



Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund

2024-2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applicant Webinar [[Register Here](#)]: **Thursday, September 5, 2:00 to 3:00 PM Eastern Time**
Full Proposal Due Date: **Tuesday, October 1, 2024, by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**

OVERVIEW

Recognizing the need for a coordinated, public-private approach to addressing the stormwater, habitat, and public-use issues in the Southeast Michigan region, seven corporate, foundation and government funders have joined together to create the Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund (Fund). The Fund will award grants to help increase the resilience of communities and natural resources in Southeast Michigan by reducing the impact of stormwater, improving water quality, enhancing habitat, and increasing the accessibility and usability of public green space and natural areas. Grants will be awarded in three categories: 1) expanding green stormwater infrastructure and enhancing public space, 2) improving habitat quality, connectivity and accessibility and 3) activating restored habitats and greenspace.

Approximately **\$1.8 million** is expected to be available for grant awards. Individual grants typically range from \$150,000 to \$400,000. **Full proposals must be submitted online (easygrants.nfwf.org) Tuesday, October 1, 2024, 11:59 PM Eastern Time.**

Administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the Fund is a public-private partnership among Cleveland-Cliffs, the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the USDA Forest Service.

The Fund was created to provide financial resources that benefit Southeast Michigan communities and wildlife habitats by voluntarily improving resilience in the face of intensifying environmental stressors related to climate change, development, invasive species, nonpoint source pollution and other factors. By investing in green stormwater infrastructure solutions, the Fund seeks to reduce flooding and other intensifying threats associated with major storm events, while also creating safe, dynamic, and enjoyable public green spaces that improve habitat values for wildlife and quality of life for residents. By restoring the region's unique natural areas, the Fund seeks to enhance the quality and connectivity of habitat for wildlife, improve the ability of these habitats to



withstand and absorb the impact of environmental stressors, and make nature more accessible for people.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

To be eligible for funding, projects must be located within the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan including St. Clair, Macomb, Oakland, Wayne, Washtenaw, Livingston, and Monroe counties (depicted geographically in the map below). Additionally, priority will be given to projects that directly benefit and engage low-income communities and communities of color. Projects that are not located in or meaningfully benefit these communities will be less competitive.



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The Fund will award grants in the following categories:



- 1. Expanding Green Stormwater Infrastructure and Enhancing Public Space*
- 2. Improving Habitat Quality and Connectivity and Enhancing Public Space*
- 3. Activating Restored Habitats and Greenspace*

Each applicant will need to identify one primary category that best describes the proposed project. If a project is expected to yield benefits in a second category as well, an applicant may also identify a secondary category. Competitive proposals will deliver environmental and social impact, improving habitat, green infrastructure and equitable public access to greenspace while benefiting low-income communities and communities of color. The following sections provide more information on the three funding categories.

Funding Category 1: Expanding Green Stormwater Infrastructure and Enhancing Public Space

Funding in this category will support green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) projects that improve stormwater capture and storage to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including reducing runoff, combined sewer overflows, basement backups, and flooding through nature-based design. Much of the region is covered in impervious surfaces and these threats pose significant risks to communities, with disproportionately severe impacts to low-income communities and communities of color. GSI projects should utilize natural design elements/nature-based solutions to reduce and treat stormwater where it falls while delivering environmental, social and community benefits. Proposed GSI projects must be designed with a dual purpose, to increase stormwater storage capacity while also enhancing the quality of, access to, and/or use of community green space or natural areas.

Projects seeking funding in this category will install new GSI and/or improve and maintain the function of existing GSI installations. All projects must add or maintain a minimum of 100,000 cumulative gallons of stormwater storage capacity per year to be competitive. GSI project activities may include, but are not limited to, the installation or maintenance of any of the following practices: stormwater wetlands, rain gardens, targeted tree planting, bioswales, and pervious surfaces.

