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**National Grants Committee Meeting**

**Curt Melcher ‐ Chair**

**Colleen Callahan‐ Vice Chair**

**September 19, 2022**

**10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

Meeting convened at 1:00 PM by Curt Melcher. 38 participants attended, including 6 (out of 8) current Committee members:

* Curt Melcher (Chair)
* Colleen Callahan Vice Chair)
* Dan Eichinger
* J.D Strong
* Bryan Burhans
* Paul Rauch

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

* Call to Order, Introductions, Announcements, and Agenda Review – ***Curt Malcher***

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM. The Chair welcomed attendees.

* Approval of the March 2022 (NA Conference) Meeting Minutes – ***Curt Melcher***

The Committee approved the meeting minutes from March 2022.

* Presentation and Discussion of Draft Priority List and Recommendations for 2023 Multistate Conservation Grants - ***Curt Melcher, Chair / Silvana Yaroschuk, AFWA***

AFWA staff presented the Draft Priority List as the Technical Review Teams proposed. After recoveries and previous year obligations, there were about $ 2.7 M available for Wildlife restoration Grants, $2.7 M for Sportfish Restoration Grants and $5.6M for R3 Grants.AFWA received 103 Initial Proposals. The Technical review Teams after their review moved forward 65 applications for Ful Grant Proposals phase. After the review of 65 FGP, Technical Review Teams drafted a Priority List with 55 Proposals for National Grants Committee Review.

The National Grants Committee received a summary of the proposals and Draft Priority List and had a chance to review them. Now it’s the time for discussions from the National Grants Committee and the approval of this draft.

Curt thanked the Technical Review Teams Members for their hard work on reviewing these grants and coming forward with a draft Priority List.

***The National Grants Committee approved the Priority List recommendations for the State Directors for the 2023 Multistate Conservation Grant Program***

* WSFR Update

***Paul Rauch, WSFR***

*Traditional Multistate Conservation Grant Program (T-MSCGP):*

* ***FY 2022:*** 18 grants recommended by AFWA were approved by the Director and awarded.

*R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program (R3-MSCGP):*

* ***FY 2022:*** 24 grants were approved by the Director and have been awarded.

**FY 2023:** Applications were submitted in July 2022. AFWA selections for the Priority List will be discussed at the National Grants Committee (Committee) Meeting. The Committee will forward their recommendations for approval at the AFWA business meeting. The Priority List will be forwarded to the Service Director by October 1, 2022. At that point, the Service will route an approval memo for Director’s approval and then WSFR will make awards. Awards are ideally made prior to January 1, 2023, but awards may be delayed if applications are incomplete, need additional information, or applicants need to register for ASAP, GrantSolutions, etc.

*General MSCGP Updates:*

* Projects selected for both the T-MSCGP and R3-MSCGP must benefit at least 26 States, a majority of States in a Region of the Service, or a regional association of State fish and game departments. The primary goal of both programs is to provide funding to address regional or national priority needs of the State fish and wildlife agencies and their partners that are beyond the scope and capabilities of a single State.
* Beginning in 2022, entry of grant and project statement information and performance reporting data into TRACS is required.

*Recovering America’s Wildlife Act of 2022 - Innovation Grants Competitive Subprogram:*

* Ten percent of RAWA’s annual funding would be set aside for the competitive Innovation Grants program for the purpose of generating innovation in techniques, tools, strategies, or partnerships that accelerate, expand, or replicate effective and measurable recovery efforts for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and their habitats. Funding amounts for competitive awards are:
* FY 2023: $83M
* FY 2024: $107.4M
* FY 2025: $117.1M
* FY 2026 and beyond: $126.9M
* Fish and wildlife agencies from states, territories, or the District of Columbia, nonprofit organizations, regional associations of fish and wildlife agencies (Regional Associations), or any group composed of more than one such entity would be eligible to receive funds through the Innovation Grants program.
* An Innovation Grants Review Committee would be appointed by the DOI Secretary and be comprised of a State Director from each Regional Association, the head of the fish and wildlife agency in a Territory, a Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) delegate, and representatives from four wildlife conservation and restoration nonprofit organizations.
* This Innovation Grants Review Committee would be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The process to appoint FACA Council members may take 9 to 12 months, creating challenges for the FY 2023 award timeline. A likely planning scenario would be to award both the FY 2023 and FY 2024 Innovation Grant program funds in FY 2024.
* 2022 National Survey Update – ***Martha Stapleton, NORC***

Martha Stapleton with NORC gave a presentation/update on NORC work for the 2022 National Survey.

