U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FWS - International Conservation

https://www.fws.gov/service/species-conservation-catalyst-fund

F24AS00017 - Species Conservation Catalyst Fund on Songbird Trade
Fiscal Year: 2024
F24AS00017

Due Date for Applications: **12/08/2023**

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A. Program Description

Authority:
U. S. Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-43)

15.679 - Combating Wildlife Trafficking

Assistance Listing Number:
15.679

Background, Purpose and Program Requirements:
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service or FWS) mission is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The International Affairs Program delivers on this mission through its technical expertise, international conservation experience, and financial assistance by supporting strategic projects that deliver measurable conservation results for priority species and their habitats around the world.

Wildlife trafficking is estimated to be a multibillion-dollar business involving the unlawful harvest and trade of animals and plants. Illegal wildlife trade has broad security implications, with corruption and sophisticated transnational crime syndicates often at the center of these illicit activities. Wildlife trafficking can place stressed animals in unsanitary conditions while evading disease surveillance, increasing the risks of disease spillover and spread. Illegal wildlife trade removes hundreds of thousands of animals and plants from wild populations each year and increases the extinction risk for threatened and endangered species, which are often the target of wildlife crime because of their rarity and value.

Species Conservation Catalyst Fund

The Combating Wildlife Trafficking Program's Species Conservation Catalyst Fund (SCCF) is an initiative that aims to reduce wildlife trafficking for selected species within the complex social-ecological systems across a species' trade chain. The fund focuses on specific species or species groups primarily threatened by illegal trade and supports work that catalyzes significant and sustained change in both demand and range countries.

The SCCF is envisioned as a 'conservation accelerator' fund that enables award recipients to launch or grow projects, build skills relevant to their work, and develop networks of researchers and practitioners. The SCCF advances an evidence-based approach to combating wildlife trafficking, by supporting recipients to provide an empirical understanding of the contexts in which species are trafficked and develop, implement, and evaluate activities that reduce the threat of trafficking to species populations. Projects supported through the SCCF will help build a body of evidence to guide future conservation and counter-trafficking efforts. The SCCF is also designed to develop capacity for award recipients to sustain conservation impact by attracting additional funding, attention, and other resources for future work on the species. In service of these holistic goals, the SCCF also builds in support to convene and coordinate award recipients for activities like strategic planning, communications, and networking.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) launches the SCCF's third species group, songbirds (suborder Passeri or Oscines, order Passeriformes) native to the Guiana Shield and Caribbean. In total, up to $5 million is expected to be available for the SCCF Songbird initiative through several funding opportunities over the next few years. The expected funding amount for this current NOFO is $1,400,000.

See below for more details on this funding opportunity. Please be sure to read this entire document and related attachments, as updated information has been added to section *D. Application and Submission Information* and section *E. Criteria* to clarify requirements, expectations, and funding criteria.

Funding Opportunity

The purpose of this NOFO is to support new or existing strategies to reduce the illegal, unsustainable international trade of songbirds native to the Guiana Shield and Caribbean traded for singing competitions. This NOFO aligns with the missions of the Service and the Department of the Interior and reflects the priorities of the Biden-Harris Administration, including Administration policies articulated by Executive Orders 14008, 13985, and 14005.

SONGBIRD TRADE FOR SINGING COMPETITIONS

A distinct market within the widespread caged bird trade of Latin America and the Caribbean is the trade of songbirds for singing competitions (Mirin and Klinck 2021; Roldán-Clarà et al. 2014). Popular in the Guiana Shield of South America and the Caribbean, this sport consists of "racing" male songbirds to assess which bird can sing a specific song the most in a given time. Singing competitions can be high stakes events; songbirds can sell for US$500-10,000 (Neme 2015) and owners of champion birds earn monetary prizes and social prestige. The sport can also play a significant socio-cultural and economic role as an opportunity for: intergenerational knowledge transfer of bird trapping, training, and care skills; socializing across class, race, and ethnicity; personal development as a discipline-oriented hobby for birdkeepers; connecting with cultural roots and identity; and sport-associated economic opportunities for lower income groups in urban and non-urban areas, including some rural Indigenous communities (Gupta 2014; Mirin and Klinck 2021).

Evidence suggests that current singing competition trade practices appear to be driving the decline of some species. Potentially 15 wild bird species native to the Guiana Shield and Caribbean – primarily seed-finches, seedeaters, buntings and grosbeaks – may be experiencing local or range-wide declines due to wild harvest for singing competitions (according to FWS consultations with field experts and Juergens et al. 2021; see SCCF Songbird Priority Species below). Four SCCF Songbird Priority Species are formally recognized as in decline: the great-billed seed-finch (*Sporophila maximiliani*) is Endangered and the Cuban bullfinch (*Melopyrrha nigra*) is Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Red List), and the rose-breasted grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) and painted bunting (*Passerina ciris*) are listed as FWS Birds of Conservation Concern (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2021). The Service includes 15 species as Songbird Priority Species under the SCCF Songbird initiative with the understanding that the suite shares similar trade pressures and may likewise benefit from similar conservation interventions to result in force-multiplying impacts.

The international trade of these songbird species for singing competitions is suspected to be a primary driver of declines, in part because songbirds are typically trafficked with high mortality. For example, in the United States, nearly all live singing competition songbirds are imported illegally without being declared. Hundreds of birds are seized each year, yet this is estimated by the Service to be a small fraction of the true number trafficked into the country. Likewise, in Trinidad and Tobago, where 4% of people keep songbirds for singing competitions and most of the birds used for singing competitions are foreign-sourced, songbirds are commonly imported illegally without the permits required by law (Gibson 2022). Trafficked birds are subject to inhumane transport conditions (carried in small cages or confined in hair curlers under clothing) and death rates are notoriously high due to stress or injury (Gibson 2022). Smuggled birds also move in association with other illegal activities and evade regulatory, quota, and disease monitoring (Gibson 2022; Rueb 2015). Even when birds are seized, repatriation and reintroduction back to the wild is challenging and rarely occurs. Most of the songbirds used in singing competitions from the Guiana Shield or Caribbean are not included in the Appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES; see **Appendix I. SCCF Songbird Priority Species in the NOFO Supplemental Document**), and therefore are not protected under an international regulatory mechanism such as the system of permits and certificates required for CITES-listed species. This leaves the capture and trade in songbirds from the region subject to a patchwork of domestic laws and regulations, which vary between countries.

While songbird singing competitions are celebrated and promoted via contemporary news and social media, little empirical research has been conducted on the socio-ecological aspects or sustainable management of the trade (Mirin & Klinck 2021, Gibson 2022). Likewise, global awareness among the conservation community about the illegal, unsustainable trade of songbirds in the Guiana Shield and Caribbean is limited and focused on the “Asian songbird crisis” (e.g., Lees & Yuda 2022; IUCN Species Survival Commission Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group).

This funding opportunity solicits projects to reduce the illegal, unsustainable international trade of native songbirds from the Guiana Shield and Caribbean for singing competitions. Proposals are invited for two broad Objectives: (1) addressing the illegal, unsustainable trade of songbirds or (2) convening and coordinating SCCF Songbird award recipients for projects aimed at meeting Objective 1.

***Note**: For definitions of terms used in this NOFO, see Appendix II. NOFO Definitions of the NOFO Supplemental Document.*

Objective 1. Addressing the illegal, unsustainable trade of songbirds

Proposed projects contributing to this objective should implement activities that address the trade of songbirds. Projects should achieve one or more of the following outcomes. Applicants do not need to complete all of the sub-outcomes under an outcome.

Outcome 1.1. System(s) for ensuring legal and biologically sustainably sourced songbirds for singing competitions are assessed, piloted, and evaluated, while supporting sustainable community livelihoods.

