

Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application



Instructions

After completing the form, applications and supporting documentation may be submitted by e-mail to ndicgrants@nd.gov. It is preferred that only electronic copies are submitted.

You are not limited to the spacing provided, except in those instances where there is a limit on the number of words. If you need additional space, please indicate that on the application form, answer the question on a separate page, and include with your submission.

The application and all attachments must be received by the application deadline. You may submit your application at any time prior to the application deadline. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications prior to the deadline for staff review in order ensure that proposals will be complete when submitted on deadline date.** Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Please review the back of this form to determine project eligibility, definitions, budget criteria, and statutory requirements.

Project Name Governor's *LEGACY Soil Health and Habitat Program*

Name of Organization *ND Association of Soil Conservation Districts*

Federal Tax ID# 45-0277476

Contact Person/Title *Rhonda Kelsch, Executive Director, North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts*

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State ND

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Web Site Address (If applicable)

Phone 701-223-8518

List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal.
North Dakota Game and Fish Department

List of contributing partners:
North Dakota Petroleum Foundation
North Dakota Wildlife Federation

North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
Pheasants Forever
Ducks Unlimited

MAJOR Directive:

Choose only one response

☐ **Directive A.** Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

☒ **Directive B.** Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

☐ **Directive C.** Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

☐ **Directive D.** Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

Additional Directive:

Choose all that apply

☒ **Directive A.**

☐ **Directive B.**

☒ **Directive C.**

☐ **Directive D.**

Type of organization:

☐ State Agency

☐ Political Subdivision

☐ Tribal Entity

☒ Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

Abstract/Executive Summary.

Summarize the project, including its objectives, expected results, duration, total project costs and participants. (no more than 500 words)

The LEGACY Soil Health and Habitat Program is a pilot project designed to support North Dakota farmers in improving the long-term productivity and resilience of their cropland by establishing perennial grass cover. The program is open to all types of cropland and offers annual payments on five-year agreements to help farmers explore the benefits of perennial cover, including improved soil health, water retention, and wildlife habitat.

The LEGACY Soil Health and Habitat Program will focus on "Building a lasting legacy of healthy soils, thriving habitats, and resilient communities." Six important elements make up the LEGACY Program:

*Land Stewardship
Ecology & Energy
Growth & Governance
Agriculture & Access
Conservation & Collaboration
Yield & Your Future*

The total project cost is estimated at \$6,505,000 with funding provided by the Outdoor Heritage Fund and matching contributions. The pilot will cover approximately 10,000 acres. The total duration of the grant shall be six years. This will allow two years for establishing landowner agreements with grass establishment in 2026 or 2027.

Developed with input from conservation, agricultural, and energy partners, the program is designed to be simple, locally led, and producer friendly. Its vision is to create a soil health and habitat program supported by all the partners.

Key components include:

- A 5-year agreement for producers to establish and manage perennial grass.*
- Crop Insurance Premium Reduction, an incentive supported by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGFD) in coordination with USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA), which offers a discount to producers in exchange for implementing conservation practices.*
- Voluntary public access through the NDGFD's Private Land Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) program; an estimated 25% of participants expected to enroll for additional incentives. Additional NDGFD public access program options will also be offered.*
- Data collection to evaluate the impact and support the expansion of the program.*

Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) and partners will lead implementation efforts. They will coordinate with producers to accept applications, develop seed mixes and management plans, and verify installation of practices. SCDs will also collaborate with the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD) to issue annual payments and track participation. NDGFD will manage the Crop Insurance Premium Reduction by transferring funds to RMA to cover a portion of participating producers' premiums.