* The national survey collects:
  + Nationwide data on:
    - Participation and expenditures in fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation for the population ages 16 and over in 2022
    - Participation in fishing and hunting for 6 to 15-year-olds for 2021
    - Participation for saltwater and freshwater angling for residents of 23 coastal states
* Major objective: Comprehensive methodology to redesign the FHWAR.
  + CHALLENGES
    - Sustainability
    - Steep respondent burden
    - Coverage error in rural areas
    - Nonresponse bias
  + SOLUTIONS
    - Shorten the questionnaire.
    - Reduce the respondent burden.
    - Reduce costs.
    - Address coverage errors in rural areas
    - Web option
    - Offer State Opt-In – 15 states currently participating.
  + INNOVATIONS
    - Blended sample design, including NORC’s AmeriSpeak panel and non-probability sample.
    - Enhanced weighting.
* Timeline

Timeline

Description automatically generated

* Data Collection Overview
  + Graphical user interface, application

    Description automatically generatedData collection occurs over 4 waves
    - Screener data collection: January 2022 - April 2022.
    - Wave 1 data collection: May 2022 - August 2022.
    - Wave 2 data collection: September 2022 - December 2022.
    - Wave 3 data collection: January 2023 – April 2023
  + Available in 3 modes:
    - Web
    - Phone
    - Mail (paper and pencil)
  + Respondents can choose from 2 Languages:
    - English
    - Spanish
  + The Screener Wave concluded at the end of April with approximately 40,000 completes.
  + Completes by Mode:
    - Web: 31,932
    - Phone: 2,232
    - Mail: 7,189

Wave 1 concluded at the end of August, with approximately 30,000 completed.

Completes followed the same pattern as the Screener, with Web being the most popular, Mail, and Phone. Each respondent received 1 of 3 possible detailed activity surveys: Fishing, Hunting, or Wildlife-Watching. Pictured is an example mail Fishing survey.

***Questions:***

***Curt:*** What's your takeaway so far in terms of how the survey has been progressing, is it going as we would expect, are there problems or issues?

***Martha:*** We as a team feel the survey is going well. We had a great meeting in July with AFWA and FWS and the technical working group. We did go over some challenges, one is the mail-in response rate was lower than we had expected, however with our blended methodological design that was offset with the web and the phone. We were also able to make some methodological recommendations for upcoming rounds. We have collected people's phone numbers in early stages of data collection and so those who provided us with the cell phone we are making good use of texting requests to them and we're finding we're getting a good response rate to that. We got approval from the technical working group to increase sample size in wave three and we're going to start an outbound calling effort for wave two so for wave one if people opted to complete on the telephone, they would tell us that they wanted to do that and for wave two we're going to more proactively reach out to people over the phone. So, yes you know there have been some challenges, but we feel like we anticipated that we would need to build in some nimbleness and flexibility and come up with some ideas for offsetting those challenges and we're pleased with how that's unfolding given our collaboration with the technical working group, AFWA and the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service in doing that.

***Q:*** Will there be any guidance provided to the users of this survey data in terms of comparing trend data or information from previous surveys? Will there be an opportunity to make those comparisons between previous data and current data as it’s presented?

***Martha:*** That was a significant topic of conversation at our meeting with the technical working group in July. Guidance will be provided. Messaging will be disseminated on different platforms and to different audiences and, and we are working with the technical working group to figure out how to do that in the least confusing way. I think the bottom line is you really will not be able to merge the data from previous administrations for any kind of a timeline comparison in that way. If you are working with both sets of data, we would encourage people to include caveats about the differences in the methodological design but that's a high-level answer. We are very aware of people's interests in trendline information, and we’ll be working with the technical working group to issue guidance on that.

* Presentation on Prior Year Grant:
  + Discover Family Bowfishing - ***Josh Gold, ATA***

Partnership includes Into the Outdoors, Archery Trade Association and Safari Club International Foundation.

* + - Designed to be peer-hosted for middle to high school ages audience and their families.
    - Content usable through the country and includes conservation, invasive species, equipment, access, regulations, safety and communication, refraction, instinctive shooting, using the harvest, aquatic habitats, fish anatomy and identification, and more.
    - Products
      * Three long-format (30 mins) broadcast television “youth education” discover Bowfishing shows.
      * Ten short forms (2-3 mins) “how-to” bowfishing YouTube videos.
      * Six short-form (2-3 mins) “bowfishing action” YouTube videos.
      * Sic educational curriculum that blend bowfishing related classroom videos and peer-driven hands on lessons activities for 3-5 clasroom sessions of interactive learning

The longevity of the products will last well beyond the year of funding.

