses, taking action, measuring results, and evaluating, documenting, interpreting, and sharing outcomes of management actions.

We utilize the Strategic Habitat Conservation framework to improve our ability to define desired biological outcomes and articulate the consequences of site-scale actions on landscape-scale functions. Other, similar adaptive management frameworks may be used. For more information, see:

- Strategic Habitat Conservation: Final Report of the National Ecological Assessment Team (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey, 2006)
- The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation (The Conservation Measures Partnership, 2013)
- Measuring the Effectiveness of State Wildlife Grants (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2011)

Award Limits and Partnership Requirements

In 2018, the Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies collaborated to establish the award Tiers and associated partnership requirements described in detail below. The Tiers are intended to encourage partnerships dedicated to cross-jurisdictional conservation efforts supporting landscape-scale conservation. The requirements for the C-SWG Program and the Plan Enhancement Subprogram differ, as described in this section. Simplified tables showing the requirements for the C-SWG Program (Table 1) and the Plan Enhancement Subprogram (Table 2) are available here.

C-SWG Program: Award Limits, Tiers, and Partnership Requirements

The maximum Federal portion of an award increases from $250,000 to $1 million per award based on the number of fish and wildlife agencies actively participating in a project. Partnership requirements of the contiguous, lower 48 States (including the District of Columbia) differ from requirements of Alaska and the island jurisdictions (Hawai'i, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). These differing requirements address resource limitations and/or geographic isolation of the island jurisdictions and Alaska.

You must provide documentation that a project partner is an *active participant*. An active participant is a project partner (*not including your agency or association*) that is requesting and/or matching at least 10 percent of the total project cost. A *fish and wildlife agency active participant* is a partnering fish and wildlife agency that is requesting and/or matching at least 10 percent of the total project cost. Fish and wildlife agency active participants are not limited to adjacent States.

C-SWG Tier 1
Maximum Federal Portion of an Award: $250,000
Fish and wildlife agencies of the contiguous States must apply with at least one active participant, which may be any State or non-state entity. Alaska and the island jurisdictions do not need an active participant to apply at this Tier. Associations must apply with at least one fish and wildlife agency active participant.

C-SWG Tier 2
Maximum Federal Portion of an Award: $500,000
Fish and wildlife agencies of the contiguous States must apply with at least one other State fish and wildlife agency active participant. Alaska and the island jurisdictions may apply with any active participant, including any State or non-state entity. Associations must apply with at least two fish and wildlife agency active participants.

C-SWG Tier 3
Maximum Federal Portion of an Award: $750,000
Fish and wildlife agencies of the contiguous States must apply with at least two other fish and wildlife agency active participants. Alaska and the island jurisdictions must apply with at least two active participant partners, including any State or non-state entity. Associations must apply with at least three fish and wildlife agency active participants.

C-SWG Tier 4
Maximum Federal Portion of an Award: $1,000,000
Fish and wildlife agencies of the contiguous States must apply with at least three other fish and wildlife agency active participants. Alaska and the island jurisdictions must apply with at least three active participants, including any State or non-state entity. Associations must apply with at least four fish and wildlife agency active participants.

As applicable, identify all active participants in your project, so we can verify the maximum award you are eligible to receive. All active participants must be documented in your Project Narrative, budget, and budget narrative along with a brief justification for the Tier under which you are applying.

Plan Enhancement Subprogram: Award Limits, Tiers, and Partnership Requirements
Documentation of active participants is not required.

Plan Enhancement Tier 1 – Single-State/Territory Projects
Maximum Federal Portion of an Award: $150,000

Single fish and wildlife agencies are eligible to apply. Associations must apply on behalf of at least one fish and wildlife agency. Partners and active participants are not required.

Plan Enhancement Tier 2 – Multi-State/Territory Projects
Maximum Federal Portion of an Award: $300,000

Partnerships of two or more fish and wildlife agencies are eligible to apply. Associations must apply on behalf of two or more fish and wildlife agencies.

To ensure that sufficient communication and coordination occurs among your partners, we require any partnering fish and wildlife agency to provide you with a signed letter indicating that the agency consents to you as the Lead Entity applying for a Plan Enhancement award on its behalf. The letter also must describe how each partnering agency will utilize project results in its next Plan revision or Comprehensive Review.

Multi-State Projects: Administrative Options and Matching Requirements

Projects involving two or more fish and wildlife agencies are submitted by a designated Lead Entity. The Lead Entity must ensure that the application includes details on the contributions of each fish and wildlife agency and any other contributing partner. If we select your project for an award, there are two options for administration of program funds. You must identify the option you choose in your application.

Option 1: The application is submitted by a Lead Entity that receives a single award and issues one or more subawards to their identified subrecipient(s). The Lead Entity, subrecipient(s), and/or any other contributors may provide any portion of the required match. The Lead Entity agrees to provide the match identified in the project budget when it submits the application.

Option 2: The application is submitted by a Lead Entity, and it identifies one or more recipients that will receive a separate award. Each recipient is responsible for providing the required match. Each recipient agrees to provide the match identified in each project budget when it submits the application.

If you use Option 2 and your project is selected for an award, each recipient identified in your application must submit a complete application, including the SF-424, budget, budget narrative, Project Narrative, Standard Objectives, and compliance information reflecting the portion of work it will complete. Since project selection occurs after the original application deadline, your CI Regional Office will provide you information on how and where your recipient(s) must submit their application. The Lead Entity and each partnering recipient is responsible for the financial and performance reporting requirements for their separate award, including any funds disbursed through subawards or contracts. Each recipient must also identify a TRACS point of contact and complete TRACS data entry for their award.