The objectives of are to:

- Establish 10,000 acres of perennial grass cover on cropland;*
- Improve wildlife habitat;*
- Reduce potential nonpoint source pollution; and*
- Increase adoption of conservation practices using financial incentives tied to crop insurance.*

This pilot will serve as proof of concept for a larger, scalable program that balances agricultural production with environmental outcomes with broad support from the conservation, agriculture, and energy sectors. A long-term goal is to develop sustainable funding to enroll 580,000 acres statewide (10% of estimated 5.8M acres of unproductive cropland in ND). The pilot program will develop criteria for ranking offers, so a process is developed if future legislative funding is provided. Potential considerations may include length of contract, public access, and priority areas for habitat development within the state.

Project Duration: *This is a two-year pilot project. During the first two years of the grant, 5-year agreements (with annual payments) will be established to ensure all funds are fully utilized by the end of the grant period. To accommodate the five years of annual payments, the grant will span a total of six years.*

Indicate the intended schedule for drawing down OHF funds.

*Estimated timeline *depending upon grant award date and signature*

2026 - 20%

2027 - 25%

2028 - 15%

2029 - 15%

2030 - 15%

2031 - 10%

Amount of Grant request: \$4,310,000

Total Project Costs: \$6,505,000

Note: in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds.

Amount of Matching Funds: \$2,195,000

A minimum of 25% Match Funding is required. Indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash. Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project. Note that effective as of March 1, 2015 no State General Fund dollars can be used for a match unless funding was legislatively appropriated for that purpose.

| Amount of Match | Funding Source | Type of Match (Cash, In-kind or Indirect) |
|-----------------|--|---|
| \$500,000 | NDGFD – Crop Insurance | Cash |
| \$300,000 | NDGFD/Partner - Access | Cash/Other project sponsor share |
| \$500,000 | Seed – Partners | Cash |
| \$500,000 | SCDs - Technical Assistance and Delivery | In kind |
| \$145,000 | Partners - Delivery | In kind |
| \$150,000 | Partners – Case study | Other project sponsor share |
| \$100,000 | NDGF/NDASCD – Marketing/Outreach | Cash |

Certifications

X I certify that this application has been made with the support of the governing body and chief executive of my organization.

X I certify that if awarded grant funding none of the funding will be used for any of the exemptions noted in the back of this application.

Narrative

Organization Information – Briefly summarize your organization’s history, mission, current programs and activities.

Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement. (no more than 300 words)

The North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD) supports the effective delivery of soil and water conservation practices across North Dakota. Established to serve and represent the state’s 54 Soil Conservation Districts, NDASCD provides membership services, technical support, and nursery products that help implement sound conservation practices on working lands. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 10 Area Directors, President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and is managed by an Executive Director. NDASCD also employs several Farm Bill Specialists who are stationed in USDA service centers throughout the state. These specialists assist producers with conservation planning and implementation of USDA conservation programs.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGFD) was created in 1930 with the mission to protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for sustained public consumptive and nonconsumptive use. The Department is led by a Director and Deputy Director and guided by an eight-member advisory board that facilitates public input. With approximately 170 full-time employees, NDGFD operates a variety of conservation and wildlife management programs. Through its Private Land Initiative (PLI), the Department works directly with private landowners to enhance habitat on working lands. While the Private Land Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) program is its most visible component, PLI also supports additional conservation programs, partnerships, and grant initiatives that extend beyond public access.

Together, NDASCD and NDGFD bring complementary strengths in conservation delivery, landowner engagement, and program administration.

Purpose of Grant – Describe the proposed project identifying how the project will meet the specific directive(s) of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program

Identify project goals, strategies and benefits and your timetable for implementation. Include information about the need for the project and whether there is urgency for funding. Indicate if this is a new project or if it is replacing funding that is no longer available to your organization. Identify any innovative features or processes of your project. Note: if your proposal provides funding to an individual, the names of the recipients must be reported to the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund. These names will be disclosed upon request.

For tree/shrub/grass plantings: provide a planting plan describing the site design, planting methods, number of trees/shrubs by species and stock size, grass species and future maintenance. A statement certifying that the applicant will adhere to USDA-NRCS tree/shrub/grass planting specifications along with the name of the governmental entity designing the planting may be substituted for a planting plan.