Competitive GSI proposals will focus the majority of the on-the-ground work on installing and/or maintaining GSI practices that are predominantly vegetative or green, with an emphasis on nature-based solutions. If projects incorporate structural GSI elements, such as pervious pavement, cisterns, subsurface detention, green roofs, etc. these elements will need to complement GSI practices that focus on natural vegetative solutions, such as rain gardens and should not be proposed as the focus of a project. Proposals should also incorporate activities designed to enhance public green space which may include but are not limited to, installing or enhancing trails or paths, passive and/or active recreational opportunities such as benches or play areas with pervious surfaces, community or shared gardens, educational signage, or pollinator gardens.

Preference will be given to projects of sufficient size and scope to significantly reduce runoff and contaminant discharge (i.e., reduction of nutrients, pollution, and sediment) and increase GSI function at a regional or significant scale (at least 100,000 gallons stormwater storage/year).



Proposals seeking funds for improvements to existing GSI projects should outline their authority to access and maintain those sites. Projects that do not include enhancements to public green space or public access will not be considered for funding.

Small, isolated projects (e.g., rain barrels, cisterns, a single parking lot) without a connection to a larger green infrastructure plan or suite of proposed installations will not be competitive. Proposals are encouraged to utilize native or non-invasive, urban-adapted plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for pollinators and other native wildlife or diversify and sustain the urban canopy. Applicants must include a maintenance plan (see Long-term Operation, Maintenance and Monitoring section) and are encouraged to build in training/capacity needs to maintain infrastructure after the life of the grant. Preference will be given to projects that align with GSI and/or community plans, municipal sustainability, climate resilience, open space plans or approved watershed management plans (see Evaluation Criteria section for more detail).

All applications proposing new GSI installations must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage added annually (design retention capacity). Applications proposing GSI maintenance or enhancement must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage capacity (gallons/year) when GSI functions optimally as a result of maintenance activities. Applicants are encouraged to use the EPA stormwater calculator tool, found by clicking here: <https://www.epa.gov/water-research/national-stormwater-calculator>, to estimate design retention capacity. For tree planting projects, applicants are encouraged to use i-Tree, found by clicking here: <https://planting.itreetools.org/>, to calculate gallons of storm water taken up annually by tree planting (use a 20-year tree age for measuring stormwater benefits in i-Tree). To inform selections of native or non-invasive, urban-adapted plants and tree species for GSI installations, consider the following references: [SEMCOG Low Impact Development Manual](#); [MSU native plant guide](#).

Funding Category 2: Improving Habitat Quality, Connectivity and Enhancing Public Space

Funding in this category will support habitat restoration projects, including in-stream, riparian, upland, and wetland habitat, that improve the quality and connectivity of habitats throughout Southeast Michigan. Habitat projects must be designed to restore habitat while also meaningfully improving public access to and/or use-opportunities of natural areas throughout the region.

Projects seeking funding in this category will restore habitats throughout Southeast Michigan to achieve a range of ecological benefits, such as improving water quality in waterways and the Great Lakes, reducing erosion, increasing the complexity, connectivity and quality of habitat, benefiting species of concern, and enhancing biodiversity and supporting healthy populations of native species. Habitat project activities may include, but are not limited to, creation/restoration of pollinator habitat, streambank stabilization, invasive species control for invasive plants, native plant restoration, construction of in-stream structures to improve geomorphological processes and habitat for fish and aquatic organisms. Proposals should also incorporate activities designed to increase connectivity between natural areas and habitats, such as restoring contiguous habitats or parcels adjacent to protected and/or restored natural areas, connecting natural areas via trail systems, greenways, etc., and restoring habitat in strategic locations to provide more ecologically



significant and improved access to critical habitats for target species (e.g., brook trout, waterfowl, lesser yellow-legs and other migratory and marsh-nesting birds). See the [Great Lake Business Plan](#) for additional program priority details. Proposals must improve public access and use of natural areas, which may include construction of trails, public access points, and infrastructure enabling use of waterways and habitats, such as paddle craft launches, wildlife viewing areas, education and community engagement activities, etc.

Projects that do not include enhancements to public green space and/or improve access to or use of natural areas will not be considered for funding. Preference will be given to projects designed to improve habitat for multiple species of conservation concern. Small, isolated projects lacking strategic relevance for priority species, regional habitat connectivity, or restoration of rare or critical habitats will not be competitive.