Please note that a Lead Entity using Option 2 must submit an executive summary paragraph for the overall project (including work completed by partnering recipients) as part of their final performance report, using the TRACS Multi-Award Linkage Tool (MALT). The MALT combines the separate performance reports that each partnering recipient enters in TRACS. Online training on how to use the MALT in a multi-state project using Option 2 is available at the CI Training Portal, Course 12.

Changes from the FY 2024 Announcement

1. Reformatting and reorganizing throughout the announcement using the updated GrantSolutions announcement template.
2. Editing in compliance with Office of Management and Budget guidelines to simplify this announcement.
3. "Application Review Information": Criterion 2 is modified to remove reference to unscheduled species because this information is no longer published by the Service.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Will grant applications from a single State or Territory be considered for funding? Yes, a single recipient may apply under Tier 1. Tables providing the partnership requirements to qualify for all C-SWG Program and Plan Enhancement Subprogram funding Tiers are available here. Contact your CI Regional Office if you need guidance or more information.

What is the minimum and maximum Federal share of awards in the C-SWG Program? There is no minimum Federal share. The maximum Federal share varies from $250,000 (Tier 1) to $1 million (Tier 4), depending on the number of partners you choose to involve in your project.

What is the minimum and maximum Federal share of awards in the Plan Enhancement subprogram? There is no minimum Federal share. The maximum Federal share is either $150,000 or $300,000, depending on whether you are proposing a single-state (Tier 1) or multi-state (Tier 2) project.

Do all recipients need to provide match? No. Matching requirements must be waived for the Territories of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (see 48 U.S.C. 1469(a), Amendment of Subsection (d) and the DOI Policy Advisory Notice on the waiver of matching fund requirements for insular areas).

How do I calculate the minimum required match? Divide your total Federal request by three. For example, if your total Federal request is $500,000, divide this amount by three, equaling $166,667.

Will the C-SWG Grant Program continue in future years? Funding for the C-SWG Program and the Plan Enhancement Subprogram is appropriated annually by Congress. There is no assurance that funds will be appropriated in subsequent years.

How must a Project Narrative document an emerging issue? Your application must identify the wildlife species benefiting from your project, identify and describe the emerging conservation issue, and commit your agency to monitoring the effectiveness of proposed actions. Your application also must include a signed letter from your agency stating that the next version of your Plan will include the species as an SGCN if it remains a priority.

What activities are eligible for funding under this program? The C-SWG Program is designed to help you meet the conservation needs of animal SGCN and habitats identified in your Plan. Eligible activities are described in Table 10-1 of the Service Manual Chapter 517 FW 10, *State Wildlife Grants – Mandatory Subprogram*, available here.

What are the compliance requirements for activities funded under this program? You must comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations as a condition of acceptance of an award. This includes 2 CFR 200, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and any other applicable requirements under State and Federal law, regulation, or policy. The Service, in cooperation with recipients, must address ESA, NEPA, and NHPA requirements prior to obligating funds in an award. CI Regional Office staff can assist you in understanding the procedures and documentation necessary for meeting these Federal requirements.

Are there Project Narrative formatting requirements? Your Project Narrative must be formatted to fit on 8.5” X 11” paper, with maximum 1" margins at the top, bottom, and sides. Include page numbers at the bottom beginning with the first page. Fonts must be no less than 12-point Arial, Times New Roman, or other commonly used font. These requirements ensure each applicant's Project Narrative does not exceed the 15-page limit.

Where should an applicant submit an application? Applications should be submitted through GrantSolutions. We recommend you also submit, via email, a single document in PDF format containing your entire proposal to your CI Regional Office prior to the deadline, in case you experience difficulties with the system. If your agency does not use GrantSolutions, you may submit your application through Grants.gov.

Who announces the awards? The Service Director approves awards based on ranking criteria published annually in this announcement. CI Headquarters publishes a national media release announcing the awards. The CI Regional Office uses GrantSolutions to notify recipients of an award.

What must be done during the period of performance if a change in objectives or approach is needed? The CI Regional Office determines whether proposed changes may be allowed. Because this is a competitive program, each application is judged to be complete with all costs needed to accomplish the proposed objectives. Typically, you must still meet your original objectives, and the resulting benefits must be equivalent or greater. If you cannot complete the approved objectives, the award is terminated and unexpended funds revert to the Service. You must submit a final report within 90 days of the termination date. We may require that you repay expended funds if the final financial status and performance reports indicate that you did not achieve any portion of your objectives.

Who has the authority to terminate an award? Awards may be terminated by the Service Director or by mutual agreement of your agency director and CI Regional Manager.

What is included within the 15-page limit for the Project Narrative, and what is not? Included: narrative text, any graphs or tables within the text, location description, project leader information, responses to ranking criteria, and any other information necessary for project scoring. Not included: Federal forms, project abstract summary, budget and budget narrative, separately attached maps, photos, diagrams, drawings, citations, appendices, or letters of commitment, and any statements pertaining to indirect costs, audits, overlap/duplication, lobbying, or conflict of interest.

Is there a page limit for my entire application? Please limit your application to 50 pages. Any additional information beyond 50 pages may not be considered when reviewing your application or your application may be rejected.

What resources are available to help with project design and proposal development? You may benefit from information in the report, *Measuring the Effectiveness of State Wildlife Grants* (AFWA, 2011). See CI's Standard Project Statement Wiki for example Project Narratives. Contact your CI Regional Office if you need assistance or more information.

Ranking criteria provide extra points for certain classes such as amphibians. Are projects targeting birds, mammals, and fish still eligible? Yes, any project targeting an animal SGCN, another animal species impacted by an emerging issue, or a species you are evaluating for potential designation as an SGCN is eligible.