Final Report and products shared on National R3 ClearingHouse, ITO website, regional conferences, and more.

* + - What’s next
      * Distribution

165 channels - Similar angling education has already been telecasted across the country 884 times on 165 channels.

PBS Television Distribution – Additional 10M impressions a year

PBS Passport – Accessible to 54 M monthly viewers

* + Measuring the Efficacy of State R3 Efforts: A Quantitative Approach - ***Gassett, Williams, and Chase***

The goal of this research is to improve the way we recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters and anglers by quantifying the effectiveness of state R3 programs.

*Approach:* To address this information need, we partnered with eight participating states to compare license purchasing behaviors of R3 event attendees to match-paired lookalikes who did not attend an event. We examined 60,000 R3 event attendees and used Matched Pairing (Mahalanobis Distance in n-dimensional space) to identify lookalikes from 13 million hunters and anglers. We analyzed attendees and their lookalikes according to their purchasing regularity across time, or lack of churn (Participation), and their annualized license purchasing volume (Engagement).

*Findings:* We found convincing evidence in all states that R3 events generate customers who churn less (Participation) and buy more licenses (Engagement). Because our study design contained matched-pair lookalikes, who acted as a counterfactual for attendees, we

determined R3 event attendees were different (more avid) from the average customer before attending the R3 event, but also were different because of the R3 event. In general,

R3 events focused on basic, introductory activities tended to have better Participation and

Engagement outcomes, and events focused on advanced techniques, difficult quarry, or using specialized equipment were less effective. In this longitudinal analysis, youth under

18 generally produced the lowest lift in Participation and Engagement, and adults 25-50 generally showed the highest lift. There is some evidence suggesting repeat attendance has a marginal benefit (in Participation and Engagement) over attending just one event.

Finally, many attendees (27-93%) purchased a license in a license year before attending the R3 event, suggesting they were already recruited to some extent before attending an R3 event, and much of the gains are compensatory recruitment, rather than additive recruitment.

*Implications:*

* + Data Analysis was significantly easier, cleaner, and faster with states that have CMS.
  + States who administer their own database or don’t have a CMS provider will be left behind.
  + Many R3 professionals mentioned there were attendees and events that were not captured.
  + Event registration with a unique identifier is a must.
  + R3 events create lift for individuals, but likely don’t have meaningful impact on hunting and fishing at the population level.
  + Agencies should consider deprioritizing R3 events that are not immediately scalable.
  + Many attendees have hunted or fished in license years prior to attending an R3 event.
  + Consider screening at applicable R3 events for those new to hunting and fishing.
  + Attending multiple R3 events has limited marginal benefits.
  + Screen introductory events to encourage only attendees that are new to hunting.
  + Young adults had higher ROI and youth had lower ROI.
  + Focus on family by targeting younger adults. Once they are recruited, they will recruit their child organically.
* Planning for 2024 MultiState Conservation Grant Program Strategic Priorities –
  + *Reviewing and Updating Conservation and Science Strategic Priorities –* 
    - ***Russ Mason****, MSCGP Conservation and Science Priority Technical Review Team* / *AFWA Science and Research Committee*

Three separate surveys (2 formal, one update) have demonstrated that state agency science and research priorities fall into three categories:

* + Wildlife disease surveillance and management
  + Invasive species eradication/management
  + Climate change impacts on fisheries, wildlife, and habitat

The surveys also highlight two lesser priorities:

* + Adaptation of advancing technologies to aquatic and terrestrial species (e.g., eDNA surveillance for secretive or rare species; more effective and economical tracking devices, adaptations of LiDAR)
  + Interjurisdictional cooperation to harmonize and accomplish ‘landscape level’ work (e.g., CWD prevention, habitat corridors, RSGCN conservation)

These priorities seem to have remained stable for (at least) a decade (i.e., for at least 10 years prior to the first survey).

The Science and Research Committee proposes to the National Grants Committee that the five identified science and research priorities become formally incorporated as explicit considerations in the ranking process used to award multistate conservation grants.

***Question:***

***Margaret:*** Are we seeing new diverse groups applying for the grants, and if we are not, has the committee thought about ways to infuse new friends into the conversation?

To be answered after the next presentation.

