

Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of questions frequently asked by MSCGP applicants. If your question is not addressed, or you require further clarification please contact Silvana Yaroschuk, Multistate Conservation Grant Program Manager, at syaroschuk@fishwildlife.org.

Program Information

What is the Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP)?

The Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) is authorized under 16 U.S.C. 669h-2 and 16 U.S.C. 777m, providing funding for wildlife and sport fish restoration projects, as well as recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) initiatives. These grants address regional and national priority needs identified by State fish and wildlife agencies and their partners, projects that exceed a single State's scale, scope, and capabilities.

Priority needs of state fish and wildlife agencies, referred to as Strategic Priorities, are identified annually by AFWA through an open process that solicits input from state agencies, regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies, conservation organizations, industry partners, universities, and other organizations interested in regional and national conservation and R3 priority needs.

Recipients awarded Traditional Multistate Conservation Grants (T-MSCG) may use these funds for research, restoration, conservation, and management of wild birds, wild mammals, sport fish, and their habitats. These funds also support public access and benefit initiatives, including hunter safety and education, aquatic education, and R3 projects, in alignment with the program's authorizing legislation. R3 activities for sport fishing or boating are only eligible under T-MSCGP.

Recipients awarded R3 Multistate Conservation Grants (R3-MSCG) may use these funds specifically for hunting and shooting sports R3 projects that promote a national hunting and shooting sport recruitment program, including related communication and outreach activities.

Each year, \$11 million in funding is available through MSCG. Of this, \$3 million is allocated for traditional sport fish restoration and sport fish recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) projects; \$3 million supports traditional wildlife restoration projects; and \$5 million is designated for hunting and recreational target shooting R3 projects.

Who administers the MSCGP?

- The MSCGP is jointly administered by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) through the following process:
- AFWA initiates the annual grant cycle by reviewing and updating Strategic Priorities in consultation with state agencies, USFWS, and partners.

- USFWS publishes the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on www.GrantSolutions.gov, providing guidance for applicants on T-MSCG and R3-MSCG under the competitive Multistate Conservation Grant program. AFWA solicits grant proposals that support Strategic Priorities and selects and recommends proposals that best address the priorities.
- AFWA then submits a recommended Priority List of Projects to the USFWS for approval.
- USFWS completes review and approval of MSCGP grant applications, issues awards, and manages and monitors the grant awards.

How can I apply for MSGP funding?

You must first submit your Grant Proposal, including a Project Narrative, Budget Narrative, and Budget Table (without Federal forms), through the AFWA MSCGP Portal by TBD

Once AFWA receives the proposals, it will coordinate with USFWS to conduct an initial screening to determine eligibility. The proposals that meet eligibility criteria will undergo a comprehensive technical review process managed by AFWA.

If the Grant Proposal you submit to AFWA does not meet eligibility requirements, you will be notified by AFWA via email within 30 days after the Grant Proposal due date.

If your proposal is selected for further consideration, you will be invited to submit a full Grant Application through a Directed Announcement in GrantSolutions.gov. Before doing so, AFWA may request revisions to your Project Narrative, Budget Narrative, and/or Budget Table based on feedback from technical reviewers or USFWS. The full application package will include your proposal materials, detailed budget information, and all required federal forms.

Training will be available to explain how to apply for MSCG, including submitting your proposal and budget information in AFWA’s Portal and submitting your Grant Application Package in GrantSolutions.gov (if invited to do so). Proposals should not be submitted in Grants.gov.

MSCGP grants are typically awarded for one year. Under special circumstances and if funding allows, the National Grants Committee may consider multiyear funding. Applicants should confirm availability of multiyear funding with AFWA before applying.

Can R3 programs related to sport fish still be funded, and if so, how?

Yes, R3 related to sport fish will be funded under Strategic Priority #3, although they will be funded through the Traditional MSCGP program using available Sport Fish Restoration funding.

What is the maximum length for the project narrative or supporting documents?