Funding Category 3: Activating Restored Habitats and Greenspace

Funding in this category will support grants that activate spaces that have been restored through habitat enhancements and green improvements including those previously funded by GLRI or NFWF, by increasing community engagement, public access, community participation and ownership and long-term stewardship of those sites. Projects should strategically advance multiple priorities including enhancing community engagement and participation while also conducting needed on the ground stewardship or restoration. All proposals should describe the rationale or plan for selecting the project location, the public access or greenspace elements proposed, and identify the communities and/or target audiences that will be served by the project and how they will be meaningfully and actively engaged in the project to encourage public use of the asset. To do this work well, we see long-term sustained commitments to community and municipal engagement as critical. All applicants will be asked to provide, or develop with NFWF funding, a longer-term community and partnership framework that is a part of the organization or partner org's strategic operations or current priorities. Projects should support public-private partnership development – both with partners at the community level and with municipalities to support project sustainability and long-term impact through direct investments such as maintenance.

All applicants submitting a proposal under this funding category should reach out to NFWF staff to discuss project activities prior to submitting a proposal. Funding will support projects that encompass the following elements and advance multiple benefits for communities, habitat, and public-access.

- **Engage communities and enhance participation in nature:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations to activate restored habitat and greenspace through strategic, direct engagement of communities and user groups that encourage public use, enhance community health, increase accessibility, empower communities and enhance ownership and agency in natural spaces, and remove barriers for communities. These can include: public education opportunities in natural areas, programs and experiences in natural areas, conservation-oriented workforce development



programs, enhancing volunteerism and long-term stewardship of sites, training the next generation of conservationists and nature enthusiasts, increasing active use of natural areas by removing barriers for community access through supported activities, events, and programs.

Category 3 projects may also include the following components as complementary activities to community engagement.

- **Create new or enhance existing public-access infrastructure:** Add new or enhance existing infrastructure that improves public access, accessibility and engagement in previously restored natural areas or greenspace. Funding is not intended for spaces that already have high quality infrastructure and visitorship. Public access improvements may include but are not limited to construction of trails, green space, nature-based or nature compatible recreation, public access points, and infrastructure enabling use of waterways and habitats, such as paddle craft launches, wildlife viewing areas, gathering spaces etc. This priority must complement other strategies and will not be competitive to stand alone. Activation is the key; this is not intended to fund park beautification such as boardwalks or pavilions *without* on-the-ground restoration or community engagement components.
- **Improve habitat stewardship:** Increase capacity among the grantee organization and/or partner organizations and implement stewardship activities to enhance long-term, sustainable habitat stewardship, including adaptive management, invasive species control and direct community engagement. Manage habitat or greenspace to improve and protect habitat quality and enhance resilience of restored project sites and public access infrastructure. This priority must enhance multiple benefits and will not be competitive as stand-alone investments.

Category 3 projects should be designed to span up to 3 years or 3 field seasons to increase sustainability and long-term success. Proposed projects should be of sufficient size, scope, or unique ecological value to necessitate a strategic re-investment in the previously restored habitat or greenspace. Projects should not request funding to support the following activities: long-term transportation to sites, stand-alone parking lots or other infrastructure that is not required for project success, planned or sustained site maintenance activities such as cleaning, mowing, annual repairs to existing infrastructure etc.

PROGRAM FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR ALL FUNDING CATEGORIES

Equity and Inclusion

The Fund desires to support projects that meaningfully engage and benefit low-income and communities of color. The Fund recognizes that these communities are often disproportionately impacted by climate change and associated environmental issues of special concern for the Fund, including stormwater runoff, combined sewer overflows and associated flooding and access to safe public greenspace and natural areas. The Fund will prioritize investments that seek to address



these impacts while also meaningfully engaging communities to achieve benefits for the environment and people.