Is student tuition an eligible cost? Yes. Tuition remission and other forms of compensation paid as, in addition to, or in lieu of wages to students performing necessary work are allowable, provided that compensation meets the criteria in 2 CFR 200.466. Costs for student compensation should be clearly justified by including a cost analysis comparing alternative hiring arrangements such as hiring seasonal staff. Your justification must also demonstrate that the compensation plan is the most cost-effective option for meeting project objectives. Your cost analysis should provide justification for all related tuition costs, including any stipends that students may be receiving in addition to tuition remission.

Are pre-award costs eligible? Yes. Pre-award costs are those incurred prior to the effective date of your award that are necessary for efficient and timely performance of proposed activities. Such costs may be eligible for reimbursement or use as match with written approval from your CI Regional Office. Pre-award costs are generally limited to those that are directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the pending award, and they must be otherwise allowable if they were incurred after the date of the Federal award (2 CFR 200.458). Costs from a previous project do not meet the criteria for eligible pre-award costs because they are not directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the pending award.

Are costs related to education/outreach or law enforcement eligible? Yes, with limitations. The activities must constitute a minor portion of a project and be necessary for completing your objectives. These costs may not exceed 10 percent of the total project cost. Examples include an activity intended to increase the public’s knowledge or understanding of wildlife, instruction in wildlife conservation and management, or distribution of educational materials. The limit also applies to costs for providing general information to the public about conservation and management programs, actions, or activities (517 FW 10.13). Activities identified under the TRACS Technical Assistance strategy are not subject to this limit.

Buy America Preferences for Infrastructure Projects

This program has Federal funding for infrastructure projects. Buy America preferences apply to Federal awards for infrastructure projects in the United States. Reference 2 CFR Part 184 - Buy America Preferences for Infrastructure Project for further guidance.

More information: https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FWS-Buy-America-Preference-for-Infrastructure.pdf

Legislative Authority

Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, Public Law 118-42 (H.R. 4366, 118th Cong., Div. E, Title I) and prior-year appropriations acts. The Fiscal Year 2025 C-SWG Program appropriation was not confirmed at the time this announcement was published. The Antideficiency Act (31

U.S.C. § 1341) prohibits the Office of Conservation Investment from awarding or obligating program funds until authorized by Congress.

Type of Award

Projects will be funded through:

Funding Instrument
G (Grant)

PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION

Applications 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-424C: Budget Information – Construction Programs	Required for construction projects
SF-429 (Cover Page & Attachment B), Request to Acquire, Improve, or Furnish Real Property Note: The SF-429 forms are only available in the Grants.gov Forms Repository. Applicants must download the form and include the completed form as an application attachment.	Required if requesting to acquire, improve, or furnish real property.
SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities	Required if requesting more than $100,000 in Federal funds and the applicant has used or plans to use funds other than Federal appropriated funds for lobbying related to the proposed project.
Project Abstract Summary (OMB 4040-0019). Must include, in plain language: • Award purpose,	Required from all applicants

Forms/Assurances/Certifications	Submission Requirement
• Activities to be performed, • Expected deliverables or outcomes, • Intended beneficiaries, Subrecipient activities (if known or specified at time of award)	
Budget Narrative	Required from all applicants

Project Narrative
Your Project Narrative must include all the information necessary for us to review and score your application, as detailed in this section. Note that certain requirements that apply only to the C-SWG Program or the Plan Enhancement Subprogram are clearly identified. Separate criteria used to score your application for the C-SWG Program and the Plan Enhancement Subprogram are included in the "Merit Review" section of this announcement. Within your Project Narrative, identify your response to each criterion. For example, at the conclusion of the sentence or paragraph in which you describe your project objective(s), add "(Criterion Three)" or "(C3)" so reviewers can easily locate your responses. Alternatively, you may provide a table showing each criterion and page number(s) where you provide your responses.

Need: Identify the need for the proposed project within the purpose of the C-SWG Program or Plan Enhancement Subprogram. Your statement of need should address all the following subelements:

For C-SWG Program applicants only, identify at least one targeted SGCN that will benefit from your proposed conservation actions, and describe the need for conservation actions to address it/them. Provide references with page numbers to the Plans of all partnering fish and wildlife agencies demonstrating that your project objective(s) are documented as needs and align with Plan actions for targeted SGCN. If your Plan is only available online, provide one or more links to the online Plan and include the full URL. Identify any species named in the Service's National Domestic Listing Workplan that you expect will benefit from your proposed conservation activities; and

For C-SWG Program applicants only, provide baseline data and information, as available, on the current status and condition of targeted SGCN and/or habitats.

For Enhancement Subprogram applicants only, identify the theme, and explain and justify the need for your proposed Plan modifications. Describe how the modifications will substantially improve your Plan. Emphasize and explain modifications that are urgent or time-sensitive, if applicable. Include a citation or link to the Plan or Plans to be addressed in your project. You do not need to identify targeted SGCN/habitats.

Objectives: The Service created Standard Objectives to document accomplishments consistent with the C-SWG Program's authorizing legislation and related policy and guidance. You must use one or more of the Standard Objectives in the TRACS Performance Matrix. Note that Standard Objectives are grouped by "Strategy," contain quantifiable units of measure, and some contain specific activities that you must identify. An example in the Standard Objective format is:

“Conduct 4 investigations on Oregon Spotted Frog by 12/31/2026”
Strategy: Research, Survey, Data Collection and Analysis
Objective: Conduct Investigations
Unit of Measure: Number of Investigations
Activities: Fish and Wildlife Species Data Acquisition & Analysis
Target Species: Oregon Spotted Frog

CI’s Training Portal contains TRACS resources and job aids and example project statements that utilize Standard Objectives. We encourage you to work with your CI Regional Office in advance if you have questions about the use of Standard Objectives in your Project Narrative.