There is no strict page limit, but clarity and conciseness are encouraged. Supporting documentation must be relevant and necessary.

Can an organization submit more than one application?

Yes. There is no restriction on the number of applications submitted by a state or organization, as long as each application is eligible and distinct in its scope and objectives.

Where can I view examples of previously funded projects?

Please visit <https://fishwildlife.org/mscgp> and search under respective categories or using keywords.

Timeline

What does a typical timeline look like for MSCGP?

Post NOFO	April
Proposals Due	June
AFWA and OCI Review	June
Technical Review Teams Review Grants	July
National Grants Committee and CI Review	August
Applicants asked for updates based on NGC/CI feedback	September
Proposals Full Package due in AFWA Portal	September
Approval of the Priority List of Projects	September
Proposals Full Package due in GrantSolutions	End of September
Priority List Sent to USFWS	By October 1

Eligibility Criteria

Who can apply for MSCGP?

- State governments
- Private, Public and state-controlled institutions of higher education
- Nonprofits with or without 501(c)(3) status with the IRS
- Other (See the paragraph below).

Other eligible applicants include the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or a State or group of States, for the purpose of carrying out the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Watching. For purposes of the Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP), ‘States’ include the 50 U.S. States; the District of Columbia (eligible under Sport Fish Restoration only); the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands; and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Canadian provinces and other non-U.S. jurisdictions are not eligible applicants and are not counted when determining whether a project benefits more than 50 percent of the States in a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service region or regional association of State fish and wildlife agencies.

Can you clarify whether my project meets the criteria for states benefiting? Does it need to involve 26 states?

There are three options for a project to meet the criteria for state involvement. A project must benefit states using *ONE of these criteria*:

- 1) **26 states**, or
- 2) **The majority** (over 50%) of states in a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service region or
- 3) **The majority** (over 50%) of states in a regional association of fish and wildlife agencies

If a region has three states and the project benefits two states, then the project is eligible.

For benefit-counting purposes, ‘States’ refers only to the jurisdictions defined under ‘**Eligible applicants,**’ and does not include Canadian provinces or other non-U.S. partners that may participate in regional associations. The District of Columbia may be included as a benefiting State only when the project involves activities eligible under Sport Fish Restoration.

Proposals must list the regions and state abbreviations for all states that will benefit and briefly describe how the project will benefit the region and states identified. Please review the Service regions at <https://www.fws.gov/about/regions> and the regional association of state fish and wildlife agencies at <https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-acts/regional-associations> . “States” include U.S. States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories only.

What does it mean to be Species and Activities eligible?

To be eligible AND allowable, projects and activities must also follow all current laws, regulations, and guidance; cost principles under 2 CFR 200; and any other rules or standards set forth by the USFWS.

Projects proposed for Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) funding must meet species and activity eligibility standards under the Wildlife Restoration Act and/or Sport Fish Restoration Act (collectively referred to as “the Acts”).

Eligible species include wild birds, wild mammals, or sport fish. Sport fish are defined as aquatic, gill-breathing, vertebrate animals with paired fins, having material value for recreation in the marine and fresh waters of the United States.

Eligible activities for T-MSCG funding include projects involving research, surveys, restoration, conservation, management, habitat improvement, and providing for public use and benefit from these resources, including R3 activities and other purposes consistent with the enabling legislation. Fishing or boating R3 activities are only eligible for T-MSCG funding. Hunting and shooting sports R3 activities, including related communication and outreach activities, are also eligible for R3-MSCG funding.

Can you give some examples of ineligible activities and species?

Any taxonomic group other than wild birds, mammals, or sport fish is ineligible.

Any proposals addressing species whose geographic range does not extend to the minimum required extent of geographic benefit (i.e., 26 or more states or 50% of a FWS region or AFWA region) will not be considered.

Ineligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- ⊗ public relations to promote an agency.
- ⊗ general conservation education or wildlife education that is not specifically related to sharing accomplishments supported by the Acts;
- ⊗ law enforcement activities;
- ⊗ establishment of regulations;
- ⊗ producing revenue as the primary purpose, including all processes and procedures directly related to printing, distribution, issuance, or sale of licenses and permits;
- ⊗ promoting opposition to regulated taking of fish or hunting or trapping wildlife;
- ⊗ wildlife damage management.

What are Strategic Priorities, and how do I find them?

To be eligible, proposals must address one or more of the Strategic Priorities. These priorities are updated annually with input from the Association's Committees, Regional Associations, Nonprofits, and Federal partners. You can find the Strategic Priorities at [AFWA Website](#) under the Full Grant Proposals section.

Can an organization submit more than one application?

Yes. There is no restriction on the number of applications submitted by a state or organization, as long as each application is eligible and distinct in its scope and objectives.

Partnering and Letters of Engagement

Is there a preference for nonprofit vs. state agency lead applicants?

No. All eligible entities are treated equally and reviewed based on merit.

Is it allowable to pay partners (e.g., guides, instructors) for their services?

Yes. Partners can be paid for services as contractors or subrecipients, depending on the nature of their role with the grant-funded project.

Can a federal employee (e.g., university faculty affiliated with USGS) serve as a co-Principal Investigator?

Yes. Though federal agencies are not eligible applicants, federal employees may participate in a grant-funded project as a co-Principal Investigator or other key project participant as long as an eligible entity is the applicant. Identify the federal employee's faculty role, describe the role of the federal employee in the project, and disclose any potential conflicts of interest in writing.

Do I need to submit Letters of Engagement?

Letters of engagement from participating states are required to document planned collaboration, especially when those states are included to meet beneficiary eligibility requirements.

If your project relies on state fish and wildlife agencies for key activities—such as data sharing, interviews, or database development—you are encouraged, though not required, to include letters or emails confirming their willingness and capacity to participate.

However, if specific agencies are identified in your project objectives, activities, or approach, letters of engagement from those agencies must be provided.

Letters from non-state agencies are not considered.

Examples:

Geographic scope: If your proposal will benefit 8 of 14 NEAFWA states, you will need to submit Letters of Engagement (a confirmation e-mail will suffice as well) from those 8 states.

Working with specific states: If your proposal benefits all 50 states, but identifies certain states for activities such as focus groups, you must submit Letters of Engagement from those states.

How do I determine if an agreement is a Contract or a Subaward?

The applicant must use case-by-case judgment based on the criteria provided in [2 CFR 200.331](#). The nature of the relationship between the applicant and the 3rd party is critical in the determination, and no single factor determines the type of relationship.

Subawards are appropriate when the partner is involved in the grant-funded project, including but not limited to, helping to carry out the project’s objectives, leading or assisting with project decision-making, and reporting on project performance.

Contracts are generally used for goods or services that are provided by vendors within normal business operations in a competitive environment. See also for determination guidance.

Subaward Example:

- **Scenario:** A State Fish and Wildlife Agency partners with a university to conduct research on bat population trends for a regional species status assessment.
- **Why it’s a subaward:**
 - The university helps define the research scope and methodology.
 - Its results are used to inform management decisions under the agency’s federal grant.
 - The university's activities advance the primary objectives of the grant program.

Contract Example:

Scenario: A state agency uses grant funds to pay a web development company to build a data portal for public access to fish stocking information.

- **Why it's a contract:**
 - The company is providing a technical service (website creation).
 - It does not have a responsibility for meeting the grant's objectives.
 - The task supports the agency's grant work, but is not integral for meeting the grant objectives, and any number of other vendors could fulfill the need for the service.

Can I request Multiyear Funding?

For projects expected to extend beyond one year, applicants are encouraged to note in the Project Narrative their intent to seek future funding. Applicants requesting continuation funding must demonstrate progress from the prior year as part of their justification. Continued funding is not guaranteed and depends on project performance, merit, and available funds.

Criteria for multiyear funding are outlined in the application package. Because the bar for approval is high, most applicants should plan to request one year of funding at a time.