1.1.1. Songbird supply is better understood and informed by social science research on:

a. the social, cultural, economic, political, and situational factors that drive markets, human behavior, or policies related to sourcing songbirds,

b. rates and trends of songbird supply,

c. differences in supply for domestic versus international songbird trade, or

d. barriers to having a fully legal and sustainably sourced trade system.

1.1.2. The current, historical, and future effects of singing competition trade on songbird species populations, distribution, and habitat are better understood and informed by research, and used to inform sustainable sourcing and wild bird conservation and management planning.

1.1.3. Wild bird conservation and management approaches are developed and implemented by or with people involved in supplying songbirds.

1.1.4. Sustainable sourcing system(s) is (are) explored, studied, designed, piloted, and evaluated. Potential unintended social and ecological consequences and tradeoffs of proposed system(s) are considered.

1.1.5. Songbird trade system(s) is (are) strengthened to reduce disease occurrence and ensure ethical transport and captivity conditions for birds along the trade chain.

1.1.6. Songbird trade system(s) is (are) strengthened to enable economically fair livelihood benefits and culturally appropriate practices for people along the trade chain, including lower-income groups.

Outcome 1.2. Demand for songbirds for singing competitions is understood and the people involved in trade reduce illegal, unsustainable trade and, as appropriate, transition to legal, sustainable trade.

1.2.1. Songbird demand is better understood and informed by social science research on:

a. the social, cultural, economic, political, and situational factors that drive markets, human behavior, policies, or practices related to consumer demand for songbirds,

b. rates and trends of songbird demand, or

c. differences in demand for domestic versus international songbird trade.

1.2.2. Effective strategies to reduce illegal, sustainable trade (and as appropriate, transition to legal, sustainable trade) are developed and implemented by or with songbird keepers and buyers/sellers.

1.2.3. Songbird keepers and buyers/sellers have increased understanding, capacity, and motivation to reduce demand for trafficked birds and/or advocate for and comply with laws, policies, and practices that lower barriers to legal, sustainable trade.

1.2.4. Songbird keepers and buyers/sellers have increased understanding, capacity, and motivation to develop and follow ethical handling and transport practices that ensure healthy, disease-free songbirds in captivity and the wild.

Outcome 1.3. Local, national, and international authority capacity is strengthened to protect birds and regulate songbird trade.

1.3.1. Robust and practical laws, policies, and systems are established or strengthened to regulate and encourage compliance with legal, sustainable songbird trade for singing competitions.

1.3.2. Regulatory, law enforcement, and judiciary needs (e.g., resources, training, community monitoring) are identified and addressed to strengthen capacity to manage songbird trade.

1.3.3. Communication, coordination, and opportunities for learning exchanges among authorities within and between source and demand countries are established and maintained.

Note: *Award recipients selected to contribute to Objective 1 will be expected (and financially supported) to attend events and coordination efforts facilitated by the entity selected to implement Objective 2. These activities are intended to advance systems thinking and a well-connected, collaborative conservation network that will enable the effective, long-term conservation of songbirds.*

Objective 2. Convening and coordinating SCCF Songbird award recipients

Multisectoral, cross-disciplinary exchange of actors working across the trade chain is necessary to holistically understand and address the complexity of wildlife trafficking (Browne et al. 2021). As such, the Service aims to ensure that SCCF Songbird Objective 1 award recipients (hereafter referred to as "award recipients") work in collaboration and/or coordination to ensure their collective efforts achieve effective, sustainable reductions in the illegal, unsustainable trade of songbirds for singing competitions.

The Service invites proposals for a single cooperative agreement award that would provide support to award recipients to convene, exchange information, develop skills, and build partner networks to help meet the goals of the SCCF Songbird initiative. Although only one award will be given, applicants may collaborate with other organizations to fulfill the activities for Objective 2.

Proposals should plan and budget activities to include several key personnel from each award recipient (likely two to six awards lasting between two and five years). For example, virtual or in-person workshops should include all costs for facilitating in addition to hosting participants (e.g., travel, lodging, per diem, admin costs for processing reimbursements).

Projects must achieve both Outcome 2.1 and 2.2 (including all sub-outcomes) and may additionally include Outcome 2.3 or any sub-outcomes of Outcome 2.3.

Outcome 2.1. SCCF Songbird award recipients share a common vision for reducing illegal, unsustainable songbird trade for singing competitions.

2.1.1. Recipients collaboratively build a model for systems thinking by developing a theory of change and indicators of success that capture how projects advance outcomes from Objective 1.

2.1.2. Recipients pursue synergies and avoid duplication in projects by coordinating on project progress and identifying opportunities for complementing other songbird trade or conservation projects and initiatives.

Outcome 2.2. SCCF Songbird award recipients strengthen their skills and capacity to advance effectiveness and enable long-term sustainability.

2.2.1. Recipients engage in a community of practice by sharing resources and supporting co-learning.

2.2.2. Recipients collectively advance relevant skills to improve project implementation by receiving trainings and other capacity-building activities.

Outcome 2.3. SCCF Songbird award recipients inform and engage appropriate audiences to reduce illegal, unsustainable international songbird trade.

2.3.1. Recipients collaboratively develop a communications plan and outreach materials to strategically raise awareness about the songbird trade problem and solutions.

2.3.2. Recipients strategize on the appropriate need and timing for broader regional/global coordination with other songbird trade and conservation actors.

General guidance

Trade focus: Projects must ultimately aim to impact the international songbird trade for singing competitions (i.e., not focus on trade in songbirds for the caged bird trade generally). Activities may also help combat the illegal, unsustainable trade of birds or wildlife more broadly, but projects must primarily benefit the trade of songbirds sourced from the Guiana Shield and Caribbean for singing competitions. Projects may focus on the domestic trade (whereby birds are sourced from the wild and sold to an end-user within the same country) if activities are clearly linked to reducing the illegal, unsustainable international trade (whereby birds are sourced from the wild in a different country than where they are sold to an end-user).

SCCF Songbird Priority Species: Project activities should benefit one or more of the following 15 species of songbirds. These species were selected because they are either 1) commonly traded for singing competitions domestically and, in some cases, internationally and show evidence of species or population declines due to trade for singing competitions or 2) Threatened or Endangered species at risk of becoming a substitute species for singing competitions (according to Juergens et al 2021 and FWS consultation with field experts). See **Appendix I. SCCF Songbird Priority Species in the NOFO Supplemental Document** for more species information.

SCCF Songbird Priority Species:

- Chestnut-bellied seedeater *(Sporophila castaneiventris*)
- Chestnut-bellied seed-finch (*Sporophila angolensis*)
- Cuban bullfinch (*Melopyrrha nigra*)
- Great-billed seed-finch (*Sporophila maximiliani*)
- Grey seedeater (*Sporophila intermedia*)
- Large-billed seed-finch (*Sporophila crassirostris*)
- Lined seedeater (*Sporophila lineola)*
- Painted bunting (*Passerina ciris*)
- Plumbeous seedeater (*Sporophila plumbea*)
- Red siskin (*Spinus cucullatus*)
- Rose-breasted grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)
- Ruddy-breasted seedeater (*Sporophila minuta*)

- Slate-colored seedeater (*Sporophila schistacea)*
- Wing-barred seedeater (*Sporophila americana*)
- Yellow-bellied seedeater (*Sporophila nigricollis*)

Priority geographic areas: Project activities should take place in:

- Guiana Shield and Caribbean range countries for priority songbird species, including Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Brazil, and/or
- Transit or consumer demand countries where priority songbird species are being traded for singing competitions, including Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands.

Please note that this program will not fund projects in countries that have supported terrorism or that are subject to U.S. sanctions (see section *C3. Other* for specific countries).