For multi-state projects only: if you are using administrative Option 2 (separate awards to fish and wildlife agency partners), be aware that you must identify separate objectives, or elements of objectives, *for each award*. Please develop your objectives with this in mind.

Approach: The approach identifies activities to be used in meeting your objectives, including specific procedures, methods, schedules or timelines, key personnel, and cooperators. Provide a description of your proposed actions in sufficient detail, so we can evaluate compliance needs for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the ESA, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Your approach should address all the following subelements:

1. Provide the name, work address, and work telephone number of the principal investigator(s). Do not attach résumés or curriculum vitae or include personal or sensitive information.
2. Describe relevant protocols and procedures with reference to applicable peer-reviewed literature, as available.
    1. If your project involves direct species or habitat management, describe how you will use a standard, replicable monitoring protocol throughout the project area to evaluate results of your activities.
    2. If your project does not involve direct management, identify and describe key indicators you will use to measure and report your accomplishments.
3. Provide a brief description of your fish and wildlife agency and all participating agencies or other partners, and identify which of the proposed activities each will conduct or manage.
4. Describe your data management plan including how and when you will manage, analyze, and share results internally and externally, especially with other conservation decision-makers.
5. Describe significant milestones in completing your project and any accomplishments to date.
6. Describe any relationships between your project and other work funded by other Federal awards that are planned, anticipated, or underway.

Expected Results: Expected results are the anticipated benefits from accomplishing your objectives. Describe how your project will benefit SGCN populations and/or their habitats, including both short- and long-term benefits (qualitatively or quantitatively as data are available). Your expected results must include both of the following subelements:

1. Describe the assumptions or hypotheses linking proposed conservation actions to your expected results and support the hypotheses with reference to peer-reviewed scientific literature, as available.
2. Describe any tools such as habitat-population models or other science-based methods you will use to estimate the wildlife or habitat response to proposed conservation actions.

Project Location(s): Describe the location(s) of project activities and the expected area(s) of impact resulting from these activities. Identify any local, State, Tribal, or Federal public lands and any private lands where activities will be conducted, as applicable. Provide maps or other geographic aids and include GPS coordinates in decimal degrees. If specific locations of project activities are unknown at the time you apply, provide the county or counties where conservation actions are expected to take place, if available. Proposals with unknown locations should provide additional information on your criteria for selecting project locations, your program's record of success in working with landowners, and the steps you will follow to meet Federal requirements for performing work in those locales.

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).

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

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 your project or program. Examples include data systems or dashboards. Data costs may also include direct or indirect costs associated with building integrated data systems, including those that link individual-level data from multiple fish and wildlife 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.

The Service has implemented TRACS (https://tracs.fws.gov) to document recipient performance and accomplishments that deliver meaningful results consistent with the C-SWG Program's authorizing legislation and applicable guidance. You are required to enter grant and Project Narrative information for your project in TRACS. We recommend you use the Standard Objective, "Research, Survey, Data Collection, and Analysis," to collect, analyze, and share data or for any evaluation-related objectives. See CI's TRACS Training Portal or contact your CI Regional Office for more information.

Describe how the SF-424 Budget Information, "Object Class Category" totals were determined. Whether you use the SF-424 A or C (Budget Information Form) or provide your budget information in another format such as a customized budget table, you must address the applicable cost categories shown in the Budget Information Form within your budget narrative. We recommend you provide a succinct narrative that is comprehensive for all requested Federal funds and non-federal match identified in your budget, and separate budget tables broken out by each project partner. If you need assistance, please contact your CI Regional Office.

For personnel salary costs, describe how estimates were determined by identifying what type of staff will support the project and how much time they will contribute to the project (in hours or workdays). Describe any proposed items of cost that require prior approval under the Federal award cost principles, including any anticipated subawarding, transferring, or contracting out of work under the award. Provide a separate description and total estimated costs for both contractual and subaward costs. Please note the prohibitions on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment in 2 CFR 200.216. The Department of the Interior's Unmanned Aircraft web page provides a list of approved unmanned aircraft and related equipment and software.

Identify any third-party cash or in-kind contributions that a partner or other entity will contribute to the project, justify their necessity, and describe how the contributions directly and substantively benefit completion of project objectives. For in-kind contributions, identify the source, the amount, and the valuation methodology used to determine the total value (2 CFR §200.306). If you are using volunteer time to meet your match requirement, you must provide an estimate of the financial value of these contribution(s) based on rates or amounts your agency normally pays for a similar product or service in the marketplace. For example, provide the required skill level of your volunteer(s) and link their duties to those of a wildlife technician or another comparable position in your agency. Provide the compensation rate for the equivalent position in your agency, give the number of hours that you expect the volunteer(s) will contribute, and justify their necessity and reasonableness for completion of project objectives. Estimates of the value of volunteer hourly contributions that are calculated by third parties do not sufficiently verify the value of such contributions. More information on valuing volunteer time and other in-kind contributions is available here.

If you are proposing tuition costs as match, including remission and other forms of compensation paid such as wages or stipends to students performing necessary work, your budget narrative should include a cost analysis comparing alternative hiring arrangements (such as hiring seasonal staff to accomplish the objectives) and demonstrate that the proposed costs will result in the greatest benefit to the project.

Identify total project costs, including requested C-SWG Program or Plan Enhancement Subprogram funds and your identified match. If you will implement your project with other Federal funds or other match that is not a part of your total project cost, these resources must be identified separately in your budget and budget narrative.

Identify and justify the funding Tier under which you are applying with reference to your budget, so reviewers can verify your eligibility. For multi-recipient projects using Option 2 (separate awards to fish and wildlife agency partners), note that you will need separate budget breakdowns, including match, for each individual award.