* + - MSCGP Relevancy, Inclusion, and Participation grant priority language update *–* ***Lindsay Rogers/David Buggs****, MSCGP Relevancy, Inclusion, and Participation Priority Technical Review Team / AFWA Education, Outreach and Diversity Committee*

We are talking about funding initiatives that are focused on relevancy, inclusion, and participation. We also need to define what we are talking about. When this process started a few years ago, there were some grants that did not necessarily address this specific priority. So, we wanted to make sure that we have a clear language when it comes to this specific priority. So, a group of Priority 2 Technical Review Team decided to work on the definitions and what it looks like. We also decided to work on something that not only works for this Priority but also can be used for other Strategic Priorities.

The first thing we did was define terms.

*DEFINING TERMS*

For this grant priority, the term “diverse audience” means:

* Constituents who have historically represented less than 20% of participants in a specific conservation action or outdoor recreation opportunity.
* Constituents who may have had little to no prior engagement with state game agencies or conservation organizations.
* Constituents who are part of a traditionally underserved or under-represented group due to various societal or institutional barriers.

Next, we went into details on elaborating on each subcategory.

1. Enhancing Conservation Through Broader Engagement
   1. Implementing Relevancy Roadmap work
   2. Opportunities to engage new and diverse audiences.
   3. Marketing efforts and campaigns to new and diverse audiences (see definition of “diverse audience” above).
2. Implementing and/or Expanding Internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts
   1. Implementing Relevancy Roadmap work specific to agency staff.
   2. Assisting states/organizations to develop or further inclusion efforts.
   3. Educating staff.
   4. Sharing best practices, sharing knowledge and material resources.
3. Research
   1. Surveying motivations barriers and desires of non-traditional, new, and diverse audiences
   2. Research focuses on participation by historically under-represented groups in outdoor recreation opportunities and highlights successful engagement practices.
   3. Assessment of internal staff demographics, perceptions, and practices
   4. Development of best practices for engaging diverse and new audiences

***Question:***

***Margaret:*** Is there a deadline for when these priorities will be updated and approved? Will it be for the upcoming cycle or in a couple of years?

***Answer:*** We are hoping to have these priorities updated and approved for the or the upcoming cycle (2024). Other priorities’ Technical Review Teams will be working on reviewing and updating those priorities and we will bring them to National Grants Committee for review and approval during National Grants Committee Meeting at the North American Conference in March 2024.

* New Business
  + Integrating DEI

***David Buggs*** introduced the participants to the DEI ThinkSheet and facilitated a discussion around it.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are core principles of developing strong conservation outcomes. This ThinkSheet is intended to help you consider DEI within the context of the specific work of your committee, guide conversations and discussions that lead to actions, and aid in framing future desired conditions.

Just as biodiversity boosts the productivity of ecosystems where each species has an important role to play in that system, so does people diversity in natural resources conservation foster creativity and innovation. Diversity and Inclusion increases support for habitat conservation, provides political and financial support for resource maintenance and increases awareness, stewardship, and sustainability of all our natural habitats and wildlife. Everyone has a connection to nature in some way, regardless of demographics and where they live.

How you consider Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles within your committee can be on multiple scales – with small, more immediate steps building into larger and long-term outcomes. This might include increasing the diversity of the workforce, or building equity in outcomes or products, or simply having a diversity of voices and viewpoints represented in discussions. For example, you may consider how your committee might seek input from diverse audiences, build outcomes for underserved communities with the scope of your technical committee work, or partner with other committees to include these underserved communities. Understanding who is currently served and who is potentially underserved can also be a useful discussion.

The primary outcome of this ThinkSheet is to be mindful of the way we engage with broader audiences both at committee meetings themselves and as possible outcomes of the actions of the committee. The questions below are intended to provide guidance for how you begin the conversation. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is intentional action – it is a journey, not a single destination.

***Colleen*** brought an example from Illinoi where they are implementing DEAI where A stand for Accessibility. That came up during a shooting sports discussions – the lack of accessibility for many to even get close to the many opportunities that we want to present in outdoor activities. I only bring this up for consideration when we move forward how to include the accessibility component in our future discussions and decision making.

***Curt:*** I feel like of all committees this committee could benefit from integrating DEI in its work. We have been talking about forming an ad-hoc to start digging into those issues.

And, to answer Margaret’s earlier question, we have had non-traditional organizations apply for grants, we only must figure out how to make those applicants successful.

* + 2023 Work Plan

***J.D.*** We probably shall get together between now and NA Conference to discuss about the ad-hoc to work on DEI.

**Action Item:**

Approve 2023 (R3 and Traditional) MultiState Conservation Grant Program Priority List

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM