

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FWS - International Conservation

### African Elephant Conservation Fund

Protecting and Conserving African Elephant Priority Populations

**Fiscal Year (FY): 2024**

F24AS00060

<https://www.fws.gov/service/african-elephant-conservation-grant-fund>

Due Date for Applications: **11/27/2023**

<https://www.fws.gov/service/protecting-and-conserving-african-elephant-priority-populations-funding-opportunity>

**\*\*Last updated 10/16/23\*\*** **New entries highlighted**

**\*\*Please refer back as the FAQs will be updated as additional questions are received.\*\***

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Please send any additional questions to: [mscf\\_africanelephant@fws.gov](mailto:mscf_africanelephant@fws.gov).

#### **What are the FY2024 NOFO priorities?**

- The NOFO aims to strengthen the long-term capacity for African forest and savanna elephant conservation across the continent's 37 elephant range states. Specifically, it prioritizes the following program objectives: (1) habitat protection for and conservation of African elephant priority populations, (2) improving conservation governance and human well-being in landscapes housing elephant priority populations, and (3) greater partner connectivity and conservation capacity in African elephant range states. Applicants may choose to include additional objectives or are welcome to use different terminology or framing to describe proposal goals and objectives that align with a project's existing strategic planning or local context. All proposed outcomes and activities, however, should collectively facilitate the delivery of meaningful results consistent with the African Elephant Conservation Fund Program goal and objectives, as stated in the NOFO.

#### **Can projects propose working on more than one of the stated NOFO objectives?**

- Yes, proposals can seek to address more than one of the three objectives described in the NOFO (section A3, starting page 3).

#### **Can the same eligible entity submit multiple proposals for different landscapes?**

- Yes, an eligible entity can submit multiple proposals to the FY2024 NOFO if they do not pose direct overlap or duplication of efforts. Different geographies would likely remove much of that potential for overlap or duplication of efforts; however, other areas where such overlap/duplication might occur, include any shared key personnel across projects that have

salary budgeted into multiple proposals. See NOFO section D2 (page 18) regarding "Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement".

### **What types of proposals are being solicited?**

- This funding opportunity solicits multi-year awards (the standard period of performance for projects is two to five years).
- Proposals can range from \$100,000 to \$250,000 USD/per year for each project.
- Anticipated support for African forest and savanna elephant population strongholds (see NOFO for definition) will be approximately \$5,500,000, with awards ranging from \$500,000 to \$1,250,000.
- Anticipated support for other priorities described in the NOFO occurring outside of elephant population strongholds will be approximately \$2,500,000, with awards ranging from \$200,000 to \$750,000.

### **Can a proposal apply for the “population stronghold” ceiling of \$1,250,000 but for a less than five-year period of performance, or is the annual payment limited to \$250,000?**

- The annual award ceiling is \$250,000 (see NOFO section B4, starting page 5). Therefore, a project proposing a period of performance of less than five years would need to adjust the total request accordingly. For example, if a “population stronghold” proposal was seeking three years of support, the maximum award request would be \$750,000.

### **What is the ideal funding/budget duration for a proposal?**

- The program cannot recommend how many years of funding a prospective applicant should apply for. However, section B4 (starting page 5) states that the standard period of performance for projects is two to five years. Applicants may submit budget tables for up to five years, and the Service reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted and will determine the resulting level of funding for the award. For example, a proposal might submit for five years of funding and the review panel recommends for award but only obligates two years of support up front, with the remaining years being contingent on performance and available program funding, or they may request the applicant revise the budget down to two years.

### **Can a project propose working on activities at a national scale, or do they need to be landscape (or site) specific interventions?**

- Yes, proposed work falling under any of the three stated NOFO objectives (section A3, starting page 3) can be at a national scale.

### **Does a project have to work across the entire “population stronghold” as described in the NOFO to be considered a “population stronghold” project, or can proposed activities occur in a select portion of a stronghold?**

- Proposed projects do not need to work across the entire extent of an identified population stronghold (i.e., the full extent of protected and conserved areas listed for a given stronghold) to be considered for funding support. Proposed work can occur within part of a given stronghold (e.g., a single protected area, OECM, corridor, dispersal area, etc.)

**Are projects that DO NOT meet the NOFO's stated definition of "population strongholds" ineligible for support?**

- No, sites that do not meet the "population stronghold" threshold, as defined in section A3 (page 4) of the NOFO, are still eligible for funding consideration. Section A3 of the NOFO highlights "priority populations" include population strongholds (for forest elephants, those >1,000 individuals and for savanna elephants, those >10,000 individuals) but also "ecologically or evolutionarily unique populations, or populations under immediate threat" (all categories are defined in the NOFO at the bottom of section A3, pages 4-5).
- Section B4 goes on to state "Anticipated support for the previously mentioned 14 African forest and savanna elephant strongholds will be approximately \$5,500,000, with awards ranging from \$500,000 to \$1,250,000. Anticipated support for other previously mentioned priorities occurring outside of elephant population strongholds will be approximately \$2,500,000, with awards ranging from \$200,000 to \$750,000."