Priority will be given to projects that meaningfully and directly engage communities in their ideation, design, implementation, and/or long-term maintenance and sustainability. Examples of direct community engagement may include, but are not limited to:

- community has direct input into the project design and implementation, project empowers community with knowledge or decision-making authority
- project team represents and is a part of the community being engaged, community is engaged through specific active engagement strategies such as: workshops, classroom activities, field trips and volunteer opportunities, etc.
- project addresses a specific and localized harm such as flooding, project creates jobs in the target community or performs job training as a direct outcome of project activities
- project directly engages in specific cultural activities with the community

Additionally, applicants should plan to report on their approach to tracking and measuring qualitative, diversity, equity and inclusion benefits of the project in the full proposal narrative portion of the application. These outcomes can include but are not limited to measuring the benefits of proposed work on increasing land value, improved access to greenspace and public recreation opportunities, reduction in basement backups and neighborhood flooding, reduction of heat island effect, jobs added or sustained etc. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate tools, such as the [Social Vulnerability Index](#) and others, to provide context. Projects receiving awards from the Fund will be asked to report on these outcomes and project-related benefits to low-income communities and communities of color in their annual programmatic reports to NFWF.

Equity and Inclusion Reporting

Applicants should plan to report on their approach to tracking and measuring qualitative, long-term diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes in the full proposal application narrative. These outcomes can include but are not limited to measuring the benefits of proposed work on increasing land value, improved access to greenspace and public recreation opportunities, reduction in basement backups and neighborhood flooding, reduction of heat island effect, jobs added or sustained etc. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate tools, such as the [Social Vulnerability Index](#), [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#), and others, to estimate and measure such outcomes. Applicants should include a description of how they estimated these outcomes and how they will measure or track the project's impact as the work progresses in the application full proposal narrative. Additionally, projects receiving awards from the Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund will be asked to report on these outcomes and project-related benefits to low-income communities and communities of color in their programmatic reports to NFWF.

Long-Term Maintenance and Monitoring

To help ensure project benefits will be sustained through time, grantees will be required to present or develop plans that clearly address the project site's operation and management for at



least five (5) years after project completion. The plans should describe anticipated actions needed (maintenance schedules and tasks to be completed at scheduled intervals), access to or ownership of equipment needed to maintain project sites (green stormwater infrastructure, trees planted, habitat restoration/creation, public greenspace etc.), cost estimates, sources of funding to support long-term maintenance plan, long-term partners, parties responsible for implementation and oversight, training needs, and the applicant’s and partners’ capacity for long-term stewardship of the project site. If applicable, the plan should also describe long-term invasive species management and early detection rapid response (EDRR) protocol. A portion of individual grant awards may be used to support this plan development, and plans must be completed prior to the end dates specified in individual grant agreements.

Applicants are encouraged to direct a portion of requested grant funding to support monitoring activities within the proposed grant period if relevant to the metrics being reported. If you are considering incorporating monitoring into the project and will be requesting funding to support those activities, please contact Aislinn Gauchay aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org for guidance on building this into your proposal and budget.

METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund has a list of metrics in Easygrants for full proposal applicants to choose from for future reporting. We ask that applicants select only the most relevant metrics from this list for their project (all possible metrics are shown in the table below). **Additional guidance to assist applicants in selecting and reporting metrics and project outcomes is available at <https://www.nfwf.org/semichigan>.** All grantees should review this document when selecting metrics as a part of their Easygrants application. If you think an applicable metric has not been provided, please contact Aislinn Gauchay aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Project Activity	Recommended Metrics <i>*Required metric</i>	Additional Guidance
Expanding Green Stormwater Infrastructure	*Volume stormwater storage added	Enter the volume (in gallons) of stormwater storage added through green infrastructure improvements (measured as design retention capacity for a 100-year 24-hour storm). For GSI maintenance projects, enter volume (gallons) of stormwater storage maintained via this metric. In comments, include projection of gallons of stormwater captured or infiltrated annually
	Sq ft of green infrastructure	Enter square feet of GSI installed. For GSI maintenance projects, enter square feet of GSI maintained via this metric.



