



## America the Beautiful Challenge | Frequently Asked Questions

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Where do I go to find information on the America the Beautiful Challenge (ATBC)?**

For general information about the ATBC, we encourage you to review the Request for Proposals, tip sheets, webinar, and other materials on our website: [www.nfwf.org/challenge](http://www.nfwf.org/challenge)  
Please check back often for updates and new program support documents.

#### **Will a recording of the webinar be made available?**

Yes, a recording of the webinar will be posted at [www.nfwf.org/challenge](http://www.nfwf.org/challenge)

#### **Why establish the ATBC?**

Congress provided hundreds of millions of dollars through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to several federal agencies to fund conservation activities across the country. Those federal government agencies are now tasked with awarding these funds to state and local governments and other entities to achieve the expected conservation actions. The ATBC was established to create a centralized funding source for applicants and simplify the process for applying for and receiving these conservation funds.

#### **Why is NFWF administering the ATBC?**

NFWF has administered programs in partnership with federal agencies for nearly four decades, under numerous administrations, and therefore has tremendous experience and expertise in this area. NFWF's non-partisan, competitive grant programs provide an efficient, effective process for state and local government, educational institutions, NGO's, private entities, and others to apply for federal funding in a streamlined and efficient process. NFWF also establishes a mechanism by which federal agency funds can be leveraged and/or matched by private funds to deliver larger, more impactful cross-boundary conservation results. Finally, NFWF has decades of monitoring and evaluation experience and has developed a standard set of ATBC reporting metrics that will allow for easy comparisons and tracking of progress across projects, programs, agencies, and departments.

#### **What is the ATBC, is it an annual grant program?**

Through the ATBC, multiple federal agencies have come together to create an easier way for entities to apply and receive funding from the BIL. NFWF will administer the funding opportunity that facilitates an accessible application process and supports the conservation goals of the America the Beautiful Initiative. This is expected to be a five-year program and the first RFP was released on May 4, 2022. Future RFPs are expected to be released each spring contingent upon the federal appropriations process.

#### **Why are DOI funds only available for states, Tribes, and territories?**

The BIL directs that the funding provided to DOI that is available through the ATBC is only available to these entities. NGOs and other entities are encouraged to partner with states, Tribes, and territories as subrecipients as part of larger landscape level proposals submitted by those entities.

### **Is ATBC the same as the 30 by 30 Initiative?**

The America the Beautiful Challenge is intended to fund a broader range of outcomes focused on conservation and restoration, whereas the 30x30 Initiative is a worldwide effort to designate 30 percent of the Earth's lands and oceans as protected areas by the year 2030. The America the Beautiful Challenge includes objectives such as conserving and restoring rivers, coasts, wetlands, and watersheds and connecting and reconnecting wildlife corridors, large landscapes, watersheds, and seascapes. In short, the ATBC is much more comprehensive and focused on a broader range of activities to conserve and restore America's natural heritage for the benefit of future generations

### **What types of projects will be funded?**

ATBC will prioritize proposals that implement voluntary, large-scale, on-the-ground conservation and restoration activities or otherwise lead to on-the-ground implementation through capacity building, community engagement, planning, and project design. The overarching goal is to advance existing landscape conservation plans and/or propose to knit together a diverse stakeholder partnership that develops and/or implements new conservation plans. As part of this, projects should address priority species and/or habitat conservation actions identified in existing plans or other species recovery or conservation plans. Projects that are informed by Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and promote Tribal co-stewardship are encouraged. Successful projects will focus on cross boundary and/or landscape level conservation and restoration activities.

### **Will the ATBC respect private property rights?**

Yes. The ATBC will focus on voluntary, locally led conservation and restoration efforts following the same conservation approach NFWF has used for nearly four decades. The ATBC will honor private property rights and the voluntary contributions of ranchers, farmers, forest owners, and private landowners.

### **Who can apply?**

Based on legislative funding authorities, the DOI funding in this round can only support states, territories, Tribal governments, and Tribal-affiliated organizations.

- State government agencies, territories of the United States, and Indian Tribes<sup>1</sup> are eligible to apply for all four grant categories.
  - Federally recognized Tribes are eligible to apply directly; all others should partner with states, territories and federally recognized Tribes in a proposal.
- Non-profit 501(c) organizations, local governments, municipal governments, and educational institutions are eligible to apply for grants in categories (3) Grants to Buffer and Benefit Public Lands, and (4) Private Forests and Farmland.
- Ineligible applicants include U.S. Federal government agencies, businesses, unincorporated individuals, and international organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Indian Tribe" has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. § 5304). "Indian tribe" or "Indian Tribe" means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians. 25 U.S.C. § 5304(e).