**Who is eligible to apply?**

- Applicants may be multi-national secretariats, U.S. and foreign non-profits, non-governmental organizations, community and Indigenous organizations, and U.S. and foreign public and private institutions of higher education.

**Can eligible entities with active support (i.e., a recipient of an award from the African Elephant Conservation Fund with an active period of performance) apply for funding under the FY2024 NOFO?**

- An eligible entity with an active African Elephant Conservation Fund award is still eligible to submit a proposal under the FY2024 NOFO; however, any new proposal with activities directly linked to a current award need to clearly relay that there is no overlap or duplication of efforts between the current award and new proposal. For example, if proposing a continuation of current activities, the current award period of performance (PoP) end date should not overlap with the new proposal's PoP start date, or if a PoP overlap between awards is anticipated, the new proposal must clearly relay how the proposal activities build on and/or are distinct from the current active award's activities. See NOFO section D2 (page 18) regarding "Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement".

**Are range state government agencies eligible to apply?**

- For the FY2024 NOFO, range state government agencies (i.e., foreign national and local government agencies) are not eligible to submit as the primary applicant but are eligible to be key implementers of proposed activities with a dedicated portion of a proposed budget for project implementation through a sub-award arrangement with an approved entity (as described in section C1 (page 6) of the NOFO) as the primary applicant. See the subsequent question "Can multiple eligible entities submit a joint application and does that improve the chance of success?" for a detailed description of "contractual arrangements" within a proposal.

**Can multiple eligible entities submit a joint application and does that improve the chance of success?**

- A single proposal can involve multiple eligible entities, but there would be one award recipient. The other collaborating entities could be sub-recipients (or contracts) if receiving part of the award/implementing certain facets of project activities, or they could be listed under the “Stakeholder Coordination/Involvement” section of the project narrative. Section D2 of the NOFO (starting page 14) provides more details on contractual arrangements within a budget. Applicants are encouraged to refer to this section and the linked 2CFR200 regulations to determine the substance of specific relationships associated with a proposed project ([§ 200.331 of 2CFR200](#) is especially helpful to reference). [2CFR200](#) provides the following definitions:
  - **Subrecipient** means an entity, usually but not limited to non-Federal entities, that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a Federal award; but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such award. A subrecipient may also be a recipient of other Federal awards directly from a Federal awarding agency.
  - **Subaward** means an award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a beneficiary of a Federal program. A subaward may be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the pass-through entity considers a contract.
  - **Contract** means, for the purpose of Federal financial assistance, a legal instrument by which a recipient or subrecipient purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a Federal award. For additional information on subrecipient and contractor determinations, see § 200.331. See also the definition of subaward in this section.
  - **Contractor** means an entity that receives a contract as defined in this section.
- The number of organizations on an award does not impact the likelihood of receiving funding support. See subsequent question “what are the criteria for evaluating the proposal?” for a detailed description of proposal criteria evaluation (also described in section E1 (starting page 22) of the NOFO).

### **What are the criteria for evaluating the proposal?**

- Proposals will be evaluated and scored on how well each addresses program priorities and integrates requested elements. Higher scores will result from well-justified projects that address all requested proposal elements. The Service will consider the following *criteria* in evaluating proposals:
  - (1) **Likelihood of conservation impact** in support of the Service’s African Elephant Conservation Fund Program **goal** and **objectives** outlined in Section A of the NOFO, specifically: (a) To what degree the proposed project is likely to contribute to one or more of the following:
    - Habitat protection for and conservation of African elephant priority populations
    - Improving conservation governance and human well-being in landscapes housing elephant priority populations.

- Greater partner connectivity and conservation capacity in African elephant range states.

(b) Whether the objectives have incorporated **desired results**;

(2) **Capacity of the organization and its staff to implement the project**, including:

- Whether the proposal demonstrates the applicant's ability to implement the proposed activities effectively (e.g., activities are logistically feasible, resourced, and under the authority of the applicant);
- Whether the proposal is clear, concise, and complete;
- Whether the proposal provides sufficient detail regarding relevant qualifications and institutional policies of the applicant, including experience of key personnel;
- If applicable, whether the applicant has received a positive record of accomplishment with the Service based on previous grant support;
- The degree to which the project has authority over the project operations and staff;

(3) **Sufficient evidence of collaboration with or inclusion of key stakeholders**, including host country governments and impacted Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

- Whether the project demonstrates that it has considered, both positive and negative, impacts on stakeholders;
- Where relevant, whether the application references specific consultation, input, facilitation, or participatory activities with stakeholders;
- Whether the proposal have sufficient detail regarding coordination of project activities with similar, ongoing, or planned activities of other stakeholders.