	# trees planted	Enter # of trees planted. In the NOTES, 1) include the size (diameter) and species of trees planted and 2) specify landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grass, shrub), # of acres, forest type planted (broadleaf, conifer, redwood, swamp--either broadleaf or conifer, shrub), density per acre, and mortality rate.
Enhancing Habitat Quality	Riparian restoration - miles restored	Enter the number of riparian miles restored, including riparian buffers. In the NOTES section, specify the landcover type prior to planting (barren, cropland, grassland), the dominant vegetation being planted (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp), and the average width of the riparian buffer. Indicate the miles of riparian habitat restored along priority waterways. Include miles of invasive species control, bank stabilization, and native vegetation restoration.
	Instream restoration - miles restored	Enter the number of miles restored
	# structures installed	Enter the number of habitat structures installed, replaced, upgraded or repaired for improvement of instream habitat.
	# passage barriers rectified	Enter the # of in-stream barriers removed or rectified as part of THIS grant to improve aquatic organism passage and/or flooding. If multiple barriers exist at one specific location, please list "1" and list each individual barrier in the notes. Provide the barrier name(s) or ID(s) will be removed.
	Miles of stream opened	Enter total # of miles opened to improve aquatic organism passage. Only include the miles of main stem & smaller tributaries connected until the next barrier upstream (or headwaters), but NOT lakes, ponds, or distance downstream from the barrier removed.
Enhancing Habitat Quality	Wetland restoration - Acres restored	Enter the # of acres of WETLAND (not riparian or instream) habitat restored. In the NOTES, specify landcover prior to restoration (Marsh, Tidal marsh, Wet meadow, Swamp) and indicate % of vegetation on pre-project site (0-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%). Include acres of invasive



		species control, native vegetation restoration, and habitat structure/quality improvement activities.
	Removal of Invasives - Acres restored	Enter # acres of invasives removed. In the NOTES, specify: vegetation removed (Forest understory, Junipers, Shrubs, Grasses/forbs, Marsh vegetation--excluding Phragmites, Phragmites australis), desired dominant vegetation (Broadleaf, Conifer, Shrub, Grass, Marsh, Swamp), average frequency (in years) of future treatment, and whether removed vegetation will be left on site to decompose (Yes/No). This can include new treatment or re-treatment.
	Lbs sediment avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually. In the notes, indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric.
	Lbs P avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually. Please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric in notes.
	Lbs N avoided (annually)	Enter the amount of sediment prevented from entering system annually. Please indicate the model or method used to calculate this metric in notes.
<p>Improving Public Access & Community Engagement</p> <p><i>(All proposals should select at least two of these metrics)</i></p>	Acres of greenspace	Enter the acres of neighborhood green space and habitat created or improved
	Miles trails developed/improved	Enter the number of miles of trails or river walks developed or improved
	Access pts developed/improved	Enter the number of public access points developed/improved
	# of volunteer hours	Enter the # of volunteer hours in this project
	# jobs sustained	Enter the # of paid jobs that are partially or fully sustained through this grant. Jobs should have existed prior to the grant, be funded by the grant, and be directly engaged in project activities. The starting value for this metric should be zero.
	# jobs created	Enter the # of individuals hired to directly work on the project (non-volunteers). Jobs should be directly engaged in grant activities, funded by the grant, and shouldn't have existed prior to the grant. In the notes, provide the FTE for the jobs created.

	# people reached	Provide total # of people reached by grant activities throughout the period of performance. People reached should reflect the number of community members (volunteers, local groups, residents) meaningfully engaged in the project design, implementation, or who utilize the project's on-the-ground assets post-implementation. If the applicant will be measuring public use of grant investments post-implementation, please indicate the method of measurement to validate the use estimate (e.g. trail counters, volunteer observations, etc.)
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Applicants proposing brook trout projects will be asked to utilize and reference the [Brook Trout Conservation Portfolio web tool](#), created by Trout Unlimited with the support of NFWF, to identify the patch or patches within which habitat restoration or aquatic connectivity work will occur and discuss how the proposed project addresses or was informed by the conservation strategy, population status and/or other insights offered by the tool. In the case of aquatic connectivity proposals, please discuss how the work will improve connectivity between or within patches and the strategic importance of the barriers selected for remediation for brook trout.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, tribal governments and organizations, and educational institutions. To be competitive, applicant organizations must demonstrate capacity and experience commensurate with the scale or complexity of the project being proposed and the funding being requested. If the applicant is a government entity or municipality, close partnership with at least one non-profit and/or community organization is required for projects to be competitive.
- Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and for-profit businesses. While these entities may not be the primary recipient of grant funds, they may be partners or contractors.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- **Equipment:** Applicants are encouraged to rent equipment where possible and cost-effective or use matching funds to make those purchases. NFWF acknowledges, however, that some projects may only be completed using NFWF funds to procure equipment. If this



applies to your project, please contact the program staff listed in this RFP to discuss options.