If I apply for multiyear funding, is it okay not to specify each year's objectives and budget?

If applying for multiyear funding, clearly break out objectives, budgets, and budget narratives by year. If awarded, multiyear projects are approved for the full duration, but funds are obligated annually.

Can federal agencies be contractors or subrecipients of MSCGP funds?

Federal agencies and personnel can often be involved in MSCGP projects (through contracts, sub-awards, etc.) Federal agencies cannot primarily receive MSCGP funds, except for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which coordinates the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

Budget

How much funding is available for a typical Multistate Conservation Grant Program Cycle?

Annually, a total of \$11,000,000 is allocated for the MSCGP.

- Traditional Multistate Conservation Grant Program - \$ 6,000,000
Wildlife Restoration Funding: \$3,000,000 and
Sport Fish Restoration Funding: \$3,000,000

➤ R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program – \$ 5,000,000

The available funding changes annually as the amount allocated to the National Survey changes, previously approved multiyear grants, as well as recoveries from expired grants. The available funding will be updated as we get closer to approving the Priority List of Projects.

Is there a matching requirement?

No match is required.

How competitive is the MSCGP?

Below is a table of MSCGP Cycles and the number of proposals submitted and projects funded:

MSCGP Cycle	Initial Proposals Submitted	Proposals Submitted	Projects Funded
2025		109	45
2024		105	55
2023	103	65	55
2022	121	54	42
2021	85	52	38

What amount of funding can be requested?

Applicants should review the guidelines to determine the amount of funding available for the current MSCGP Cycle and consider whether the project will require funds from Sport Fish Restoration, Wildlife Restoration, or R3, or a combination of those.

The range of funding for projects has been up to \$1,000,000, depending on the type of project, its scope, and duration. The average per grant is \$350,000.

Are indirect costs allowed?

Yes. Applicants may:

- Use their organization’s Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or a voluntary reduction in this rate
- Use the De minimis rate (up to 15%) as defined by 2 CFR 200.414(f)
- Propose not to include indirect costs

Applicants are encouraged to justify their approach clearly. available for demonstrating effective management of indirect costs.

Is there a cap on indirect costs?

No. There is no cap on indirect. Applicants may use their negotiated indirect cost rate or up to 15% of the de minimis rate but must justify the rate and explain how it supports project delivery. Bonus points are available for demonstrating effective management of indirect costs. See also [2 CFR 200.414](#) and the NOFO.

Can Multistate Conservation Grant funds be used to pay for state fish and wildlife agency personnel?

State agency personnel's salaries, benefits, and indirect costs are allowable as part of a Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) application budget, as long as:

- ✓ Proposed activities are eligible under the grant program, are allocable under the specific Multistate award, and are necessary and reasonable for accomplishing the grant objectives (2 CFR 200).
- ✓ State agency personnel must document the time and effort spent on each grant-funded project assigned to them.
- ✓ A state agency cannot duplicate (“double dip”) time charged for an activity under both an MSCGP federal award and a state Wildlife Restoration (WR) and/or Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) apportionment grant or any other federal grant.

All states structure activities funded differently under their annual WR and SFR apportionments. It is possible that state personnel activities proposed under an MSCGP grant may not have been included in any of the state’s annual apportionment grants, thus making it reasonable for a state to request personnel expenses as part of an MSCGP application.

Lobbying

How is lobbying defined under this opportunity?

Lobbying is defined under [43 CFR 18](#) as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress. Applicants must report lobbying activities on Federal form SF-LLL. This form must be included with your application if you are requesting more than \$100,000 and you or your organization has used or plans to use funds other than Federal funds for lobbying, as defined under [43 CFR 18](#), related to the proposed project. Using Federal funds to influence an action related to a Federal award is prohibited.

General Terms and Conditions

Where can applicants find the terms and conditions document for awarded projects?