If applicable to your application, also include information on:

1. Program Income – Estimate the amount of program income that the project is likely to generate and indicate the method of applying and disposing of it.
2. Allocation of Costs – Describe the method for allocating costs in multipurpose projects and facilities. You must allocate costs in multipurpose projects based on the uses or benefits for each purpose that will result from the completed project or facility, and you must also describe the method used to allocate costs.
3. Equipment – including any tangible personal property (includes information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by you or your subrecipient(s) for financial statement purposes, or $5,000 (see 2 CFR 200.1). If equipment previously purchased with Federal funds is available for the project, provide a list of that equipment and identify the Federal funding source. You and your subrecipients must follow the requirements at 2 CFR 200 when acquiring equipment under an award, with emphasis on 200.313, 200.317 through 200.327, and 200.439.
4. Useful Life – Propose a useful life for each capital improvement that costs at least $25,000 to build, acquire, or install, and reference the method used to determine the useful life of a capital improvement with a value greater than $100,000.
5. Contingency costs – if estimated using broadly accepted cost estimating methodologies, such costs are allowable but must be separately identified in your budget, they must be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of project or program objectives, and they must be verifiable from your financial records (2 CFR 200.433). Explain how any contingency costs were calculated and why they are necessary to improve the precision of your budget estimates.

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.

Letters of Commitment
If you are the applicant and your agency or association is providing matching funds or other resources, you are not required to submit a letter of commitment. However, any matching resources (cash and/or in-kind) provided by a third party must be documented in a letter of commitment that is signed by an individual authorized to commit the identified resources.

Letters of commitment must detail the amount of matching funds committed to the project and, if applicable, the value of any in-kind contributions. Matching funds and in-kind values identified in letters of commitment should align with figures you provide in the SF-424, budget, and budget narrative. If you omit a required letter of commitment or include a letter that does not explicitly value and justify a partner's match contribution, we may determine that your proposal is ineligible. If you are unsure whether you are required to submit a letter of commitment, or need more information on documenting matching resources, contact your CI Regional Office.

If a partner is contributing resources to your project, but the value of the resources is not included as match in your budget, a letter of support is optional. Whether or not you include a letter from a partner that is not providing match, make sure you provide a justification and details on any such partner's non-matching contributions in your Project Narrative.

Multi-State Plan Enhancement applicants only: you must include a signed letter from each partnering fish and wildlife agency providing its consent to you as the Lead Entity applying on its behalf, and describing how the partner will utilize project results in their next Plan revision or Comprehensive Review. If the agency partner is providing match, this information may be included in their letter of commitment. If you are the Lead Entity, you do not need to provide a letter.

Additional Requirement for Associations: submit a Section 501(c)(3) or (4) non-profit status determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), unless the letter is already on file in your CI Regional Office.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

Address to Request Application Package

Submission Package Summary
Please review this announcement carefully before you apply for a C-SWG Program or Plan Enhancement Subprogram award. Use the following list of components to make sure your application is complete and eligible. Failure to provide complete information may result in rejection of your application, or delay or postponement of your award.

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.
- Project Abstract Summary form (OMB Number 4040-0019).

- If applicable, a completed Request to Acquire, Improve, or Furnish real property form (SF-429B).
- Project Narrative (15-page limit)
- A complete SF-424A or SF-424C Budget Information form, or equivalent budget information in another format.
- Budget narrative: identify the funding Tier under which you are applying and provide a justification. Address all other budget narrative elements described in the "Budget Narrative" section of this announcement. For multi-state projects only, identify your administrative plan (Option 1 or 2).
- Any required letters of commitment identifying financial or other project contributions signed by an authorized individual.
- For Tier 2 Plan Enhancement projects only, a signed letter from any partnering fish and wildlife agency providing consent for you to apply on their behalf. The letter also must describe how each agency will incorporate project results in their next Plan revision or Comprehensive Review.
- Indirect Cost Statement.
- Statement on applicability of and compliance with Single Audit Report requirements.
- Statement regarding project Overlap/Duplication.
- If applicable, a completed SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form.
- If applicable, a Conflict of Interest Disclosure.
- Association applicants only: include your IRS determination letter.

Submission Dates and Times

Closing Date for Applications: 02/25/2025

Closing Date Explanation

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

Submission Instructions

Apply Through Grants.gov

To apply through Grants.gov, please follow the instructions in the Quick Start Guide for Applicants. Before applying, ensure that at least one person at your organization is registered and has the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Only the AOR can submit the application. If you need more users, they must create their own Grants.gov account. Follow these steps below to apply:

- *Create a Workspace*: Creating a workspace allows you to complete it online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- *Complete a Workspace*: Invite participants to the workspace so you can collaborate on the application. Required applications forms are included in the Grants.gov Funding Opportunity Package and can be completed in the Workspace, unless noted otherwise in the Required Forms table above. Check for errors before submission.
- *Submit a Workspace*: An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab

- *Track a Workspace Submission*: After successfully submitting a workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application.

The system generates a date and time stamp and sends it to the applicant's AOR via email as proof of submission. Make sure your application passes the Grants.gov validation checks. Do not encrypt, zip, or password-protect any files. Only registered individuals in SAM as both a user and an AOR can submit applications. Please allow 30 days to register in Grants.gov.

Application System Technical Support: For Grants.gov technical registration and submission, downloading forms, and application packages, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or by email at Support@grants.gov.

If you have access to GrantSolutions, we recommend you apply there. Only apply through Grants.gov if you do not have access to GrantSolutions.

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.

Is the applicant eligible? Eligible applicants include ONLY the following:

- State, Territory, or District of Columbia (D.C.) fish and wildlife agencies; and
- The four regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies (NEAFWA, SEAFWA, MAFWA, and WAFWA).

Is the application complete and submitted by the deadline? See the "Submission Requirements and Deadlines" section of this announcement for deadline information and the list of required components.

