



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

Multistate Conservation Grant Program



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 Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 777 et seq.) and the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669 et seq.) as amended by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs Improvement Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-408, 114 STAT. 1766 §113 and 114 STAT. 1722 §122) authorize the Secretary of the Interior to make up to \$6,000,000 available annually to fund MSCGP projects. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will cite this traditional program as the Traditional Multistate Conservation Grant Program (T-MSCGP). In addition, the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow's Needs Act (Modernizing PR Act, 16 U.S.C. 669) amended the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to, among other measures, authorize the Service to make hunter recruitment and recreational target shooter recruitment grants that promote a national hunting and shooting sports recruitment program, including related communication and outreach activities. The Service will cite this program as the R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program (R3-MSCGP). Up to \$5,000,000 will be available specifically for the R3-MSCGP grants.

Who administers the MSCGP?

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) cooperatively administer the MSCG process.

- AFWA begins the annual grant cycle by developing a list of Strategic Priorities in consultation with state agencies, conservation partners, and industries.
- USFWS publishes the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in the federal grant management system known as www.GrantSolutions.gov, which the USFWS uses to review federal grant applications. The NOFO provides application guidance for both types of projects (i.e., T-MSCG and R3-MSCG) under the competitive Multistate Conservation Grant program.
- AFWA solicits grant proposals that support Strategic Priorities and selects projects that best address the priorities.
- AFWA then submits a recommended list of priorities 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?

The application process involves submitting a proposal and budget information (i.e., budget narrative and budget table) first in the AFWA Portal for review by Technical Review Teams facilitated by AFWA. The Applicants may then be invited to submit a Complete Application Package to GrantSolutions, which the USFWS uses to review federal grant applications. The Complete Application Package includes the proposal, budget information, and other required federal forms. Training is provided for applicants annually to update them on processes and any changes for the current application year.

MSCGP grants are traditionally approved for one year of funding. Applicants whose projects are expected to last for more than one year are encouraged to let the Grants Committee know that they will apply for a subsequent year(s) of funding and will need to report on progress made in the first year as part of the justification for subsequent/supplemental funding. Subsequent funding is not guaranteed and will depend on the project's merits, available funding, and progress. Under special circumstances, the Grants Committee will consider approving multiple years of funding (multiyear funding). The criteria for multiyear funding established by the National Grants Committee are included in the application package. Please note that there is a very high bar to justify multiyear funding, and most applicants will be requested to apply for one year of funding at a time. If applicants decide to apply for multiyear funding, they are required to break down the objectives, budget table, and budget narrative for each year of the proposed project. If awarded, funding for a multiyear proposal is approved for all years of the project, but funds are only obligated to the project one year at a time.

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 #5, although they will be funded through the Traditional MSCGP program using available sport fish funding (DJ funds).

Timeline

What does a typical timeline look like for MSCGP?

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

Eligibility Criteria

Who can apply for MSCGP?

- A. State or group of States
- B. A nongovernmental organization.
- C. Public Institution of Higher Education
- D. The United States 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-Associated Recreation

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
- 2) **The majority** (over 50%) of states in a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service region
- 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.

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 are wild birds, mammals, and sport fish. ***Wildlife*** means the indigenous or naturalized species of birds or mammals. ***Sport fish*** means aquatic, gill-breathing, vertebrate animals with paired fins, having material value for recreation in the marine and fresh waters of the United States.

Proposed project activities must carry out the purposes of the Acts. These purposes include conservation, restoration, management, and enhancement of wild birds, mammals, and sport fish, as well as providing for public use and benefit from these resources.

Can you give some examples of ineligible activities and species?

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

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.

Will the project fit better under the Traditional MSCGP or the R3 MSCGP?

You must look at the strategic priorities and funding source to answer those questions.

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.

Budget

How much money is available for the upcoming Multistate Conservation Grant Program Cycle?