**How much funding does USFWS have available in FY2024 and how many grants are expected to be awarded?**

- The anticipated funding available is \$8,000,000 USD. It is anticipated that approximately 15 multi-year grants will be awarded.

**When will the next NOFO be released, and will a similar amount of funding be expected?**

- As a biennial funding opportunity, the next African Elephant Conservation Fund Program NOFO is anticipated to be released in FY2026. The Service cannot guarantee the amount of funding available for forthcoming NOFOs, as it is based on future Congressional appropriations. Congressional appropriations for the African Elephant Conservation Fund for the past two fiscal years were ~\$4.4 million USD (FY2022) and ~\$4.6 million USD (FY2023).

**If a proposal receives funding under the FY2024 NOFO, is that entity eligible to submit for funding for another project with different activities under the forthcoming FY2026 NOFO?**

- Yes. Successful applicants for the FY2024 NOFO would be eligible for funding in FY2026 if there is no overlap or duplication of effort between the FY2024 project and the FY2026 proposal. See NOFO section D2 (page 18) regarding "Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement".

**Does the application of novel technology (e.g., environmental DNA (eDNA), uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS), etc.) that supports elephant conservation fit within the FY2024 NOFO priorities?**

- Depending on the scope of activities, the application of “novel” technology in support of elephant conservation would fit under the overarching goal of the African Elephant Conservation Fund Program, which seeks to “*ensure healthy African elephant populations in the wild, while improving pathways for human-elephant coexistence*”. Specifically, under the stated NOFO objectives, such efforts could fit under the following desired result for Objective 1 “*Habitat protection for and conservation of African elephant priority populations*”: “(4a) improved understanding of elephant distribution and abundance necessary to inform protection and management and (5a) development of innovative technologies that have the potential to improve elephant protection.”
- Regarding application of UAS, the NOFO, in section D2 (page 16), highlights prohibitions on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment (as per 2 CFR 200.216). The [Department of the Interior’s Unmanned Aircraft web](#) page provides a list of approved unmanned aircraft and related equipment and software, which prospective applicants are encouraged to review.

**How should confidential/sensitive information be handled in a proposal?**

- If specific data on elephant population size and locations is confidential due to security risks to the population, please provide only relevant information in the proposal that can be shared publicly. Sensitive or confidential data, clearly indicated as such, may be provided directly to the USFWS Program Officer separately if relevant or requested. In the proposal, please provide only relevant information that can be shared publicly.

**Are proposals required to include applicant cost share (i.e., matching or leveraged funds)?**

- Cost share is voluntary and not required and does not impact an applicant’s eligibility, nor is it part of the application review criteria.

**Will a grant application proposing work at a site where the African Elephant Conservation Fund Program has provided recent funding to a different organization be penalized?**

- Proposals will not be penalized for applying to conduct work at sites where the African Elephant Conservation Fund Program has provided recent support to organizations or individuals other than the applicant. Please see section E1 of the NOFO for full review criteria. The Program does encourage prospective applicants to explore where their work can complement, and where feasible, directly engage with active African Elephant Conservation Fund Program partners, in those cases of geographic overlap.

**How do I learn more about applying for the African Elephant Conservation Fund?**

- Please visit the NOFO webpage at <https://www.fws.gov/service/protecting-and-conserving-african-elephant-priority-populations-funding-opportunity> or email the program inbox at [mescf\\_africanelephant@fws.gov](mailto:mescf_africanelephant@fws.gov).

**How do I apply?**

- All applicants should apply through [GrantSolutions.gov](https://www.grantsolutions.gov) (search for funding opportunity number F24AS00060) or if unable, [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

- Applicants who are unable to submit applications through GrantSolutions.gov may seek a waiver and obtain Service approval to apply via direct email to the program inbox. If you wish to seek a waiver, you must submit supporting documentation to demonstrate the issues you are experiencing. Documentation may include computer screenshots showing error messages or email communication with the GrantSolutions Help Desk attempting to resolve the issue. The request must be submitted at least **three** days before the submission deadline. Please send your waiver request to [DIC GRANTS@fws.gov](mailto:DIC_GRANTS@fws.gov). Individual applicants who have received a waiver can send the application package via email to the following address: [mescf\\_africanelephant@fws.gov](mailto:mescf_africanelephant@fws.gov).