Does the application identify and justify the minimum required match? See the "Cost Sharing Requirement" section of this announcement.

Do all project costs comply with applicable cost principles and other requirements in 2 CFR 200?

Does the budget narrative correctly identify the funding Tier and include all applicable components? See the "Budget Narrative" section of this announcement. Tables showing the Tier funding limits and partnership requirements are available here.

Does the application include all applicable letters of commitment, consent letters or statements, and other required responses described in the announcement? See the "Prepare Your Application" section of this announcement.

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

C-SWG Program Guidelines and Criteria

We use the following guidelines and criteria to score your application for a traditional C-SWG Program award only.

Identify your response to each of the criteria in your Project Narrative. For example, at the conclusion of a sentence or paragraph in which you describe your project objective(s), add "(Criterion Three)" or "(C3)" or provide a table listing the criteria and page numbers where reviewers can find your responses. Your responses to the criteria are included in the maximum page limit of 15 pages. Do not provide your responses to the criteria in a separate section of your application.

In Criteria 1, 2, and 7 you may receive bonus points, which are intended to encourage activities meeting Service or other priorities. Point scales are guidelines and individual values may be assigned within the ranges identified.

The maximum score is 70 points.

Need (Criteria 1 and 2)

Criterion One: Relevance to and Documentation of Wildlife Action Plan(s)
Do you provide evidence and information showing the importance, relevance, extent, and immediacy of the need for the project as a strategy for implementing your and any of your partnering agencies' Wildlife Action Plans and meeting your conservation goals? Be sure to cite where in the Plan(s) the referenced information is located and include page numbers (or links with the full URL if the Plan is only available online). (Scale: 0-5 points)

5 Points: The importance, relevance, extent, and immediacy of the need is clearly discussed, justified, and referenced to specific parts of your and any of your partners' Plans.

0 Points: The importance, relevance, extent, and immediacy of the need is not discussed, justified, or referenced.

Criterion One Bonus Points

Up to 2 Points: Project implementation occurs with more than the required number of active participant partners, the additional partners are contributing to completion of project objectives, and their contributions are described in detail. Note that these partners may include State or non-State partners, and their matching contributions may include cash and/or in-kind in any amount; or Project implementation occurs with partners that are not requesting funding or providing match but are contributing to completion of project objectives. The contributions of these partners must be described in detail. Note that these partners may include State or non-State partners.

Up to 3 Points: The need statement describes a new time-sensitive wildlife crisis that has occurred within the past two years or is imminently expected in the future. You must clearly explain the crisis (e.g., response to catastrophic wildfire, or to a new disease or pathogen) requiring data collection, habitat restoration, or other actions and justify why it is a crisis. Note: A time-sensitive wildlife crisis is distinct from the Emerging Issue procedure described in the Service Manual Part 517 FW 10, which pertains to species not included as SGCN in your Plan.

Criterion Two: High Priority Target Species
Does the project target a SGCN that is federally or State listed (threatened or endangered), or a SGCN under review by the Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to determine if it may warrant listing under the ESA? (Scale: 0-3 points)

3 Points: Proposal directly targets a SGCN that is federally listed (threatened or endangered) or a candidate species (i.e., a species with a positive 12-month finding concluding that listing is warranted but precluded).
Service Threatened and Endangered Animals
NMFS Marine Threatened and Endangered Species
Service Candidate Species
NMFS Candidate Species

3 Points: Proposal directly targets a SGCN that is a scheduled species in the Service's National Domestic Listing Workplan.

1 Point: Proposal directly targets a SGCN that is a State/Territory threatened or endangered species.

0 Points: Proposal targets a SGCN that is not listed and is not a candidate species or under review for listing at the State/Territory or Federal level.

Criterion Two Bonus Points:

2 Points: Proposal provides evidence to demonstrate that project activities will benefit SGCN amphibian, reptile, invertebrate, or non-game fish species.

2 Points: Proposal identifies direct management of habitat or augmentation of one or more populations of targeted species.

1 Point: Proposal provides evidence that project activities directly support one or more of the DOI's financial assistance priorities. For FY 2025 these are: 1) improving climate change adaptation and increasing resilience, and 2) strengthening the economy.

Objectives (Criterion 3)

Criterion Three: Clarity
Does the proposal include Standard Objectives? Does the proposal explain whether and/or how completion of your objective(s) help you meet your overall project goals or intended outcomes? Is it clear what will happen in the project? (Scale: 0 - 4 points)

4 Points: Standard Objectives are identified, explained, justified, and are appropriate for meeting project objectives.

2 Points: One or more Standard Objectives are missing or are insufficiently explained, justified, or are not appropriate for meeting the project objectives.

0 Points: Standard Objectives are not identified.

Approach (Criteria 4, 5, and 6)

Criterion Four: Procedures
Where will the work occur? How will the work get done? What methods will be used and are they likely to achieve the objectives and anticipated outcomes? Do you clearly demonstrate that the project is scientifically based, uses a planned approach, and follows accepted principles of fish and wildlife conservation and management? Are best practices sufficiently cited? Do your procedures and practices indicate that your project is likely to succeed? The following points

may be awarded for each of the following subelements; make sure you provide a detailed response for each one. (Scale: 0-18 points)

Up to 6 Points: Procedures and protocols used to implement each objective.

Up to 2 Points: The project action area(s) with respect to geographic location, habitat type, and land ownership.

Up to 2 Points: Individual(s) or entities responsible for each action and how their participation helps ensure the success of the project (do not include CVs/résumés).

Up to 4 Points: Monitoring and evaluation procedures for measuring and reporting project effectiveness or outcomes.

Up to 2 Point: Reference(s) to peer-reviewed scientific literature supporting your approach (if no peer-reviewed literature is available, provide a justification/explanation).