- Federal funds and matching contributions may not be used to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems (including entering into or renewing a contract) that uses telecommunications equipment or services produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities) as a substantial or essential component, or as critical technology of any system. Refer to Public Law 115-232, section 889 for additional information.
- NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- NFWF funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY, GRANT DURATION AND MATCH

Approximately **\$1.8 million** is expected to be available for grant awards annually. Individual grants typically range from **\$150,000 to \$400,000**. Projects should apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work. Applicants are highly encouraged to apply the remainder of grant funding requested to support activities with significant strategic value, such as community engagement/outreach, education, operations and maintenance, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two years following finalization of a grant agreement. The standard grant period may include a third year in cases with a demonstrated need for additional time to complete critical project activities including but not limited to, final design or engineering, project establishment or maintenance, community engagement/outreach, or monitoring. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching funds are spent or applied. The start date indicated in an application should not precede March 30, 2025.

Match is not required. The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process. However, providing some match (non-federal and federal) is encouraged to demonstrate broad support for the project and overall impact of the work. Match can be any combination of in cash and/or in-kind goods and services (for example external/partner services, volunteers, or grantee in-kind, materials and services donated, etc.) or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. No priority will be given to



higher cash percentages versus other sources of match. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found by [clicking here](#). Full information on how to document match, including a description of acceptable sources of match, is available at <http://www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/faqs.aspx>.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with NFWF and funding source policies. The Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund advisory team, comprised of the Fund's administrators and funding partners, and a panel of technical reviewers, comprised of subject-matter experts and key stakeholders from state agencies, communities, academia etc., will use the following criteria as a strong basis for project selections. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic distribution of projects, and balance among project types and grant size.

Strategic Value

Fund partners will consider the following criteria, listed in order of relative importance, when reviewing proposals and determining which will receive grant funding. Note that this list is not necessarily comprehensive of all factors that considered when reviewing proposals and some criteria might be weighted more heavily than others on a case-by-case project basis.

- **Program Goals and Priorities:** Project contributes to the program's overall goals for green stormwater infrastructure, habitat restoration, enhancing public space, engaging communities and equity and inclusion. Project has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the program priorities.
- **Technical Merit and Budget:** Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan, timeline for implementation and budget. Budget is clear, detailed, cost-effective (see Implementation section below) and appropriate for work proposed. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design implementation and maintenance.
- **Spatial Data** – Project spatial data submitted to NFWF's online mapping tool accurately represent the location(s) conservation activity(ies) at the time of proposal submission. Successful projects will be required to submit improved spatial data for each conservation activity within the period of performance as necessary.
- **Community Engagement and Partnerships:** Project engages relevant communities and local stakeholders (e.g., municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, community leaders) project planning, co-design and post-implementation education and engagement to optimize the public use of and benefits to communities generated by the project. Project substantiates community partnerships and engagement through letters of support or

shared investment in the project, demonstrated by including community partner entities as a match source in the proposal or sub-awarding grant funds requested in the proposal budget to community partners.

Priority will be given to projects that directly benefit and engage low-income communities and communities of color. Projects that are not located in or meaningfully benefit these communities will be less competitive. Describe the community characteristics of the project area, identify any communities impacted, describe outreach and community engagement activities and how those will be monitored and measured. Use demographic data to support descriptions and submit letters of support from community partners and/or collaborators demonstrating their commitment to the project and engagement in project activities as proposed. To be competitive, proposals **must** include a plan to meaningfully engage the community throughout the project timeline, from design to post-implementation. Education or engagement activities may be supported by grant funds and may include, but are not limited to, programming, engagement events, establishing or supporting existing stewardship groups to maintain or enhance the impact of project elements, signage, etc.