For projects including Section 319 funding: provide in detail the specific best management practices that will be implemented and the specific projects for which you are seeking funding.

For projects including fencing: A minimum cost share of 40% by the recipient is preferred. Include detailed information on the type of fencing to be installed, whether funding is requested for boundary fencing, new or replacement of existing fencing, and/or cross fencing.

The purpose of this grant is to implement an innovative, collaborative approach to conservation by integrating agricultural, conservation, and energy sector efforts. This new strategy centers on a crop insurance premium reduction incentive to encourage adoption of perennial grass cover. Delivered at the county level, this approach provides a practical, cost-effective tool to enhance soil health and wildlife habitat while reducing water runoff, wind erosion and nonpoint source pollution.

Nearly every farm operation in North Dakota uses crop insurance. By aligning conservation practices with the existing crop insurance framework, this project introduces a streamlined method to reach producers who may not engage with traditional cost-share programs. Participating producers will benefit from improved Actual Production History (APH), financial incentives, and lower future premiums.

Conservation benefits such as improved soil health and water quality will be realized with this program as well as important habitat for big game, upland game, waterfowl and other grassland dependent wildlife. The primary habitat benefits through this program will be the development of important nesting and brood rearing habitat for grassland birds and fawning habitat and escape cover for deer and other wildlife.

Landowners may not charge a fee for hunting access under this program. While public hunting access is not required, participants will have multiple opportunities to offer and manage access on their property through existing and emerging Department programs.

Landowners may choose to enroll their land in the Private Land Open To Sportsmen (PLOTS) program, which provides the standard \$10 per-acre payment plus an additional \$5 per-acre financial incentive from partners. Other voluntary access options are also encouraged, such as the Department's HuntLink app, which connects hunters and landowners seeking permission for specific hunting opportunities (e.g., coyotes, antlerless deer, or youth hunts). Landowners can designate their preferences and contact information through their NDGF account, and hunters can view these listings via the Department's online mapping application.

The Department is also developing new access opportunities, including customized electronic posting, which will begin in 2026 and allows landowners to specify posting dates rather than closing access for an entire season. Additional access models such as controlled

or reservation-based systems are also being evaluated. As these tools become available, they will be offered as flexible options to participating landowners.

Finally, the Department will promote the program to current PLOTS cooperators to enhance existing tracts with higher-quality habitat while maintaining hunting opportunities.

The pilot aims to install 10,000 acres of perennial grass cover over a five-year period. If successful, this model could be expanded statewide with legislative or partner support. With over 5.8 million acres in North Dakota impacted by salinity, sodicity, high pH, or flooding, the potential scale and impact of this project are significant. (Brennan, J., and M. Ulmer, 2010, Salinity in the Northern Great Plains, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bismarck, N.D.)

Research from the Center for Regenerative Agriculture (Meyers and Sherrick, 2023) shows that cover crops and reduced tillage can lower “prevent plant” (PPL) acres by 24% during wet springs. This reduction not only improves field productivity but also lowers federal crop insurance indemnities. A similar national study in 12 corn belt states shows counties with higher cover crop use tend to have lower prevented planting losses. Understanding the effect of cover crop use on prevented planting losses – “Understanding the effect of cover crop use on prevented planting losses” (Sunjae Won et al., 2023)

By focusing on perennial grasses, this project anticipates similar outcomes, reduced crop insurance payouts, lower producer premiums, and public savings. USDA Risk Management Agency data will be used to quantify these taxpayer benefits.

Additionally, this grant will support the formal implementation of public recommendations from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s Habitat and Hunting Access Summit, held in Bismarck on December 17, 2024. From this summit, two key recommendations emerged that directly relate to this project.

Recommendation: Develop a broad coalition of partners to propose a habitat program that provides incentives and rental payments to landowners for developing grassland and wetland habitat. These partnerships should include agricultural and energy entities, as well as conservation.