Annually, \$11,000,000 is available
 Traditional Multistate Conservation Grant Program - \$ 6,000,000
 R3 Multistate Conservation Grant Program – \$ 5,000,000

The amount of funds changes annually as the amount allocated to the National Survey changes, as well as additional recoveries from previous grants (when funds are returned when grants close). The amount will be updated and available 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 Invited	Projects Funded
2024		105	55
2023	103	65	55
2022	121	54	42
2021	85	52	38
2020	110	74	64

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 between \$50,000 and \$1,000,000, depending on the type of project, its scope, and duration. The average per grant is \$350,000. Applicants are encouraged to request the minimum funds required to complete the project.

Can I charge Indirect Cost under MSCGP, and if so, what is the right amount?

If you have an approved NICRA (submitted or pending approval), your indirect costs must be calculated by applying your indirect rate to the direct cost base *identified in your NICRA (or proposed but not yet approved NICRA)*. Your NICRA may identify the cost base as salaries and wages, salaries/wages and fringe, Total Direct Costs, Modified Total Direct Costs, or Pass-through agreements. ***Please review your NICRA carefully to determine which direct costs are included in your indirect cost calculation.***

If you are eligible to use the de minimis indirect rate, your indirect costs must be calculated by applying de minimis rate to the Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each sub-award (regardless of the sub-awards' performance period under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each sub-award in excess of \$25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

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

State agency personnel salary, benefits, and indirect 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.

It 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) 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.

Reviewing Process

What is a Technical Review Team, and how are the members selected?

Technical Review teams consist of subject matter experts (representing states and federal agencies) from AFWA Committees (approved by the relevant committee chair).

There are 5 Technical Review Teams: Conservation and Science, Expanding Relevancy and Engagement, Capacity Building, Conservation Education and Coordination of Conservation Policies, AFWA Priorities, and R3

What is the National Grants Committee?

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 Committee meets in person twice a year and a few times virtually. Their primary tasks include:

- (1) Approval of the Strategic Priorities to be used in soliciting and selecting grants under the Multistate Conservation Grant Program later in the year.
- (2) Finalizing the Draft Priority List of the Projects. The resulting Final Draft Priority List is introduced at the AFWA Business Meeting for a vote by the State Directors.

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

How does AFWA handle the Conflict of Interest?

Application scoring and ranking by the Technical Review Teams –

- Technical Review Team members shall sign a Conflict of Interest form every cycle before reviewing grants.
- Scoring through SurveyMonkey Apply software—Members with a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest with one or more applications shall recuse themselves from scoring said application(s). When prompted by the software, the software shall mark it as a conflict of interest in the notes.
- Ranking during the meetings – Members with a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest with one or more application(s) shall be excluded from the discussions and leave the room during the discussion of said application(s).

National Grants Committee Priority List recommendation –

- National Grants Committee members shall sign a Conflict of Interest form every cycle.
- National Grants Committee Meeting - Members with a conflict of interest, or potential conflict of interest, with one or more applications shall be excluded from the discussions and leave the room during the discussion of said application(s).

Can I request Multiyear Funding?

MSCGP grants are traditionally approved for one year of funding. Applicants whose projects are expected to last for more than one year are encouraged to let the Grants Committee know that they will apply for a subsequent year(s) of funding for the project and will need to report on progress made in the first year as part of the justification for subsequent/supplemental funding. Subsequent funding is not guaranteed and will depend on the project's merits, available funding, and progress.

Under special circumstances, the Grants Committee will consider approving multiple years of funding (multiyear funding). The criteria for multiyear funding established by the National Grants Committee are included in the application package. Please note that there is a very high bar to justify multiyear funding, and most applicants will be requested to apply for 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 applicants decide to apply for multiyear funding, they are required to break down the objectives, budget table, and budget narrative for each year of the proposed project. If awarded, funding for a multiyear proposal is approved for all years of the project, but funds are only obligated to the project one year at a time.

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.

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

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