Meaningful community engagement and education efforts may be conducted by the applicant or, preferably, through a partnership-based effort between the primary grantee, community organizations or groups, municipalities, and/or relevant local or regional stakeholders. All projects will be required to submit letters of support from community partners and/or collaborators demonstrating their commitment to the project and engagement in project activities as proposed.

- **Climate Resilience in Design:** Project incorporates planning for increasingly severe and more frequent storm events and other climate-driven threats into their design, location, and/or function. Additionally, projects must identify existing and anticipated impacts of climate change on target communities and/or ecosystems and wildlife identified as the intended beneficiary of the grant funded work. Applicants should further describe how NFWF-funded interventions will help mitigate these impacts and threats to low-income communities and communities of color.
- **Matching Contributions:** Availability of match should not be the primary factor when an applicant decides whether or not to submit an application to the Fund. Match is not required. However, providing some match (in-kind, volunteer/staff time, equipment, cash, etc.) is encouraged to demonstrate project impact and partner investment where possible. The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process. If you are concerned about match or wish to discuss potential matching contributions, please contact Traci Giefer at traci.giefer@nfwf.org.
- **Plan or Strategy Alignment:** Project advances an existing local, regional, watershed, tribal, state or federal plan or strategy. Applicants are encouraged to align their proposed projects with regional and local efforts and demonstrate how they would complement and



connect to other previous and ongoing work in the region in the proposal narrative. Types of relevant plans or strategies may include, but are not limited to, watershed plans, municipal or regional domestic action plans, climate action plans, sustainability plans, green stormwater infrastructure strategies, such as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments [Green Infrastructure Vision for Southeast Michigan](#), the [Detroit Sustainability Action Agenda](#), the [Michigan Environmental Justice Plan](#), state wildlife action plans, federal or regional wildlife or natural resource strategies, such as [Lakewide Action and Management Plans](#), [Michigan's Forest Action Plan](#), Joint Venture plans, [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region Coastal Program Strategic Work Plan](#), [Great Lakes Business Plan](#) and other existing local strategies. For more information about relevant strategies and/or resources to support project development, visit <https://www.nfwf.org/semichigan>.

- **Regional Collaboration & Geographic Distribution of Projects:** The Fund will take the location of proposed project sites into consideration when evaluating proposals to ensure investments represent the regional scope of the Fund and are distributed throughout the region. Projects proposing work that extends to the regional scope, has established communication or collaboration plans to share key findings or project design with regional stakeholders, or connects partners from throughout the region will be more competitive.

Grantee Qualifications

- **Organizational Capacity:** Applicant organization demonstrates capacity and experience commensurate with the scale or complexity of the project being proposed and the funding requested.*
- **Funding Need:** Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.
- **Past Success:** Project team has a proven track record of success in implementing practices with specific, measurable results.*
- ***Partnerships:** If the organization does not have the capacity or history of successes needed to constitute a competitive application alone, we highly encourage organizations to identify and collaborate with partner organizations to increase capacity and improve project design and outcomes. These partnerships may include multiple organizations needed to implement the project and authentically engage local stakeholders but elevate one higher capacity organization to act as the applicant and pass-through entity for project funding if needed. Partnerships should also ensure additional funds are leveraged and that the project will be maintained after the life of the grant. (Note: a project partner is any local community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state, and federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in the completion of the project.) If the applicant is a government entity or municipality, close partnership with at least one non-profit and/or community organization is required to make projects competitive.