Important considerations: Project activities should be developed and implemented in coordination, collaboration and/or consultation with relevant authorities and community members who will be affected by or engaged in activities (e.g., communities living in or near songbird habitat; bird dealers and transporters; bird keepers or singing competition bird clubs). Empirical research should be clearly tied to interventions. Activities should also enable trade that follows best practices for bird health care and welfare. All approaches and interventions should be culturally appropriate and ethical. Finally, we encourage applicants to follow best practices of inclusive science and conservation, such as by conducting project activities in local language(s), prioritizing values of the local region, and centering local people and practitioners in leadership, planning and implementation (e.g., Soares et al. 2023).

LITERATURE CITED

Links to the following documents are provided to applicants as reference only. The inclusion of these documents should not be viewed as an official endorsement of a particular approach or strategy in responding to this NOFO.

Browne C, Ronis EM, Miller JRB, Kapetanakos Y, Gibbs S, Hendrix T, Carlson Bremer D (2021). Systems approaches to combating wildlife trafficking: Expanding existing frameworks to facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration. Frontiers in Conservation Science 2:1–8.

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2021). Birds of Conservation Concern 2021. United States Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Birds, Falls Church, Virginia. https://www.fws.gov/media/birds-conservation-concern-2021

B. Federal Award Information

B1. Total Funding

Estimated Total Funding
$1,400,000

B2. Expected Award Amount

Maximum Award
$1,000,000

Minimum Award
$100,000

Proposals should be two to five-year projects with a range of $50,000 to $200,000 per year for no more than $1,000,000 total over five years. The amount of funding requested must be clearly justified by the scope of the activities, anticipated results, and length of the project period. For multi-year projects, budgets and activities should be clearly articulated by year.

The Service may obligate all funds upfront, or the funds may be obligated in incremental funding year-by-year. Support for subsequent years will be contingent upon satisfactory project performance, reporting, financial management, and availability of program funds.

The Service may issue future and non-competitive renewal funding for the projects funded from this NOFO. Requests for renewal funding will be solicited by the Service and will be based on satisfactory project performance, reporting, financial management, and availability of program funds.

The Service reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted and will determine the resulting level of funding for the award.

B3. Expected Award Funding and Anticipated Dates

Expected Award Funding
$100,000

Expected Award Date
June 05, 2024

The expected award funding will range from $100,000 - $1,000,000. The standard period of performance for projects is two to five years. The proposal, budget, and timetable should describe activities for the entire proposed period of performance. The period of performance for projects starts on the date the award is signed by the Service and may be one or more years duration. If the applicant wishes to request a shorter or longer period of performance, it should be noted and the proposal, budget, and timetable should describe activities for the entire proposed period of performance. For multi-year projects, budgets and activities should be clearly articulated by year. Support for subsequent years will be contingent upon satisfactory project performance, reporting, financial management, and availability of program funds. The Service reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted and will determine the resulting level of funding for the award.

B4. Number of Awards

Expected Number of Awards
7

The total anticipated number of awards is three to seven.

B5. Type of Award

Funding Instrument Type
G - Grant
CA - Cooperative Agreement

Grants

A grant agreement is a legal instrument of financial assistance and is distinguished from a cooperative agreement in that it does not provide for substantial involvement from Service in carrying out the activities contemplated by the award.

Cooperative Agreements

The Service may be substantially involved in projects under this funding opportunity. To submit a proposal for consideration as a cooperative agreement, provide a justification statement in the project proposal as to the type and duration of assistance requested by the Service and a rationale for why involvement of Service is needed to fulfill the project objectives. If the Service determines that its involvement could contribute significant value to a project, the Service Program Officer will approach the recipient following proposal review to discuss whether a cooperative agreement would be mutually beneficial.

Under cooperative agreements, substantial involvement by the Service should be expected and could include one or more of the following: participating and collaborating jointly with the recipient or other personnel in refining and carrying out the scope of work, including training recipient personnel or detailing Federal personnel to work on the project effort; reviewing and approving one stage of work before the next stage can begin; reviewing and approving, prior to recipient action, proposed modifications or sub-awards; helping select project staff or trainees; and directing or redirecting the work because of interrelationships with other projects.

C. Eligibility Information

C1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants
25 – Others (see text field entitled “Additional Information on Eligibility” for clarification)

Additional Information on Eligibility
Applicants can be individuals, multi-national secretariats, foreign, national, and local government agencies, non-profit non-governmental organizations, for-profit organizations, and public and private institutions of higher education.

C2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement
No

Percentage of Cost Sharing / Matching Requirement
Cost sharing is the portion of program costs not borne by the Service. Under this program, cost share is not required but may be committed voluntarily. Voluntary Committed Cost Share (See 2 CFR 200.1) is not an eligibility factor, and contributions will not result in a more favorable competitive ranking. Cost share should be necessary and reasonable to accomplish project objectives, and allowable in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles.

Applicants may consider all types of cost sharing, including in-kind and public-private partnerships. Examples include the use of office space owned by other entities; donated or borrowed supplies and equipment; (non-federal) sponsored travel costs; waived indirect costs; and program activities, translations, or consultations conducted by qualified volunteers. Assign a monetary value in U.S. dollars to each in-kind contribution. The values of offered cost-share should be included in the detailed budget and explanations of contributions should be included in the Budget Narrative whether cash or in-kind.

If the proposed project is a component of a larger program, identify other funding sources and the specific funding amount to be provided by those sources. In addition, it is recommended that the Budget Narrative address the overall cost-effectiveness of the proposal, including leveraging institutional or other resources.

Funds provided by another U.S. Federal Government agency or another Service award cannot be reported as cost share but contributions should be noted and explained in detail in the Budget Narrative.

If cost share is included in the budget, written records must be maintained to support all allowable costs that are claimed as its contribution to cost share, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit.

C3. Other

Foreign Entities or Projects:

State Sponsors of Terrorism: This program will not fund projects in countries determined by the U.S. Department of State to have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism and therefore are subject to sanctions restricting receipt of U.S. foreign assistance and other financial transactions.

Office of Foreign Assets Control Sanctions: This program will not fund projects in countries subject to comprehensive sanction programs administered by the U.S. Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control without proper licenses.

In-Country Licenses, Permits, or Approvals: Entities conducting activities outside the U.S. are responsible for coordinating with appropriate U.S. and foreign government authorities as necessary to obtain all required licenses, permits, or approvals before undertaking project activities. The Service does not assume responsibility for recipient compliance with the laws, regulations, policies, or procedures of the foreign country in which they are conducting work.

Excluded Parties:

The DOI conducts a review of the SAM.gov Exclusions database for all applicant entities and their key project personnel prior to award. The DOI cannot award funds to entities or their key project personnel identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or otherwise excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits, as their ineligibility condition applies to this Federal program.

D. Application and Submission Information

D1. Address to Request Application Package

This funding opportunity contains everything needed to apply. To request paper copies of materials, please contact cwt@fws.gov.

Program Website Link

https://www.fws.gov/service/species-conservation-catalyst-fund

D2. Content and Form of Application Submission

SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance

All applicants must submit the Standard Form (SF)-424, Application for Federal Assistance. This form is available with the announcement on Grants.gov and in GrantSolutions. The form must be complete and signed by an Authorized Representative. For all applicants except individuals and commercial entities, the Authorized Representative's signature on a standard application form submitted to the Service represents their certification that the entity's financial management system meets 2 CFR §200.302 financial management requirements. The non-Federal entity's financial management system must be sufficient to:

1. Permit the preparation of required reports;
2. Trace funds to a level of expenditures adequate to establish that the entity has used such funds per Federal statutes, regulations, and terms and conditions of the Federal award;
3. Provide for the requirements in 2 CFR §200.302(b); and
4. Comply with §200.334 Retention requirements for records, §200.335 Requests for transfer of records, §200.336 Methods for collection, transmission, and storage of information, and §200.337 Access to records.

If this application requests more than $100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Representative's signature on or submission of the SF-424 form in GrantSolutions also represents their certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying.

When completing the SF-424 Application form, enter only the amount requested from this Federal program in Box 18a, Estimated Federal Funding. Include any other Federal sources of funding in Box 18e. Estimated Other Funding and identify any such sources and amounts in the required Budget Narrative (see below). For individuals applying as a private citizen (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization you may own or operate in your name), do NOT include your Social Security Number on this or any other document to be submitted with your application! When completing the SF-424 Application form, individuals must enter in Box 8b. Employee/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN) the substitute number "444-44-4444." Individuals may register in SAM.gov but are not required to have a SAM.gov registration. For individuals without a SAM.gov registration enter in Box 8c. the substitute Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) "KA5HQCLKUVW1".

Project Abstract Summary (OMB Number 4040-0019)

Applicants must complete and submit the Project Abstract Summary form. The Project Abstract Summary form must provide a brief award description. The description must be in plain language that the public can understand without viewing the full application proposal. It should include a brief, simple description of the project purpose, activities to be performed, deliverables and expected outcomes, intended beneficiaries, and subrecipient activities, if known at the time of submission.

Do not include personally identifiable, sensitive, or proprietary information in the award description as this is available to the public. Use only English characters, numbers, punctuation, and standard symbols. Use of non-English, non-standard characters (also referred to as special or extended ASCII characters) will result in the award description failing to be reported correctly to

USASpending.gov. Award descriptions are limited to 4,000 characters or less. Applicants should check the length of the award description and proofread for proper grammar and spelling.

For applicants applying through Grants.gov: Applicants must download and complete the Grants.gov "Project Abstract Summary" form from the full text announcement. To submit the Grants.gov "Project Abstract Summary" form with the application, applicants must add the form as an attachment to the Grants.gov "Attachments" form that is included in the application package.

For applicants applying through GrantSolutions-Grants Management Module (GS-GMM): Applicants must enter the information in the Project Abstract Summary screen. Do not upload a document in place of entering the information directly into GS-GMM Project Abstract Screen.

Project Narrative
Project narratives should be ten pages or fewer and pages should be numbered. Project figures, data tables, maps, curriculum vitae, additional detailed information, partner organizations or government letters of endorsement, financial materials, and required standard forms do not count toward the ten-page limit.

Detailed guidance and examples for completing the Project Narrative are provided in Appendix III. Project Narrative in the NOFO Supplemental Document.

The following sections must be included in your Project Narrative:

1. Project Title
2. Statement of Need
3. Project Goal, Objectives, Activities, and Methods
4. Relevant Party Engagement and Capacity Development
5. Project Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptation
6. Project Learning and Sharing
7. Ethics Standards
8. Project Timetable
9. Description of Entities Undertaking the Project
10. Sustainability

Include as an addendum (not included in 10-page limit):

11. Literature Cited (include as an addendum)
12. Project Location
13. Partner Organization or Government Letter of Endorsement

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 on Grants.gov or 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 Table

Applicants must include an itemized Budget Table following the table format below. If your Budget Table requires more than one page, verify that the column headings and row titles appear on all pages. For multi-year or multi-phase projects, please include a separate budget table and narrative for each year/phase with subtotals.

If the proposed project is a component of a larger program, identify leveraged funds and other resources available and/or needed to accomplish the desired objectives (leveraged funds are funds that run parallel to or outside of the proposed SERVICE project budget). Include the specific funding amount to be provided by those sources and the relevant activities they will contribute to. In addition, it is recommended that the Budget Narrative address the overall cost-effectiveness and feasibility of the proposal, including leveraging institutional or other resources.

The itemized budget should provide enough information for reviewers to be able to understand the cost basis and calculation at a glance. For example, a $3,300 charge for lodging should include the formula for how the cost was calculated (e.g., *Lodging for 20 nights x 11 people x $15/night = $3,300)*. For personnel salary costs, include the baseline salary figures and the estimates of time (e.g., *50% time on project*).

For any salaries, staff time, or contractors for which Service funds are requested, the person should be identified, and their qualifications described in the Project Narrative (Description of Entities Undertaking the Project). For any training, a description of the training should be included in the Methods section. For any meetings, a description of participants, a draft agenda, and desired outputs should be provided.

Expenses listed as "Miscellaneous" or "etc." are unallowable. Unless conditions listed under 200.433 Contingency provisions are applicable, "contingencies" are unallowable. Expenses listed as "Other" must be clearly identified and described in the Budget Narrative.

Applicants should be aware of and comply with the requirements of 200.216 Prohibition on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment.

Equipment: Equipment is defined as an item with a per-unit cost of $5,000 or more and a service life of more than one year. If the item meets these criteria, all federal procurement policies and procedures must be followed. If an item does not meet these criteria, it should be considered a supply and listed under cost category E. Justify any equipment purchase/rental in the budget narrative. If equipment previously purchased with Federal funds is available for the project, provide a list of that equipment and identify the Federal funding source. For expensive items or large single purchases, provide detailed technical specifications or a pro forma invoice.

Supplies: List items separately using unit costs and the percentage of each unit cost being charged to the award for photocopying, postage, telephone/fax, printing, and office supplies (e.g., Telephone: $50/month x 50% = $25/month x 12 months).

Contractual:

1. Subawards: For each subaward, provide a detailed line-item breakdown explaining specific services in a separate tab in the Budget Table and Narrative. Subaward budgets should include the same level of detail for personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, other direct costs, and indirect costs required of the direct applicant. If indirect costs are charged on a subaward budget, include the subrecipient's NICRA.

2. Consultant Fees: For example, lecture fees, honoraria, travel, and per diem for outside speakers or independent evaluators: list number of people and rates per day (e.g., *2 x $150/day x 2 days*). Consultant/outside expert fees/honoraria should be consistent with the level of experience and based on a fair market value.

Go to http://www.fws.gov/international/pdf/sample-budget.pdf to view a sample project budget table.

Category/Budget Item	**Units**	**Cost per Unit ($)**	**No. of Units**	**Total**	**USFWS**	Recipient
Personnel						
Trainer	month	$xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	$XXX
Project Director	month	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx		$ xxx
Project Coordinator	month	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx		$ xxx
Personnel Subtotal					$xxx	$ xxx
Fringe Benefits						
% rate	lump	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	$XXX
Fringe Benefits Subtotal					$ xxx	$ xxx
Travel						
Vehicle day-use (with driver)	Day	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx		
Vehicle maintenance and repair	lump	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
Domestic Flights (Coordination at Transit Points)	Each	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
Meals (4 day Training 30 ppl)	Day	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
Accommodation (4 day Training 20ppl)	Day	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	

Travel Subtotal						
Equipment						
xxx	Each	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
xxx	Each	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
Equipment Subtotal					$ xxx	$ xxx
Supplies						
xxx	Each	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
xxx	Each	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
Supplies Subtotal					$ xxx	$ xxx
Contractual						
xxx	lump	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
xxx	month	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
Contractual Subtotal					$ xxx	$ xxx
Other						
xxx	lump	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
xxx	month	$ xxx	xx	$ xxx	$xxx	
Other Subtotal				$ xxx	$ xxx	$ xxx
TOTAL DIRECT CHARGES				$ xxx	$ xxx	$ xxx
INDIRECT CHARGES				$ xxx	$ xxx	$ xxx
GRAND TOTAL					**$xxx**	**$xxx**

Budget Narrative

Applicants must include a budget narrative that describes and justifies requested budget items and costs. In your budget narrative, describe how the SF-424 Budget Information, "Object Class Category" totals were determined. For personnel salary costs, generally 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 any work under the award. Provide a separate description and total estimated costs for both contractual and subaward costs. If equipment previously purchased with Federal funds is available for the project, provide a list of that equipment and identify the Federal funding source. Identify any third-party cash or in-kind contributions that a partner or other entity will contribute to the project and describe how the contributions directly and substantively benefit completion of the project. For in-kind

contributions, identify the source, the amount, and the valuation methodology used to determine the total value. See 2 CFR §200.306 for more information. 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.

Although not a requirement, the following types of activities may be included in applications:

- Open-access publication charges, for institutions/organizations that cannot cover costs otherwise.
- Skills and professional development training. Applicants are encouraged to budget up to $20,000 per year for skills and professional development training opportunities for project staff. If specific sessions are not named, we request applicants to identify the general skill(s) they aim to develop. We encourage applicants to consider building skills in fundraising, strategic planning, adaptive management, social and behavioral science research and application, and other relevant topics consistent with the approach of the SCCF and that will help sustain the project goals and team growth in the long-term.
- Costs associated with convening and coordinating partners and any other collaborative processes such as meetings (space, lodging, travel), web and print communications, relevant party outreach activities, strategic planning, and conservation prioritization.

Dedicated staffing or other activities (e.g., workshops, meetings) to strengthen conservation outcomes and enable the work to continue beyond the period of performance, such as monitoring and evaluation, fundraising, communications and storytelling, and strategic planning and adaptive management.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Per the Financial Assistance Interior Regulation (FAIR), 2 CFR §1402.112, applicants must state in their application if any actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of submission.

a. *Applicability*.
   1. This section intends to ensure that non-Federal entities and their employees take appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest in their responsibilities under or with respect to Federal financial assistance agreements.
   2. In the procurement of supplies, equipment, construction, and services by recipients and by sub recipients, the conflict of interest provisions in 2 CFR§200.318 apply.

b. *Notification*.
   1. Non-Federal entities, including applicants for financial assistance awards, must disclose in writing any conflict of interest to the DOI awarding agency or pass- through entity in accordance with 2 CFR §200.112.
   2. Recipients must establish internal controls that include, at a minimum, procedures to identify, disclose, and mitigate or eliminate identified conflicts of interest. The recipient is responsible for notifying the Financial Assistance Officer in writing of any conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of the award, including those that have been reported by sub recipients.

c. *Restrictions on lobbying*. Non-Federal entities are strictly prohibited from using funds under a grant or cooperative agreement for lobbying activities and must provide the required certifications and disclosures pursuant to 43 CFR §18 and 31 USC §1352.

d. *Review procedures*. The Financial Assistance Officer will examine each conflict of interest disclosure on the basis of its particular facts and the nature of the proposed grant or cooperative agreement, and will determine whether a significant potential conflict exists and, if it does, develop an appropriate means for resolving it.

Enforcement. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the government may be cause for termination of the award. Failure to make required disclosures may result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR §200.339, Remedies for noncompliance, including suspension or debarment (see also 2 CFR §180).

Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

All U.S. states, local governments, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, and non- profit organizations expending $750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in the applicant's fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System, in accordance with 2 CFR 200 subpart F. U.S. state, local government, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, and non- profit applicants must state if your organization was or was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year. If your organization was required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year, provide the EIN associated with that report and state if it is available through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse website.

Certification Regarding Lobbying

Applicants requesting more than $100,000 in Federal funding must certify to the statements in 43CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If this application requests more than $100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Official's signature on the appropriate SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance form also represents the entity's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A.

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

Applicants and recipients must not use any federally appropriated funds (annually appropriated or continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a Federal award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any U.S. agency, a Member of the U.S. Congress, an officer or employee of the U.S. Congress, or an employee of a Member of the U.S. Congress connection with the award. Applicants and recipients must complete and submit the SF-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities" form if the Federal share of the proposal or award is more than $100,000 and the applicant or recipient has made or has agreed to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with the application or award. The SF-LLL form is available with this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. See 43 CFR, Subpart 18.100 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

Applicants must provide a statement indicating if there is any overlap between this Federal application and any other Federal application, or funded project, in regard to activities, costs, or

time commitment of key personnel. If no such overlap or duplication exists, state, “There are no overlaps or duplication between this application and any of our other Federal applications or funded projects, including in regard to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel”. If any such overlap exists, provide a complete description of overlaps or duplications between this proposal and any other federally funded project or application in regard to activities, costs, and time commitment of key personnel, as applicable. Provide a copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity and identify when that proposal was submitted, to whom (entity name and program), and when you anticipate being notified of their funding decision. When overlap exists, your statement must end with “We understand that if at any time we receive funding from another source that is duplicative of the funding we are requesting from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in this application, we will immediately notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service point of contact identified in this Funding Opportunity in writing.”

D3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Registration:
This requirement does not apply to individuals applying for funds as an individual (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization you may own, operate, or work within), or any entity with an exception to bypass SAM.gov registration with prior approval from the funding bureau or office in accordance with bureau or office policy. All other applicants are required to register as a financial assistance recipient in SAM.gov prior to submitting a Federal award application and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). A Federal award may not be made to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the program is ready to make an award, the program may determine the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. Federal award recipients must also continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information through the life of their Federal award(s). Entities already registered in SAM.gov should review their registration to confirm that they are registered as a financial assistance recipient, which requires completion of the SAM.gov “Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations”. See the “Submission Requirements” section of this document below for more information on SAM.gov registration.

Applicants can register on the SAM.gov website. The “Help” tab on the website contains User Guides and other information to assist you with registration. The Grants.gov “Register with SAM” page also provides detailed instructions. Applicants can contact the supporting Federal Service Desk for help registering in SAM. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least once every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly encouraged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure their information is up to date and reflects changes that may have been made to the entity’s IRS information. If applicable, foreign entities who want to receive payment directly to a U.S. bank account must enter and maintain valid, current banking information in SAM.

D4. Submission Dates and Times

Due Date for Applications
12/08/2023

Application Due Date Explanation
Electronically submitted applications must be submitted through GrantSolutions no later than 11:59 PM **ET,** on the listed application due date**.** Applications must be submitted in English. **Late applications will not be accepted**.

A confirmation email containing an assigned application number beginning with "FWS-" will be sent to applicants upon submission. If you do not receive this email within five days of the opportunity closing date, contact cwt@fws.gov**. DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION MORE THAN ONCE. Duplicate applications will be discarded.**

Please see more information about submission requirements in section D7. Other Submission Requirements. Applicants must have an active registration in SAM to apply.

D5. Intergovernmental Review

An intergovernmental review may be required for applications submissions from a U.S. state or local government prior to submission. Applicants must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to comply with the state's process under Executive Order 12372. The State Single Point of Contact list is available on the OMB Office of Federal Financial Management website.

D6. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Costs: Individuals
Individuals applying for and receiving funds separate from a business or non-profit organization they may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, you must not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.

Indirect Costs: Organizations
The Federal awarding agency that provides the largest amount of direct funding to your organization is your cognizant agency for indirect costs, unless otherwise assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). If the Department of the Interior (DOI) is your organization's cognizant agency, the Interior Business Center (IBC) will negotiate your indirect cost rate. Contact the IBC by phone 916-930-3803 or using the IBC Email Submission Form. See the IBC Website for more information.
Organizations must have an active Federal award before they can submit an indirect cost rate proposal to their cognizant agency. Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award. Recipients may not shift unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

Required Indirect Cost Statement to be submitted by Organization:

U.S. state or local government entities receiving more than $35 million in direct Federal

funding must include the following statement in their application and attach a copy of their most recently negotiated rate agreement:

- We are a U.S. state or local government entity receiving more than $35 million in direct Federal funding. We submit our indirect cost rate proposals to our cognizant agency. Our current indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. Attached is a copy of our most recently negotiated rate agreement/certification.

U.S. state or local government entities receiving $35 million or less in direct Federal funding must include the applicable statement from this list:

- We are a U.S. state or local government entity receiving $35 million or less in direct Federal funding. We prepare and retain for audit an indirect cost rate proposal and documentation per 2 CFR 200, Appendix VII. Our current indirect cost rate is [insert rate], which is charged against [insert a complete description of the direct cost base used to distribute indirect costs to the award].
- We are a U.S. state or local government entity receiving $35 million or less in direct Federal funding. We have not prepared an indirect cost rate proposal and documentation per 2 CFR §200, Appendix VII and elect to charge the de minimis rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs as defined in 2 CFR §200.1. We understand we must use this methodology consistently for all Federal awards until we choose to establish a rate per 2 CFR §200. We understand we must notify the Service in writing if we establish a rate that changes the methodology used to charge indirect costs during the award period. We understand that additional Federal funds may not be available to support an unexpected increase in indirect costs during the project period and that such changes are subject to review, negotiation, and prior approval by the Service.

All other organizations must include the applicable statement from this list and any related documentation in their application. Please note, an organization with a current negotiated (including provisional) rate may not elect to charge the 10% de minimis rate of Modified Total Direct Costs during the period covered by their current negotiated rate.

- We are an organization with a current negotiated indirect cost rate. In the event we receive an award, we will charge indirect costs per our current negotiated rate agreement. Attached is a copy of our current rate agreement.
- We are an organization with a negotiated indirect cost rate that has expired. Attached is copy of our most recently negotiated rate agreement. If we receive an award, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award date. We understand we must provide the Service a copy of our approved rate agreement before charging indirect costs to the Federal award.
- We are an organization that has never negotiated an indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate], which is charged against [insert a complete description of the direct cost base used to distribute indirect costs to the award]. If we receive an award, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award date. We understand we must provide the Service a copy of our approved rate agreement before charging indirect costs to the Federal award.

- We are an organization that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate. In the event an award is made, we elect to charge the de minimis rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs as defined in 2 CFR §200.1. We understand we must use this methodology consistently for all Federal awards until such time as we negotiate a different rate with our cognizant agency. We understand that we must notify the Service in writing if during the award period we establish a rate that changes the methodology used to charge indirect costs to the award. We understand that additional Federal funds may not be available to support an unexpected increase in indirect costs and that such changes are subject to review, negotiation, and prior approval by the Service.
- We are an organization submitting a [insert either "Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program" or "Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Network"] project proposal, which has an indirect cost rate cap of [insert rate; CRU is currently 15%; CESU is currently 17.5%]. In the event we receive an award, we understand that if we have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect cost rate agreement we must charge the capped indirect cost rate to the same base identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement. We understand we must request prior approval from the awarding program to use the 2 CFR 200.1 Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) base instead of our approved base and that we must submit such requests with our application, including a calculation showing how use of the MTDC base results in an overall reduction in the total indirect costs recovered. If we do not have current negotiated (including provisional) rate, we understand we must charge the capped indirect cost rate against Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) as defined in 2 CFR §200.1. If we have never negotiated a rate, we understand we must use the de minimis rate of 10% of MTDC.
- We are an organization that will charge all costs directly.

The following cost elements **are not allowable** under this program:

- The purchase of firearms or ammunition
- Gathering information by persons who conceal their true identity
- Buying or purchasing of intelligence, evidence or information or paying informants
- Law enforcement operations that, to arrest suspects, prompt them to carry out illegal activities (entrapment)
- Any activity that would circumvent sanctions, laws, or regulations of either the U.S. or the country of the proposed activity
- Support for either non-governmental organization staff or foreign government delegates to attend CITES Conferences of the Parties (CITES working groups and technical meetings are acceptable)
- Publication of materials for distribution within the United States that are not related to the program
- Pre-award Costs - Expenses incurred before the specified dates of award period of performance (unless prior written approval is received.)
- Programs designed to advocate policy views or positions of foreign governments or views of a particular political faction
- Entertainment and/or alcoholic beverages
- Purchase of land

- Direct support or the appearance of direct support for individual or single-party electoral campaigns
- Duplication of services immediately available through municipal, provincial, or national government

D7. Other Submission Requirements

The Service uses the GrantSolutions system to manage financial assistance applications and awards. Applicants must register in and conduct any subsequent award business with the Service in GrantSolutions. To apply, your organization and organization officials must be established in GrantSolutions. To register your organization in GrantSolutions, send an email to help@grantsolutions.gov with the following information:

Subject: New Organization Request

- Organization/Individual Name
- Point of Contact first and last name, email, and phone number
- Organization Type
- SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (not required for individuals or Service-waived entities)
- Organization Employer Identification Number (Applicants that are INDIVIDUALS DO NOT include your social security number)
- Address

Organizational details should match those in the organization's SAM.gov registration. To establish organization official accounts and user role(s), complete a Recipient User Account Request Form for each official and email it to help@grantsolutions.gov. The GrantSolutions entity user roles are: Authorizing Official (ADO); Principal Investigator/Program Director (PI/PD); Support Specialist (GSS); Financial Officer (FO); and Financial Support Staff (FSS). All roles can do the following: enter applications, amendments, and reports, view awards, and view and create notes. The ADO and the PI/PD roles can also submit applications, amendments, and reports. The FO role can also submit reports. At a minimum, registered organizations must assign someone to the ADO and PI/PD roles. For more information, see the GrantSolutions Recipient Training and FAQs web page. For GrantSolutions registration, submission, and other assistance contact their Customer Support by telephone at 1-866-577-0771 or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov.

PLEASE NOTE: Applicants must have an active registration in SAM before attempting to register in GrantSolutions. The Service recommends applicants begin the initiation process for SAM at least 30 days before the submission deadline. If you experience problems registering or submitting an application in GrantSolutions, you may be granted a waiver. If you wish to seek a waiver, you must submit supporting documentation to demonstrate the issues you are experiencing. Documentation may include computer screenshots showing error messages or email communication with the GrantSolutions Help Desk attempting to resolve the issue. The request must be submitted at least **three** days before the submission deadline. Please send your waiver request to **DIC_GRANTS@fws.gov**.

E. Application Review Information

E1. Criteria

The minimum programmatic requirements for this funding opportunity are that (1) the proposal follows basic proposal content and formatting requirements as described in D2. Content and Form of Application Submission, and (2) the proposal addresses the program's Funding Priorities, as described in A. Program Description. Proposed project goals should specify clearly in the body of the proposal which desired outcome(s) will be achieved by the project. Proposals that do not address the desired outcomes described above will not move forward in the review process. Proposals that meet minimum programmatic requirements will be evaluated based on the criteria below.

Priority will be given to projects that reduce the illegal, unsustainable trade of songbirds through sound, realistic, evidence-based, and inclusive project designs. Project proposals that receive higher scores in the merit reviews will:

- *Show systematic understanding:* Demonstrate a systematic understanding of the social-ecological context of wildlife trafficking in the project system, including identifying the social, cultural, economic, and political factors driving the issue (either known or unknown), and identifying where and how the project will engage in this context.
- *Build on prior evidence:* Demonstrate how the project is context specific, reflects a thoughtful and adaptive conservation strategy grounded in best available evidence, and how and why the proposed activities are expected to work (e.g., through the development/presentation of a theory of change or proven prior success of this or similar work). If there is a lack of evidence, the proposal should provide a strong rationale for the proposed approach and how it will be piloted. Describe how the project ultimately will build the evidence base for effective interventions.
- *Adhere to ethical standards and culturally appropriate approaches:* Demonstrate that project activities will adhere to accepted ethical standards and best practices established by pertinent local, national, or international policies and norms by considering and mitigating potential risks posed by project activities. This includes ethical considerations for research and interventions involving people and wildlife, assessing potential (and unintentional) positive or negative impacts of proposed activities, and defining measures to manage risks and maximize positive impacts. As relevant, integrate culturally appropriate approaches into work, such as developing tailored approaches based on the cultural attributes and wellbeing of engaged groups and including key personnel with relevant lived experience and expertise.
- *Include relevant parties and partners:* Demonstrate that activities will be developed and implemented in coordination, collaboration, and/or consultation with local, national, and international authorities, and members of communities who will be affected by or engaged in activities and other relevant parties and partners.
- *Participate in collaboration and partnerships:* Establish new or maintain existing partnerships, networks, or communities of practice to support collaboration, leveraging resources, and shared learning to improve both short- and long-term, local, and global conservation goals.

- *Show capacity for implementation:* Demonstrate capacity to implement the proposed project, such as key personnel with system-specific expertise, including (but not limited to) knowledge and prior experience relevant to the country, species, proposed activities, and/or relevant research methods, theory, and evidence.
- *Show a monitoring and evaluation plan:* Demonstrate robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, and invest in contributing to the evidence base for conservation.
- *Show sustainability and amplification:* Describe a vision for project sustainability including (but not limited to) whether projects (1) develop and foster lasting in-country capacity; and/or (2) develop strategies to generate additional support and attention to counter illegal, unsustainable trade of the target species.
- *Align the budget with activities:* Align the project budget with activities, such that proposed costs seem necessary and reasonable to achieve the project objectives, and budgeted expenses are clearly linked to the proposed project.
- *Demonstrate strong past performance (if applicable)*: If applicants have had other Service awards, past performance will be considered as a primary review criterion. The proposal should demonstrate the record of past performance and a summary of major activities and accomplishments of previous Service awards (if applicable). Independent of the proposal, reviewers will also evaluate past award performance on previous Service grant support, including timely submission of financial and performance reports, fiscal responsibility, and the ability to complete project activities.

Reviewers may consider the following sub-factors to break ties and further distinguish between applications with equivalent scores: alignment with SCCF Songbird Objectives and Outcomes; financial need; geographical and project diversity in the Service portfolio; and proportion of proposal budget dedicated to administration, salaries, and travel.

E2. Review and Selection Process

Prior to award, the program will review any applicant statement regarding potential overlap or duplication between the project to be funded and any other funded or proposed project in terms of activities, funding, or time commitment of key personnel. Depending on the circumstances, the program may request modification to the application, other pending applications, or an active award, as needed to eliminate any duplication of effort, or the FWS may choose not to fund the selected project.

Prior to award, the program will conduct and document a review of the proposed budget to ensure figures are calculated correctly, proposed costs are clearly linked to the project narrative and seem necessary and reasonable, no obviously unallowable costs are included, costs requiring prior approval are identified and described, indirect cost are applied correctly, and any program match or cost share requirements are addressed.

The program may not make a Federal award to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the Bureau is ready to make an award, the program may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. The program can use that determination as a basis for making

an award to another applicant.

Prior to award, the program will evaluate the risk posed by applicants as required in 2 CFR §200.206. Prior to approving awards for Federal funding in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold (currently $250,000), the Bureau is required to review and consider any information about or from the applicant found in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System. The Bureau will consider this information when completing the risk review. The Bureau uses the results of the risk evaluation to establish monitoring plans, recipient reporting frequency requirements, and to determine if one or more of the specific award conditions in 2 CFR §200.208 should be applied to the award.

The Service's International Affairs program evaluates proposals by scoring how well each proposal addresses the program priorities and the requested elements listed in the section *E1. Criteria* above. Programs MUST ensure that: (1) applications are reviewed and evaluated by qualified reviewers; (2) applications are scored and selected based on announced criteria; (3) consideration is given to applicant risk and past performance; (4) competitive applications are ranked; and (5) funding determinations are made. Programs must establish an evaluation plan comprised of five basic elements: (1) merit review factors and subfactors; (2) a rating system for competitive applications (e.g., adjectival, color coding, numerical, or ordinal); (3) evaluation standards or descriptions which explain the basis for assignment of the various rating system grades/scores; (4) program policy factors; and (5) the basis for selection.

The following describes the review and selection process:

Recruitment of merit review panel: Prior to convening a merit review panel, a Service Program Officer will identify, recruit, and receive approval for each reviewer on the merit review panel. A minimum of five U.S. Government employees are required for each panel: at least three merit reviewers, one panel chair, and one recorder. Only permanent U.S. Government staff may score proposals. Prior to participating in any review or evaluation process, all staff and peer reviewers, evaluators, panel members, and advisors must sign and return to the program office Point of Contact the "Department of the Interior Conflict of Interest Certification" form. By signing this form, the reviewer agrees to recuse themselves from scoring or commenting on proposals for which they have a conflict of interest or appearance thereof. This form must be signed and filed before a reviewer can participate in the merit review panel. For a copy of this form, contact the Service Point of Contact identified in section G. *Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)* below.

Initial Program Officer review for minimum programmatic requirements: After submission, each proposal will be reviewed by the relevant Program Officer to ensure that the proposal meets minimum programmatic requirements before advancing to the merit review. The minimum programmatic requirements are listed in section *E1. Criteria*. The Program Officer will share with the merit review panel any proposals that did not meet minimum programmatic requirements and the reasons why, and the panel will have an opportunity to discuss.

Merit review to evaluate and select proposals for funding: Applications that meet minimum programmatic requirements will then be reviewed by the approved merit review panel with specific subject area and/or regional expertise. The Service may also solicit technical advice

from qualified U.S. Government experts to provide additional information during the panel review and/or discuss your proposal with known past and present partners who are relevant technical experts to verify project feasibility and to encourage coordination and collaboration among projects on the ground.

After reading proposals, reviewers will assess the degree to which the application meets the criteria described in section *E1. Criteria* by assigning "yes, "partially," or "no" to each criteria category and noting any sub-factors. The criteria are not individually allocated a quantitative score; instead, the criteria offer an aid for evaluating proposals holistically and qualitatively. Using this information, reviewers will individually assign an overall score of 1, 2, or 3 to each application. The scoring system is as follows:

- Category 1: Excellent, highest priority to fund: Excellent proposal with no issues or minor revisions needed. Important, critical, compelling, high-priority project and proposal meets all program requirements. Minor revisions are allowed before funding is finalized.
- Category 2: Acceptable, lower priority to fund: Acceptable to fund if additional funds become available. Proposal meets program requirements but is not the highest conservation priority. Concerns and conditions for the proposal should be described in detail by the reviewers.
- Category 3: Do not fund. Reject proposal. Project does not address a priority or is unlikely to achieve the desired impact, and/or proposal has other fundamental issues or problems that make it unsuitable for this program.

Each review panel submits their individual scores to the panel chair prior to the review. The panel chair will organize the scores to identify trends and areas of alignment amongst the reviewers. These trends and areas of alignment may be used to facilitate the panel discussion (i.e., the highest ranked proposals may get discussed first). During the review, the panel will briefly discuss each proposal and agree on a consensus score using the same 1-3 scoring system above. The panel recorder will document any pertinent discussion items that demonstrate how a panel reached consensus to provide sufficient support for the consensus score. Ultimately, it is the consensus score of the review panel that will determine whether the proposal is recommended for award. The Service will attempt to fund all projects in the highest ranked category (Category 1). If available funding is insufficient to fund them all, proposals within the highest ranked category will be further ranked, then funded in order of that ranking.

Proposal revisions: Following review, applicants whose proposals scored a Category 1 or a Category 2 in merit review may be asked to provide revisions to the project scope and/or budget before an award is made. Applicants whose project is recommended for funding may be asked to demonstrate financial capabilities to manage Federal funds in accordance with standards set in 2 CFR 200.302 Financial management.

Communication of funding decisions: Once proposals have been selected and approved for funding, the Program Officer will reach out to applicants by email or via GrantSolutions to inform the applicant whether the proposal is recommended and approved for funding. Successful applicants will receive a notice as described below in F1. Federal Award Notice. If the proposal was not recommended for funding, the applicant can request feedback (via the Program Officer)

from the merit review panel. Please note that while the time that it takes to review the proposals and communicate decisions is dependent on the number of proposals received, unsuccessful applicants will receive notice within 180 days, as indicated below.