General terms and conditions for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can be found at [FWS General Award Terms and Conditions](#). General terms and conditions for the Department of the Interior can be found at [DOI General Terms and Conditions](#). These links are also provided in the NOFO. Project-specific terms and conditions may be added to a Notice of Award upon application review and approval.

Reviewing Process

Who is involved in reviewing and selecting proposals, and what are the selection criteria?

Technical Review Teams will score proposals using [published criteria](#). Technical Review teams consist of subject matter experts (representing states, federal agencies, and all other partners).

There are 4 Technical Review Teams: Conservation and Science, Relevancy and Capacity Building, Recruiting, Retention and Reactivation (R3), and the AFWA Priorities.

To maintain impartiality and fairness in the review process, AFWA enforces the following:

- **State Agency Representatives** - Under the **Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts**, state fish and wildlife agencies are legally designated **cooperators** and **managers** of conservation programs. Because of this:
 - **They are allowed to participate as reviewers** for Multistate Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP) proposals, even if their state stands to benefit from a proposal.
 - They **must disclose any direct conflicts** (e.g., if they are listed on a proposal or their staff are key personnel) and **recuse** themselves from scoring or discussing those proposals.
 - This is justified by their **statutory role** as co-managers and decision-makers under the Acts
- **Non-State Representatives** are only eligible to participate as reviewers if:
 - Their organization is not submitting or listed on a proposal.
 - They are not contractors/subrecipients or are not listed as key personnel.
 - They did not contribute to the development of the proposal.
 - There is no other personal or professional conflict.
- **Annual Disclosure:** All reviewers must sign a COI disclosure annually.

Who prepares the List of Projects that is sent to the USFWS?

The National Grants Committee (NGC) approves a draft Priority List, which is adopted by the majority of Fish and Wildlife State Agencies' Directors.

The National Grants Committee is comprised of the following Association members:

Vice President of AFWA (Chair)
Chair of Executive Committee (Vice Chair)
Vice Chair of Executive Committee
Chair of Fish and Wildlife Trust Funds Committee
Western President (or designee)
Northeast President (or designee)
Midwest President (or designee)
Southeast President (or designee)

The Priority List is sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by October 1.

How does AFWA handle the Conflict of Interest?

All individuals serving on Technical Review Teams (TRTs) or the National Grants Committee (NGC) who are involved in reviewing proposals for the MSCGP must complete a Conflict of Interest (COI) Certification Form on an annual basis.

This certification serves as a formal acknowledgment of each reviewer's commitment to uphold the integrity and impartiality of the MSCGP review process. The form must confirm that the individual:

- Has reviewed and understands the MSCGP Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Does not knowingly have any conflicts of interest with any of the proposals submitted for the current cycle.
- Agrees to promptly disclose any conflict that may arise during the review period.

All signed certifications must be submitted prior to the start of each review cycle. AFWA is responsible for collecting, managing, and securely retaining these records in accordance with applicable records management policies.

Performance

What is the timeframe in which projects should be completed?

The performance period is one year from January 1st, 20XX, to December 31st, 20XX.

Do I send the reports and publication to AFWA after the project has closed?

Please submit your report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by uploading it under your award number in GrantSolutions. Send any questions regarding your report to karen_bennett@fws.gov. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies may use resources produced under this grant for reporting and publicity purposes.

If you produced publications under the grant, you should send copies (electronic) of the publications to AFWA Program Manager Silvana Yaroschuk at syaroschuk@fishwildlife.org

Where do I find more information about MSCGP?

Below are the resources to find more information and answer your questions:

MSCGP WebPage:

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-informs/multi-state-conservation-grants-program>

MSCGP Grants Database

www.fishwildlife.org/mscgp

Partner With a Payer

<https://partnerwithapayer.org/multistate-conservation-grants/>

GrantsSolution WebSite

www.grantsolutions.gov

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<https://www.fws.gov/program/multistate-conservation>

Contact AFWA staff before and during the submission:

syaroschuk@fishwildlife.org

Contact OCI Staff after October 1st:

Karen_bennett@fws.gov