## **PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Can multiple organizations submit a joint application for one project?**

Yes, we encourage applicants to bring together broad partnerships in support of the project. However, the application can only have one primary applicant organization, and the point of contact on Easygrants (NFWF's grant-management software) must be directly affiliated with the applicant organization. If awarded, all funding will flow through the applicant organization, which will be responsible for managing subawards to any project partners.

### **Can an organization submit more than one application for this RFP?**

Yes, more than one application may be submitted, but please note that anything beyond two or three submissions per grant category may see diminished competitiveness. We generally encourage applicants to submit the one or two of their best projects per RFP grant category. Please do not submit the same project to multiple categories — select only the most appropriate one.

### **What is the period of performance?**

The Period of Performance is the time between the start and end date of your project for which all activities in the scope of work (and request and match budgets) must be included. Expenses incurred outside of the start and end dates cannot be reimbursed or counted as match.

### **What is the latest possible start date for a project funded through the 2022 ATBC?**

It is up to the applicant to specify the period of performance for their project that is appropriate for the work they are proposing to complete. For the 2022 grant slate, we will consider projects with start dates from August 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023.

### **What is the greatest possible period of performance?**

It is up to the applicant to specify the period of performance for their project that is appropriate for the work they are proposing to complete. For this RFP, a project cannot have a start date prior to August 1, 2022 or an end date after June 30, 2027. Any expenses incurred prior to an official award letter and signed contract are taken solely at the risk of the applicant.

### Are matching funds required for these grants?

Each agency funding source has a slightly different match requirement based on the legal authorities associated with the funding. Applicants who are unable to meet these minimum requirements are still encouraged to apply and to proactively contact NFWF staff before submission. Where possible, NFWF will work with potential applicants to help meet these minimum requirements. Match should be incurred and expended during the period of performance. The tables below outline the requirements for each type of funding.

#### DoD Conservation and Restoration Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
All entities	100% of costs	Not required

#### DOI Conservation and Restoration Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
States	90% of costs	10% of costs, of which at least 2.5% must be cash
Indian Tribes & Territories	97% of costs	3% of costs, of which at least .75% must be cash

#### NRCS Technical Assistance Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
All entities	50% of costs	50% of costs

#### USFS Conservation and Restoration Funds

Recipient Type	Federal cost share	Non-federal cost share
All entities	80% of costs	20% of costs

### How can I capture federal funds leveraged in support of a project, when they do not count as non-federal match?

In the match section of your application, you can indicate that funds are federal. You can also detail federal funds leveraged in support of your project in your proposal narrative. These funds will be counted as federal leverage but not match when evaluating your proposal.

### Can grant funds be used for administration/project management?

Yes. Your project budget should include all costs to carry out the project including personnel costs for fiscal and programmatic management and reporting.

### Are smaller proposals more competitive because they are requesting less money?

No. ATBC will fund proposals that advance conservation and restoration at a scale that is appropriate for the landscape and the applicant. Overall, this funding is intended to support large cross-boundary or landscape scale projects.

### **Can ATBC projects be implemented on federal land?**

Yes, projects can be implemented on federal/public land. Projects requesting funds from the USFS must be implemented on or benefit USFS land or Indian forestland or rangeland. Projects requesting DOD funding may not be implemented on military lands/installations but should be located near military installations per the Sentinel Landscape project areas. A [map of these locations](#) is included on the website.

### **Is land acquisition or conservation easement eligible under this program?**

The focus of the 2022 ATBC is on implementing restoration priorities identified in established or new conservation plans, broader ongoing restoration efforts and/or projects that are informed by Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and promote Tribal co-stewardship. Voluntary acquisition and easement projects are not excluded, but to be competitive the application would need to demonstrate how the acquisition or easement is critical to the overall landscape restoration and stewardship work being conducted. In short, acquisition or easement could be a means to achieving a broader conservation goal, but not the goal of the project itself. An example would be protecting land within a high priority migration corridor as part of a broader effort to improve the overall health and functionality of that corridor. Land acquisition and conservation easement proposals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis—particularly with respect to the conservation and restoration outcomes that can be delivered, the degree to which they incorporate a public access component, and the overall cost effectiveness of the proposed approach, among the other evaluation criteria detailed in the RFP.