Recommendation: Focus habitat efforts on large blocks of remaining contiguous grassland tracts, addressing soil health on marginally productive cropland (salinity and pH issues) and providing incentives for wetland habitats.

This grant puts those recommendations into action, bridging stakeholder interests and creating a scalable model for conservation delivery in North Dakota.

Is this project part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, provide a copy with the application.

Note: Projects involving buildings and infrastructure will only be considered if part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Please refer to the “Definitions” section at the back of the form for more details.

Management of Project – Provide a description of how you will manage and oversee the project to ensure it is carried out on schedule and in a manner that best ensures its objectives will be met.

Include a brief background and work experience for those managing the project.

The North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts (NDASCD) will administer this project, working closely with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGFD) and other partners. NDASCD represents North Dakota’s 54 Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) and has extensive experience in supporting local districts through conservation program delivery, grant administration, and technical assistance.

NDASCD’s Executive Director brings years of leadership experience managing the state’s soil conservation programs, including overseeing Lincoln-Oakes Nursery and advocating for locally led conservation. NDGFD’s Private Lands Section Leader, with over 20 years of experience, manages the state’s Private Land Initiative, including the PLOTS program, and has led numerous state, federal, and private conservation efforts. He was instrumental in developing the Meadowlark Initiative, a statewide grassland restoration strategy.

Project Oversight and Delivery

NDASCD will handle day-to-day project administration, including grant reporting, reimbursement coordination, agreement management, and producer payments. NDASCD will coordinate with NDGFD to develop procedures for agreements, site visits and annual assessments. Local SCDs, alongside partners, will lead on-the-ground implementation, including accepting applications, developing seed mixes and management plans, site visits, and verifying completed practices. While multiple partners may work directly with producers, SCDs will maintain producer records and coordinate cost-share disbursements with NDASCD. The NDASCD will also be responsible for issuing tax documents to producers annually. Applications will be accepted year-round, with grass seedings occurring in spring or fall. Project acreage will be enrolled in the first two years to ensure full use of funds within the grant period. All agreements will adhere to standards outlined in the ND Game and Fish Department’s programmatic agreement with the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO).

Payment Structure

Producers will receive annual rental payments for seeded acres based on the Department of Trust Lands’ average rental rate for non-irrigated cropland in the county. A flat cost-share rate of \$100 per acre (\$50 for seeding, \$50 for seed) will simplify administration. These rates are consistent with USDA’s ND Handbook and reflect average planting costs.

Crop Insurance Premium Reduction

NDGFD will oversee the Crop Insurance Premium Reduction, providing funds to the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) through a Memorandum of Understanding. RMA will coordinate with Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) to apply reductions to eligible producers’ crop insurance bills the year following practice implementation. Producers will determine how to apply the premium reduction when purchasing insurance for spring-seeded

crops (typically in March). Some may apply the discount toward additional coverage; others may use it for forage or livestock insurance. The reduction amount will be based on the number of acres converted to perennial grasses.

Average Corn Insurance Costs in ND

- *Total cost: \$90/acre*
- *Federal subsidy: \$65/acre*
- *Producer pays: \$25/acre*

Example – 160-acre field with 20 acres in perennial grass (5 years)

- *Rental Payments: 20 ac × \$75/ac × 5 yrs = \$7,500*
- *One-Time Grass Seed/Establishment: 20 ac × \$100/ac = \$2,000*
- *Crop Insurance Discount: 20 ac × \$10/ac × 5 yrs = \$1,000*
- *Optional PLOTS Access Incentive:*
 - *20 ac grass × \$15/ac × 5 yrs = \$1,500*
 - *140 ac crop × \$1/ac × 5 yrs = \$700*
 - *Total Access Incentive: \$2,200*

Total Potential Benefit Over 5 Years: \$12,700

In the above example, 20 acres were seeded to perennial grasses, whole-field conservation will be encouraged on all remaining acres. Producers may implement additional practices, such as reduced tillage, nutrient management, and cover crops, on the remaining acres within the field. Other conservation programs offered by partner agencies will also be promoted to support broader stewardship goals. Haying and grazing on perennial grasses seeded will be conducted for only management purposes to rejuvenation of the grass stand. Control of noxious weeds is required; spot clipping or haying will be allowed to control annual weeds during establishment. At the end of the 5-year agreement, haying or grazing will be allowed to rejuvenate the stand. It is expected that haying will be more commonly used for management, however, grazing, specifically aftermath crop grazing, may be allowed in the management plans.

During the program's startup year, NDASCD and NDGFD will formally launch the program and provide information for key partners, certified crop advisors (CCAs), and crop insurance agents. This will ensure that all partners understand the program's objectives and can effectively promote and support its implementation. The project will also utilize the Trusted Advisor Partnership, which is made up of CCAs who work directly with producers and are well-positioned to encourage adoption of the program.

Partners and advisors were consulted during the development of this grant proposal to better understand what is needed for successful delivery. Their input has been incorporated into the design of this program to increase its effectiveness and producer participation.

Evaluation – Describe your plan to document progress and results.

Please be specific on the methods you will utilize to measure success. Note that regular reporting, final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

NDASCD and NDGFD will evaluate the success of the project using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Primary metrics will include:

- *Acres of perennial grasses successfully seeded (target: 10,000 acres)*
- *Number of producer agreements executed*
- *Level of producer interest and engagement, measured by inquiries and application volume*
- *Participant satisfaction, decision-making feedback, and economic impacts to landowners*
- *Soil and water data collection to evaluate the impact of perennial grasses on soil health and water quality*

Progress will be tracked continuously throughout the project using internal reporting systems managed by NDASCD in coordination with local Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs). SCDs and partners will be responsible for verifying the installation and maintenance of practices and will submit documentation to NDASCD. Seeded acres, management plans, and payment records will be centrally maintained to ensure transparency and accountability.

This project will evaluate the effectiveness of the new conservation program designed to provide common-sense, voluntary options for North Dakota landowners. This program seeks to bridge the gap between production agriculture and traditional conservation ethics by creating incentives and tools that make conservation practical, economically viable, and beneficial to soil health and wildlife habitat.

The proposed study will assess the human dimensions, economic outcomes, and soil health impacts of this pilot program. Results will help determine its potential as a replicable, cost-effective model for delivering conservation on working lands.

NDASCD will submit regular progress reports, a final evaluation report, and detailed expenditure reports in accordance with grant requirements. Adjustments to the program will be made as needed to ensure timelines, budget, and conservation goals are met.

Financial Information

Project Budget – Use the table below to provide an itemized list of project expenses and describe the matching funds being utilized for this project.

Indicate if the matching funds are in the form of cash, indirect costs or in-kind services. The budget should identify all other committed funding sources and the amount of funding from each source. **A minimum of 25% match funding is required.** An application will be scored higher the greater the amount of match funding provided. (See Scoring Form.)

Certain values have been identified for in-kind services as detailed under “Budget Information” at the back of this form. Refer to that section and utilize these values in identifying your matching funds. **NOTE: No indirect costs will be funded. Supporting documentation for project expenses, including bids, must be included or application will be considered incomplete.**

| Project Expense | OHF Request | Applicant's Match Share (Cash) | Applicant's Match Share (In-Kind) | Applicant's Match Share (Indirect) | Other Project Sponsor's Share | Total Each Project Expense |
|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Rental | \$3,750,000 | | | | | \$3,750,000 |
| Establishment | \$500,000 | | | | | \$500,000 |
| Seed (Partners) | | \$500,000 | | | | \$500,000 |
| Insurance Reduction (NDGF) | | \$500,000 | | | | \$500,000 |
| Access (NDGF) | | | | | \$225,000 | \$200,000 |
| Access (Partners) | | \$75,000 | | | | \$100,000 |
| Project Admin (NDASCD) | \$60,000 | | | | | \$60,000 |
| Delivery (Partners) | | | \$500,000 | | \$145,000 | \$645,000 |
| Case Study/Research (Partners) | | | | | \$150,000 | \$150,000 |
| Marketing/Outreach | | \$100,000 | | | \$ | \$100,000 |
| Total Costs | \$4,310,000 | \$1,175,000 | \$500,000 | \$ | \$520,000 | \$6,505,000 |

Note: Costs for seeding, fencing, pipelines, wells, and cover crops cannot exceed NRCS Field Office Tech Guide without justification. Projects involving perimeter fencing must follow NRCS eligibility standards.

Budget Narrative – Use the space below to provide additional detail regarding project expenses.

Rental - 5-year rental payments will be made on acres seeded to perennial grasses. Rates will be derived from Department of Trust Lands Rents and Prices Annual Survey for non-irrigated cropland in each county. Estimated \$75/acre X 10,000 acres: \$3,750,000.

Establishment - \$50 per acre for establishment from OHF. \$50 X 10,000 acres = \$500,000.

Seed - \$50 per acre for seed costs. \$50 per X 10,000 acres = \$500,000. Partners will provide seed costs.

Crop Insurance Premium Discount – This reduction will be based on the number of acres seeded back to perennial grasses. \$10/acre X 10,000 acres X 5 years: \$500,000. NDGF will provide discount.

Access Payments – Public access will be encouraged; it is estimated that 25 percent of producers will elect to enroll in PLOTS for additional financial incentives. NDGF access payments on acres seeded to perennial grasses are \$10/acre X 2,500 acres X 5 years, with an additional \$5/acre from partners totaling \$15/acre. Additional acreage (cropland, hayland, other grass, etc...) enrolled will also receive standard PLOTS payments. Estimated \$300,000.

Project Admin - Project Admin will consist of actual time spent by NDASCD. This grant proposal is requesting \$60,000 in OHF funds.

Partner Delivery – Other partners, including NGOs, will provide in kind for delivery of the project, including other practices for whole field conservation, in addition to acres seeded to

perennial grasses. Other practices such as reduced tillage and cover crops could be implemented on remaining acres. Soil Conservation Districts are providing \$500,000 of in-kind match for technical assistance and delivery, and partners will provide \$145,000 of in-kind match.

Case Study/Research – A study will be conducted on the project acres to investigate the benefits to human dimensions, economics, and soil health to provide documentation for proposed long-term funding. Estimated \$150,000.

Marketing/Outreach – NDASCD, NDGF and other partners will develop a broad and continuous marketing and outreach campaign, including, but not limited to social media, internet, magazine, radio, workshops and other events. Estimated \$100,000.

Sustainability – Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years.

Include information on the sustainability of this project after OHF funds have been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

This pilot project is designed as a proof of concept for a long-term, scalable program that can be sustained through the North Dakota Legislature or expansion of the Outdoor Heritage Fund. While initial implementation will be supported by OHF funds, the goal is to demonstrate measurable outcomes and broad support that justify continued investment from multiple sectors.

After OHF funds have been expended, the project may be sustained in several ways:

- State-level support: If successful, the project will be proposed for expansion and long-term funding through the North Dakota Legislature or expansion of the Outdoor Heritage Fund.*
- Partner contributions: Conservation, agricultural, and energy stakeholders have shown strong interest in collaborative conservation efforts. Future sustainability could include financial or in-kind support from these sectors.*
- Integration with existing programs: Practices piloted through this project could be embedded into ongoing programs such as the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Private Land Initiative, partner OHF programs, or USDA conservation efforts.*
- Producer adoption: By aligning with the existing crop insurance system, the project creates a practical, streamlined conservation model that producers may continue using, particularly if premium reductions or other incentives remain available.*

North Dakota has a long-standing heritage of conservation, agriculture, and energy. This project seeks to honor that legacy by creating a conservation delivery model that works across industries and benefits both the land and the people who rely on it. Through collaboration, proven outcomes, and adaptable funding strategies, this pilot sets the stage for a sustainable, statewide conservation program. This is an incredible opportunity for OHF to support a pilot program that has the potential to become one of the most impactful programs in North Dakota and to create a LEGACY for wildlife habitat and hunting access.

Partial Funding – Indicate how the project will be affected if less funding is available than that requested.

If full funding is not available, the project will be scaled accordingly. The most likely adjustment would be to reduce the number of acres enrolled, or to modify cost-share rates and incentive payments to reflect available resources. While a smaller-scale effort may limit overall reach, it would still provide valuable insights into producer interest, implementation challenges, and program effectiveness. Even with reduced funding, the pilot would remain a worthwhile investment, offering lessons that can inform future program design and potential expansion.

Partnership Recognition - If you are a successful recipient of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars, how would you recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund partnership? * There must be signage at the location of the project acknowledging OHF funding when appropriate.

If awarded Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) dollars, the project partners will implement a comprehensive outreach and education campaign that prominently recognizes OHF's support. All print materials, social media content, presentations, and web-based resources developed for the pilot project will include appropriate OHF branding and acknowledgment.

Where applicable, with a willing producer, signage may be placed on project sites to identify the location as part of the pilot and to highlight OHF's role in funding the effort. In addition, if a formal case study or report is produced to showcase the outcomes and scalability of the project, OHF will be clearly recognized as a primary funding partner.

This recognition will be ongoing throughout the life of the project to ensure continued visibility of OHF's contribution to conservation, agriculture, and habitat restoration efforts in North Dakota.

Awarding of Grants - Review the appropriate sample contract for your organization on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm>.

Can you meet all the provisions of the sample contract? X Yes No

If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be:

ABOUT OHF:

The purpose of the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund is to provide funding to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with higher priority given to projects that enhance **conservation** practices in this state by:

Directive A. Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

Directive B. Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Directive C. Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

Directive D. Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

EXEMPTIONS

Outdoor Heritage Fund grants may not be used to finance the following:

- Litigation;
- Lobbying activities;
- Any activity that would interfere, disrupt, or prevent activities associated with surface coal mining operations; sand, gravel, or scoria extraction activities; oil and gas operations; or other energy facility or infrastructure development;
- The acquisition of land or to encumber any land for a term longer than twenty years; or
- Projects outside this state or projects that are beyond the scope of defined activities that fulfill the purposes of Chapter 54-17.8 of the North Dakota Century Code.

OHF funds may not be used, except after a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission, to finance:

- A completed project or project commenced before the grant application is submitted;
- A feasibility or research study;
- Maintenance costs;
- A paving project for a road or parking lot;
- A swimming pool or aquatic park;
- Personal property that is not affixed to the land;
- Playground equipment, except that grant funds may be provided for up to 25% of the cost of the equipment not exceeding \$10,000 per project and all playground equipment grants may not exceed 5% of the total grants per year (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);
- Staffing or outside consultants except for costs for staffing or an outside consultant to design and implement an approved project based on the documented need of the applicant and the expenditures may not exceed 5% of the grant to a grantee if the grant exceeds \$250,000 and expenditures may not exceed 10% of the grant to a grantee if the grant is \$250,000 or less (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);
- A building except for a building that is included as part of a comprehensive conservation plan for a new or expanded recreational project (see Definitions/Clarifications for definition of comprehensive conservation plan and new or expanded recreational project); or
- A project in which the applicant is not directly involved in the execution and completion of the project.

The goal of the Industrial Commission is that at a minimum 15% of the funding received for a biennium will be given priority for recreation projects that meet Directive D.