Implementation & Maintenance

- **On-the-Ground Implementation:** Funding categories 1 and 2 only will apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work, with the option of using the remaining funds for planning, permitting, final design, engineering, outreach, education, operation and maintenance (if the project's primary focus is improving or maintaining GSI, this would be considered on-the-ground work), or monitoring.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Cost-effectiveness analysis identifies the economically most efficient way to meet project objectives. Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation includes, but is not limited to, an assessment of effective direct/indirect costs across all categories in the proposed budget according to the type, size and duration of project and project objectives. Project budgets will be compared to similar projects to ensure proposed costs across all budget categories are reasonable for the activities being performed and the outcomes proposed.
- **Timeliness:** Project has completed or nearly completed planning, design and engineering to the extent that on-the-ground implementation can begin shortly after the grant is awarded.
- **Monitoring:** Project includes a plan for monitoring progress during and after the proposed project period to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.
- **Long-Term Sustainability and Maintenance:** Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. Plans described in the proposal include how the organization will ensure long-term efficacy and sustainability of the project features including but not limited to, increasing or sustaining organizational capacity for long term maintenance, secure or plans to secure future funding for this activity, and partnerships established to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.
- **Regional Connectivity & Scalability:** Project has the potential to catalyze additional efforts in communities or settings throughout Southeast Michigan where it has not been broadly deployed. Additionally, projects with regional scopes and partnerships that seek to improve regional collaboration and advance or establish regional strategies will be more competitive.
- **Transferability:** Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.
- **Communication:** Project includes a detailed plan to communicate information about the project to appropriate audiences.

OTHER

Applicant Demographic Information: In an effort to better understand diversity in our grantmaking, NFWF is collecting basic demographic information on applicants and their organizations via a voluntary survey form (available in Easygrants). This information will not be shared externally or with reviewers and will not be considered when making grant decisions. For more details, please see the [tip sheet](#) and the Uploads section of Easygrants.

Budget: Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.

Environmental Services: NFWF funds projects in pursuit of its mission to sustain, restore and enhance the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats for current and future generations. NFWF recognizes that some benefits from projects may be of value with regards to credits on an environmental services market (such as a carbon credit market). NFWF does not participate in, facilitate, or manage an environmental services market nor does NFWF assert any claim on such credits.

Intellectual Property: Intellectual property created using NFWF awards may be copyrighted or otherwise legally protected by award recipients. NFWF may reserve the right to use, publish, and copy materials created under awards, including posting such material on NFWF's website and featuring it in publications. NFWF may use project metrics and spatial data from awards to estimate societal benefits that result and to report these results to funding partners. These may include but are not limited to habitat and species response, species connectivity, water quality, water quantity, risk of detrimental events (e.g., wildfire, floods), carbon accounting (e.g., sequestration, avoided emissions), environmental justice, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Matching Contributions: Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the project during the period of performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

Procurement: If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF's express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support: Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF's financial support for the grant in press



releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

Receiving Award Funds: Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

Compliance Requirements: Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

Permits: Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any federal, state or local requirements. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

Federal Funding: The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information (<https://www.nfwf.org/semichigan>).

Applicant Webinar (Virtual)
Full Proposal Due Date
Review Period
Awards Announced

Thursday, September 5 2:00-3:00 pm Eastern Time
Tuesday, October 1, 2024, by 11:59 PM Eastern
September – October 2024
March 2025

After project selection, NFWF staff will work with applicants to prepare grant agreements and other necessary paperwork, all of which will be completed electronically using the Easygrants system. Additional information about the grantee's organization and its finances may be solicited during this time. Please note the preparation of grant agreements will require approximately 4 to 6 weeks from the time the NFWF receives the additional required information from the grantee.



Once grant agreements are finalized, funds will typically be paid to grantees on a reimbursable basis. Funds may be advanced to qualified grantees on an as-needed basis.

WEBINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to view **both** webinars prior to applying.

1) Funding Opportunity Webinar

Fund partners will host a **virtual webinar September 5 from 2:00-3:00 PM ET**.

Register [Here](#).

At this workshop, NFWF staff will focus on answering attendee questions about the RFP and Fund priorities, assist with proposal development, facilitate a discussion around partnerships to connect applicants with potential collaborators, provide an in-depth review of application requirements, and share insights into crafting competitive proposals. Applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully review the RFP, have a good idea of their proposed project(s), initiated the application, and downloaded the proposal narratives prior.

2) Easygrants Instructional Webinar

The pre-recorded Easygrants webinar [found here](#) covers in-depth instructions for navigating Easygrants.

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through NFWF's Easygrants system.

1. Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information. Please disable the pop-up blocker on your internet browser prior to beginning the application process.
2. Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.
3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be [downloaded here](#).

Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's [Applicant Information](#) page.



For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact:

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

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: 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.