E3. CFR – Regulatory Information

See the Service's General Award Terms and Conditions for the general administrative and national policy requirements applicable to Service awards. The Service will communicate any other program- or project-specific special terms and conditions to recipients in their notices of award.

E4. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

Awards under this program are expected to be announced by June 5, 2024.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

F1. Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive a written Notice of Award document. Notices of Award are issued electronically by GrantSolutions via email. Successful applicants may also receive an additional email from the awarding program email address. Award recipients are not required to sign/return the Notice of Award document. Acceptance of an award is defined as starting work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Applicants whose projects are not selected for funding will receive written notice, most often by email, within 180 days of the final review decision. Applicants are not authorized to incur pre-award costs without prior written approval. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of award are incurred at the applicant's risk. The Service is not required to reimburse such costs if for any reason the applicant does not receive a Federal award or if the Federal award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs.

F2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

See the DOI Standard Terms and Conditions for the administrative and national policy requirements applicable to DOI awards.

See the Service's General Award Terms and Conditions for the general administrative and national policy requirements applicable to Service awards.

Buy America Provision for Infrastructure: Required Use of American Iron, Steel, Manufactured Products, and Construction Materials.
As required by Section 70914 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58), on

or after May 14, 2022, none of the funds under a federal award that are part of a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure may be obligated for a project unless all the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States, unless subject to an approved waiver. Recipients conducting infrastructure projects under the award must include related requirements all subawards, including all contracts and purchase orders for infrastructure work or products under this program. For the full text term applicable to infrastructure and related waiver request standards and procedures, see the Service's General Award Terms and Conditions.

Data Availability
Per the Financial Assistance Interior Regulation (FAIR), 2 CFR §1402.315:

a. All data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, valuation products or other scientific assessments in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual, resulting from a financial assistance agreement are available for use by the Department of the Interior, including being available in a manner that is sufficient for independent verification.
b. The Federal Government has the right to:
    1. Obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, or other scientific assessments, produced under a Federal award; and
    2. Authorize others to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data, methodology, factual inputs, models, analyses, technical information, reports, conclusions, or other scientific assessments, for Federal purposes, including to allow for meaningful third-party evaluation.

F3. Reporting

Financial Reports
All recipients must use the SF-425, Federal Financial Report form for financial reporting. At a minimum, all recipients must submit a **final** financial report. 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** financial reports on the frequency established in the Notice of Award. The only exception to the interim financial reporting requirement is if the recipient is required to use the SF 270/271 to request payment and requests payment at least once annually through the entire award period of performance. We will describe all financial reporting requirements in the Notice of Award.

Non-Construction Performance Reports
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 was not met, if appropriate; 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.

Construction Performance Reports

For construction awards, onsite technical inspections and certified percentage of completion data may be relied on to monitor progress for construction. Additional performance reports for construction activities may be required only when considered necessary. However, awards that include both construction and non-construction activities require performance reporting for the non-construction activities. See 2 CFR§200.329 for more information. The USFWS will describe all performance reporting requirements in the Notice of Award.

Significant Development Reports

Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates which have significant impact upon the supported activity. In such cases, recipients are required to notify the Bureau in writing as soon as the recipient becomes aware of any problems, delays, or adverse conditions that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of any corrective action(s) taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation. The recipient should also notify the Service in writing of any favorable developments that enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

Real Property Reports

Recipients and subrecipients are required to submit status reports on the status of real property acquired under the award in which the Federal government retains an interest. The required frequency of these reports will depend on the anticipated length of the Federal interest period. The Bureau will include recipient-specific real property reporting requirements, including the required standard form or data elements, reporting frequency, and report due dates, in the Notice of Award when applicable.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures

Per 2 CFR §1402.112, non-Federal entities and their employees must take appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest in their responsibilities under or with respect to Federal financial assistance agreements. In the procurement of supplies, equipment, construction, and services by recipients and by subrecipients, the provisions in 2 CFR §200.318 apply. Non-Federal entities, including applicants for financial assistance awards, must disclose in writing any conflict of interest to the DOI awarding agency or pass-through entity in accordance with 2 CFR §200.112. Recipients must establish internal controls that include, at a minimum, procedures to identify, disclose, and mitigate or eliminate identified conflicts of interest. The recipient is responsible for notifying the Service Project Officer identified in their notice of award in writing of any conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of the award, including those that reported by subrecipients. The Service will examine each disclosure to determine whether a significant potential conflict exists and, if it does, work with the applicant or recipient to develop an appropriate resolution. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the government may be cause for termination of the award.

Other Mandatory Disclosures

The Non-Federal entity or applicant for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Non-

Federal entities that receive a Federal award including the terms and conditions outlined in 2 CFR 200, Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to SAM. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies for noncompliance described in 2 CFR §200.339, including suspension or debarment.

Reporting Matters Related to Recipient Integrity and Performance

If the total value of your currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds $10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of this Federal award, then you as the recipient during that period of time must maintain the currency of information reported to the System for Award Management that is made available in the designated integrity and performance system (currently the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System) about civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings in accordance with Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

G1. Program Technical Contact

For **programmatic technical assistance**, contact:

First and Last Name:
Jen Miller, Program Officer
Telephone:
+1 703-835-2329
Email:

jennifer_r_miller@fws.gov

G2. Program Administration

For **program administration assistance**, contact:

First and Last Name:
Combating Wildlife Trafficking Program
Telephone:
Email:
cwt@fws.gov

G3. Application System Technical Support

For Grants.gov technical registration and submission, downloading forms and application packages, contact:
Grants.gov Customer Support
Numeric Input Field: 1-800-518-4726

Support@grants.gov

For GrantSolutions technical registration, submission, and other assistance contact:
GrantSolutions Customer Support
1-866-577-0771
Help@grantsolutions.gov

H. Other Information

Payments
Domestic recipients are required to register in and receive payment through the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP), unless approved for a waiver by the Service program. Foreign recipients receiving funds to a final destination bank outside the U.S. are required to receive payment through the U.S. Treasury's International Treasury Services (ITS) System. Foreign recipients receiving funds to a final destination bank in the U.S. are required to enter and maintain current banking details in their SAM.gov entity profile and receive payment through the Automated Clearing House network by electronic funds transfer (EFT). The Bureau will include recipient-specific instructions on how to request payment, including identification of any additional information required and where to submit payment requests, as applicable, in all Notices of Award.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT:

OMB Control Number: 1018-0100
Per the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA; 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) collects information in accordance with program authorizing legislation to conduct a review and select projects for funding and, if awarded, to evaluate performance. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Privacy Act Statement: This information collection is authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5701 et seq. The information provided will be used to administer all Service financial assistance programs and activities including to: (1) determine eligibility under the authorizing legislation and applicable program regulations; (2) determine allowability of major cost items under the Cost Principles at 2 CFR 200; (3) select those projects that will provide the highest return on the Federal investment; and (4) assist in compliance with laws, as applicable, such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970. This information may be shared in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 and the routine uses listed in INTERIOR/DOI-89, Grants and Cooperative Agreements: FBMS - 73 FR 43775 (July 28, 2008). Furnishing this information is voluntary; however, failure to provide all requested information may prevent the Service from awarding funds.

Estimated Burden Statement: We estimate that it will take you on average about 40 hours to complete an initial application, about 3 hours to revise the terms of an award, and about 8 hours

per report to prepare and submit financial and performance reports, including time to maintain records and gather information. Actual times for these activities will vary depending on program-specific requirements. Direct comments regarding the burden estimates or any other aspect of the specific forms to the Service Information Clearance Officer, USFWS, U.S. Department of the Interior, 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: PRB (JAO/3W), Falls Church, VA 22041-3803, or by email to Info_Coll@fws.gov.