The following projects are not eligible for funding, unless there is a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission include:

- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor ice rinks,
- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor athletic courts and sports fields,
- Other substantially similar facilities.
- Infrastructure that is not part of a comprehensive conservation plan.
- Projects not meeting a minimum funding request of \$2,500.

Budget Information

In-kind services used to match the request for Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars shall be valued as follows:

- Labor costs \$15.00 an hour
- Land costs Average rent costs for the county as shown in the most recent publication of the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Services, North Dakota Field Office
- Permanent Equipment Any equipment purchased must be listed separately with documentation showing actual cost. (For example: playground equipment)
- Equipment usage Actual documentation
- Seed & Seedlings Actual documentation
- Transportation Mileage at federal rate
- Supplies & materials Actual documentation

More categories will be added as we better understand the types of applications that will be submitted. We will use as our basis for these standards other State and Federal programs that have established rates. For example, the North Dakota Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program has established rates. If your project includes work that has an established rate under another State Program, please use those rates and note your source.

Definitions/Clarifications:

Building - Defined as "A structure with a roof either with walls or without walls and is attached to the ground in a permanent nature."

Comprehensive Conservation Plan - Defined as "A detailed plan that has been formally adopted by the governing board which includes goals and objectives--both short and long term, must show how this building will enhance the overall conservation goals of the project and the protection or preservation of wildlife and fish habitat or natural areas." This does not need to be a complex multi-page document. It could be included as a part of the application or be an attachment.

New and Expanded Recreational Project means that the proposed building cannot be a replacement of a current building. The proposed building must also be related to either a new or expanded recreational project--either an expansion in land or an expansion of an existing building or in the opportunities for recreation at the project site.

Playground equipment calculation - Only the actual costs of the playground equipment (a bid or invoice showing the amount of the equipment costs must be provided) - cannot include freight or installation or surface materials or removal of old equipment, etc.

Staffing/Outside Consultants Costs - If you are requesting OHF funding for staffing or for an outside consultant, you must provide information in your application on the need for OHF funding to cover these costs. For example, if you are an entity that has engineering staff you must explain why you don't have sufficient staff to do the work or if specific expertise is needed or whatever the reason is for your entity to retain an outside consultant. If it is a request for reimbursement for staff time then a written explanation is required in the application of why OHF funding is needed to pay for the costs of that staff member(s)' time. **The budget form must reflect on a separate line item the specific amount that is being requested for staffing and/or the hiring of an outside consultant.** This separate line item

will then be used to make the calculation of 5% or 10% as outlined in the law. Note that the calculation will be made on the grant less the costs for the consultant or staff.

Maintenance – Activities that preserve or keep infrastructure in a given existing condition, including repairs. Repair means to restore to sound condition after damage, to renew or refresh; except repairs due to damage caused by Acts of God.

Scoring of Grants

Oral Presentation. Please note that you will be given an opportunity to make a ten-minute Oral Presentation at a meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board. These presentations are strongly encouraged.

Open Record. Please note that your application and any attachments will be open records as defined by law and will be posted on the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund website.

All applications will be scored by the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board after your ten-minute oral presentation. The ranking form that will be used by the Board is available on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm>.

Awarding of Grants

All decisions on requests will be reported to applicants no later than 30 days after Industrial Commission consideration. The Commission can set a limit on duration of an offer on each application or if there isn't a specific date indicated in the application for implementation of the project, then the applicant has until the next Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board regular meeting to sign the contract and get the project underway or the commitment for funding will be terminated and the applicant may resubmit for funding. Applicants whose proposals have been approved will receive a contract outlining the terms and conditions of the grant.

Responsibility of Recipient

The recipient of any grant from the Industrial Commission must use the funds awarded for the specific purpose described in the grant application and in accordance with the contract. The recipient cannot use any of the funds for the purposes stated under Exemptions on the first page of this application.

If you have any questions about the application, the Commission can be reached at 701-328-3722 or ndicgrants@nd.gov.

Revised: November 4, 2019, April 12, 2023