Up to 2 Points: Project timeline that articulates how objective(s) will be completed within the overall project period of performance.

Criterion Five: Data
Is data collection (including any species/habitat monitoring or performance data) standardized across all project areas and partners? (Scale: 0-5 points)

5 Points: Proposal clearly identifies how data/information will be collected using a standardized data collection protocol and references the protocol.

3 Points: Proposal includes the development of a standardized data collection protocol.

0 Points: Proposal does not include any information on a standardized data collection protocol.

Criterion Six: Compliance
Does the proposal include a thorough, detailed review of any compliance requirements, including required permits and approvals, and does it identify any budgeted funds to address all compliance requirements? We recommend you provide this information in table format. If you provide a reasoned, thoughtful response you can receive the maximum points even if your project does not include physical, ground-disturbing activities. Specifically address NHPA, ESA, and NEPA compliance, and include a justification or explanation for any conclusions about the need for permits and approvals. (Scale: 0-3 points).

1 Point: Proposal addresses the potential to impact cultural resources or historic properties. If applicable, have you budgeted for an archaeologist and allocated sufficient time for completion of any NHPA reviews?

1 Point: Proposal identifies any preparations for ESA and/or Army Corps of Engineers compliance and describes how budgeted funds and allocated time will allow for meeting permit/compliance needs within the project period of performance. Are applicable permits, programmatic agreements, and/or biological opinions discussed?

1 Point: Proposal addresses any potential NEPA compliance requirements. Please identify any appropriate Categorical Exclusion(s). If a Categorical Exclusion is not applicable, does the narrative describe whether an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement

will be required, and does it identify budgeted amounts and allocate sufficient time for NEPA compliance?

Anticipated Outcomes and Benefits (Criteria 7 and 8)

Criterion Seven: Impact
How will this project impact the targeted SGCN and/or habitat? Targeted species are those explicitly addressed in your project within an adaptive management framework. (A list of species without documentation is not sufficient.) How are the project's expected results important to the conservation of the targeted SGCN/habitat? Impacts will be varied based on: direct species management, creating or improving habitat, monitoring/surveys to address data gaps, reducing threats, or monitoring species' response to conservation actions. Clearly identify and distinguish between targeted and non-targeted species. (Scale: 0-12 points)

12 Points: Proposal describes highly significant project outcomes, and provides justification (e.g., conceptual model, references) as to how the project results are expected to inform conservation and/or provide short-, intermediate-, or long-term benefits to the targeted species and/or habitats.

6 Points: Proposal describes project outcomes that are relatively significant, and/or the proposal provides limited justification demonstrating how the project is expected to inform conservation and/or benefit the targeted species.

0 Points: Proposal does not include information on the significance of project outcomes and does not justify expected outcomes.

Criterion Seven Bonus Points:
Up to 2 Points: Multiple SGCN are concurrently addressed in your project and the proposal includes evidence with reference to peer-reviewed scientific literature supporting expected benefits to the SGCN.

Criterion Eight: Communications Content
How will you share the results of the project, lessons learned, and other information externally? How are you communicating with stakeholders in the conservation community with the ability to influence future conservation decision-making? Examples include but are not limited to: published papers, conference presentations, and technical committee meetings or media products to provide information to colleagues, researchers, and/or others in the conservation community. Describe how the information will be used by key stakeholders. Note: activities involving required project reporting or coordinating with partners in managing your project are not considered in scoring on this criterion. (Scale: 0-3 points)

3 Points: Proposal includes detailed information on how knowledge and information will be shared externally with a variety of audiences using various media to inform future decision-making and build awareness of SGCN conservation.

0 points: Proposal lacks information on how knowledge and information will be shared externally to inform future decision-making or build awareness of SGCN conservation.

Budget (Criterion 9)

Criterion Nine: Budget Completeness
Is the Tier under which you are applying identified, and do you justify your active participant(s)

in detail? In multi-recipient projects, do you clearly describe and justify your administrative approach (Option 1 or 2)? Is your budget complete, clear, accurate, and sufficiently detailed and justified? Is your budget sufficient to complete your objectives? (Scale: 0-5 points)

5 Points: Proposal clearly identifies the active participant(s) in the project and provides justification for the selected funding Tier. Throughout the document, all budget figures and the budget narrative are consistent, adequately detailed, appropriately organized, easily understandable, and supported with necessary documentation. The budget is appropriately sized to complete the objectives, or additional resources are described that will ensure the applicant can complete the project as planned.

3 Points: Proposal includes figures and narrative that are mostly consistent, detailed, organized, easily understandable, and justified; some budget items are appropriately sized, or additional resources are partially described.

0 Points: Budget figures and narrative are inconsistent, inadequately detailed or justified, and poorly organized; the budget is insufficient to meet project objectives and no additional resources are described.

Plan Enhancement Subprogram Guidelines and Criteria

We use the following guidelines and criteria to score your application for a Plan Enhancement Subprogram award only.

Identify your response to each of the criteria in your Project Narrative. For example, at the conclusion of a sentence or paragraph in which you describe your project objective(s), add “(Criterion Three)” or “(C3)” or provide a table listing the criteria and page numbers where reviewers can find your responses. Your responses to the criteria are included in the maximum page limit of 15 pages. Do not provide your responses to the criteria in a separate section of your application.

The maximum score is 45 points.

Scoring Guidelines:

1 point - Minimal; not at all; poor; none; very unlikely
2 points - Somewhat; barely; fair; to a small degree; unlikely
3 points - Medium; moderately; average; adequately; neutral
4 points - Mostly; largely; good; to a large degree; likely
5 points - Fully; completely; excellent; significantly; very likely

Criteria for Plan Enhancement Applications:

1. To what extent will the project provide the specific products, results, or benefits relating to your Plan? Explain how the proposed changes will substantially improve the relevance or effectiveness of your Plan and highlight urgent or time sensitive needs.
2. To what extent does the proposed activity represent a significant advancement in the quality or usefulness of your Plan?
3. How appropriate, clearly stated, and achievable are the project objectives?
4. How sound is the technical approach, project design, and methods?
5. How well do you demonstrate a clear understanding of the problem being addressed, and an awareness of best practices and/or models used successfully to address the problem?

6. How reasonable and realistic (high probability of being met) is the proposed timeline?
7. How effective and sufficient is your plan for tracking and measuring progress and ensuring that your objectives are achieved?
8. How justifiable, realistic, and reasonable is the budget, considering the work proposed and the expected results and benefits?
9. To what extent does the application demonstrate the inclusion of match or the leveraging of additional resources to carry out the proposed project?

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.

Contact your CI Regional Office at least four weeks in advance of the deadline in this announcement if you are requesting a pre-deadline review; however, we cannot guarantee pre-deadline application review.

After the deadline, we will conduct an initial review of applications to verify applicant and project eligibility. If we identify any minor errors or omissions, we may contact you to clarify information. Examples of minor errors or omissions include cost inconsistencies or omission of disclosures or statements. We will not accept revised Project Narratives, entire budgets, emerging issue letters, consent letters, or letters of commitment after the deadline.

After review for eligibility, a panel of CI program specialists scores eligible applications using criteria published in this announcement. The Assistant Director for CI then recommends a ranked project list to the Service Director. The Service Director makes the final project selections.

Prior to participating in any review or evaluation process, all review panel members must sign and return to CI the Department of the Interior Conflict of Interest Certification form. A copy of the form is available upon request.

Additional review by the Department of the Interior may be required before we notify recipients of awards.

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: 06/02/2025

Anticipated Project End Date: 05/31/2028

Your period of performance may not begin prior to the Service Director's signature on the FY 2025 C-SWG Program approval memo. This date varies, and may be as early as May or June (2025). External factors beyond our control may delay project approvals. We make every effort to distribute the signed approval memo as soon as possible.

The typical period of performance is two to three years; however, the program authorizing legislation does not establish a three-year limit. Your CI Regional Office can provide the procedures and limitations on requesting an extension of your period of performance if necessary.

We encourage you to submit all compliance-related information to your CI Regional Office within three months of Director approval of your award.

You will receive information via GrantSolutions detailing the terms and conditions of the award and instructions on how to request payment.

POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration and National Policy Requirements

For award administration and national policy requirements, see the DOI Standard 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).

Performance reports must contain a comparison of actual accomplishments with the established goals and objectives of the award; a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if applicable; and any other pertinent information relevant to the project results. **Final** reports are due no later than 120 calendar days after the award period of performance end date or termination date. For awards with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit **interim performance** reports on the frequency established in the notice of award.

You must submit all performance reports in TRACS and GrantSolutions as described in the terms and conditions specified in the notice of award. You should complete your performance report in TRACS first. Once completed, TRACS will generate a performance report that you can upload in GrantSolutions.

Your performance report information must provide descriptions of quantitative outputs based on approved Standard Objectives, and narrative responses to the following questions:

1. What progress has been made toward completing the objectives(s) of the project?
2. Describe and justify any changes in the implementation of your objective(s) or approach(es).
3. If applicable, please share if your project resulted in any unexpected benefits, promising practices, new understandings, cost efficiencies, management recommendations, or lessons learned.
4. For survey projects only: If applicable, does this project continue work from a previous award? If so, how do the current results compare to prior results? (Recipients may elect to add attachments such as tables, figures, or graphs to provide further detail when answering this question).
5. If applicable, identify and attach selected publications, photographs, screenshots of websites, or other documentation (including articles in popular literature, scientific literature, or other public information products) that have resulted from this project that highlight the accomplishments of the project.

6. Is this a project you wish to highlight for communication purposes?
7. For CMS States only: If the grant is a CMS, has the agency submitted an updated report every three years detailing the CMS components: (a) inventory and scanning; (b) strategic plan; (c) operational plan; and (d) evaluation and control have been reviewed and summaries included which provide detailed review results and recommendations?

Other Information

Real property acquisition and construction are eligible activities. Real property interests may include, but are not limited to, fee simple, fee with exceptions to title, easements, water rights, and mineral rights. Leaseholds acquired by you or a subrecipient must also be reported regardless of their status as real or personal property under State law. The real property and leaseholds to be reported are those that require a Notice of Federal Participation to be recorded in the public recorder's office of the local jurisdiction. They include real property and leaseholds that were:

- Purchased for a financially assisted project with Federal funds or non-federal cost sharing or matching funds;
- Acquired previously by you or a subrecipient for another purpose, but committed to the financially assisted project as an in-kind contribution; or
- Accepted by you or a subrecipient as an in-kind contribution from a non-federal third party for the financially assisted project.

If your award includes real property acquisition or facility construction, you are responsible for entering information in the TRACS inventory modules to create real property/facility record(s). We will use these real property/facility records to ensure completion of your periodic compliance requirement to submit reports on the status of real property acquired or constructed under a Federal award, as outlined in the notice of award. The Office of Grants Management has approved the Service's use of TRACS as an alternate and equivalent format for the collection of data needed for the OMB approved form, *Real Property Status Report SF 429-A* (2 CFR 1402.329(d)(4)). If the real property will be held for less than 15 years, reports must be submitted annually. If the real property will be held for 15 years or more, the first report will be due within a year of the end of the period of performance, and subsequent reporting on a schedule determined by us. Reports for real property held for 15 years or more will be due at least once every five years but could be required more often.