### **Is environmental compliance (NEPA, ESA, historic preservation, etc.) required for these projects?**

Yes. Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the Endangered Species Act (ESA; state and federal), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other Federal regulations, as applicable. These requirements typically come into play on projects that would involve ground- or habitat-disturbing activities. Even habitat restoration projects designed to improve habitat conditions have the potential to affect listed species or disturb historic artifacts during implementation. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be completed by the grant recipient prior to initiating activities that involve ground disturbance, or other alterations to the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to provide this information early in the process.

### **For implementation projects, must permits be in hand?**

For the implementation project category, we are looking to fund “restoration ready” projects that are ready to start in 2023. Projects that have permits in hand may be more competitive, and it is expected that most viable projects will be well into the permitting process by the proposal due date. Given the four-year timeline to spend grant funding, it is expected that projects will be able to receive all permits and start construction within six months of the start date for the project’s period of performance.

### **What are NFWF’s procurement guidelines and procedures?**

As indicated in the ATBC RFP, this program awards federal assistance funds subject to the requirements of OMB Uniform Guidance, which can be [accessed here](#). As such, recipients must maintain and follow a documented procurement process that aligns with the Procurement Standards of the Uniform Guidance and must maintain sufficient supporting documentation. Please note, NFWF does not approve the solicitation and/or selection of contractors.

**What do you mean by the term “underserved”?**

Underserved or under-resourced populations are those who receive inadequate or inequitable environmental services and protection, who experience quality-of-life disparities, and who by design have little power or influence over outside decisions that impact their daily quality-of-life. These include both urban and rural populations.

**When will funds be available?**

This will depend on how complete your application is, the grants policies and routing at your organization and how responsive you are to modification requests. Funds are only disbursed to grantees who have a signed grant agreement with NFWF. Notifications are expected in November 2022, therefore, the soonest funds are likely to be available is January 2023. February or March of 2023 would be safer start dates, if your project is flexible.

**EASYGRANTS & UPLOADS****Is there a way to print a preview of the application questions?**

Yes, there is a great deal of information on the application, indirect costs, etc. that can be found at <http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/home.aspx>. The full proposal [narrative template](#) is available for preview on the ATBC website.

**If we didn't have to undergo an A-133/Single Audit, do we upload a statement to that effect?**

Depending on your organization type, you may not be required to provide this upload. To see which documents are required of your organization go here: <https://www.nfwf.org/apply-grant/application-information/required-financial-documents>. If an upload does not apply to your organization, you will need to upload a simple document stating it is not needed and why in 1 to 2 sentences in lieu of the financial document itself. The same applies for the Statement of Litigation requirement (state and local government applicants are not required to complete this document).

**How is the project description different from the abstract?**

A description is a two-sentence overview. The abstract is more detailed. Please [reference the tip sheet](#) for specific instructions on completing these sections.

**Who should be the main point of contact for the proposal/project in Easygrants, particularly where a project has multiple partners?**

The organization that will be managing the project should be the one submitting the application. Only one person can be on the application to submit, so you will need to work within your group to determine who is the best person to be the primary point of contact. If your organization is awarded a grant, you will be able to have multiple contacts listed for the project in Easygrants, including finance staff managing the award and grant reporting. Please note that Easygrants only allows one individual assigned per task.

**If a group of organizations is submitting a proposal as part of a collaborative group, how do we complete the Applicant Demographic Form?**

Demographics should be provided for the lead applicant within the Applicant Demographic Form.

**How can an additional tracking metric be added to the drop-down menu?**

We are not accepting additional program level metrics at this time – please add any further metrics you feel are important to the metrics section of your narrative. If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact NFWF staff listed in the RFP to discuss acceptable alternatives.

**What are the metrics for different project categories?**

Please see the metrics section in the RFP and Appendix 1 – metrics are grouped by activity type (i.e. restoration, water quality, engagement, etc.), this same full list of metrics is available for each project category type. All metrics listed in the ATBC RFP are available in Easygrants and applicants may select any applicable metrics—but please pay special attention to those most relevant to the grant category to which you are applying.

**Are letters of support required?**

Letters of support are not required but are strongly encouraged, especially for any partnering entity that is contributing match and any communities or organizations that will directly benefit or be impacted by project implementation (particularly those the applicant cites as underserved or disadvantaged).

**Who can help me with Easygrants issues?**

For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: [Easygrants@nfwf.org](mailto:Easygrants@nfwf.org)

Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.

Include: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.