

**FY 2019 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF)
Traditional Conservation Grants Program
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: F19AS00134

Federal Program: Department of the Interior, United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services & Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 15.615 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund

Authorizing Legislation: Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C. 1535, as amended (ESA); 50 CFR 81.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: We are collecting this information in accordance with the authorizing legislation identified above. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to select projects for funding and to evaluate performance. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. We estimate that it will take you on average about 40 hours to complete an initial application, about 3 hours to revise the terms of an award, and about 8 hours per report to prepare and submit financial and performance reports, including time to maintain records and gather information. Actual time for these activities will vary depending on program-specific requirements. You may send comments on the burden estimate or any other aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

OMB Control Number: 1018-0100 (Expiration Date: 7/31/2021)

I. Program Description

More than half of all species listed as endangered or threatened spend at least part of their life cycle on non-federal lands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) recognizes that success in conserving species requires working cooperatively with local communities to foster voluntary stewardship efforts on non-federal lands. States and Territories (hereafter, "States") play a key role in catalyzing these efforts. Tools are available under the ESA to help States and landowners plan and implement projects to conserve species.

Section 6 of the ESA authorizes the Secretary of Interior (Secretary) to enter into cooperative agreements with States that establish and maintain an "adequate and active" program for the conservation of threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are resident in the States. A cooperative agreement sets forth the roles and responsibilities of the State and the Service in the management of threatened and endangered species. Once a State enters into such an agreement, the Service is authorized to provide Federal financial assistance for the implementation of a State's conservation program, through the Traditional Conservation Grant Program.

Financial assistance, provided in the form of Traditional Conservation Grants, can be used to support projects that have direct conservation benefits for federally listed species, candidate and at-risk species, and recently delisted species. States may apply for funding to conduct work on federally listed resident species that are included in the State's cooperative agreement. States may also apply for funding to monitor candidate, at-risk species and recently delisted species. Candidate Species are those that the Service determined warrant listing as a threatened or endangered species, but the listing is precluded by

other higher priority actions. For the purposes of this Notice of Funding Opportunity, we are including certain “at-risk” species in addition to Candidate Species: 1) those species that are the subject of a positive 90-day finding but not yet the subject of a proposed rule, 2) species that are the subject of a proposed listing rule but not a final rule or 3) species for which the Service has initiated an ESA status review and has announced the review in the Federal Register. Further, recently de-listed, for purposes of this solicitation, are those species de-listed within the past five years. Only species delisted due to recovery may receive funding under this solicitation. A list of all de-listed species and the year delisted is available at the Service’s [ECOS Delisted Species page](#).

Projects proposed for funding may involve management, research, monitoring, and outreach activities or any combination thereof. Proposals should include clear and specific information about how the proposed work would contribute to species recovery or prevent the need to list a species under the ESA. Successful applications will be those that demonstrate a direct conservation benefit to the species or its habitat.

Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Introduction of species into suitable habitats within their historic range
- Enhancement or restoration of habitat
- Surveys and inventories of habitats
- Species status surveys
- Propagation of animals and plants
- Research such as genetic analysis to determine genetic health and population structure
- Public education and outreach tools such as website development or coordination workshops with local landowners to address a specific threat to a species
- Monitoring of candidate, at-risk and recently recovered species

General Program Funding Priorities

The general program funding priorities for Traditional Conservation Grants address the listing status of the species; and implementation of tasks identified in a final or draft recovery plan, recovery outline, or similar conservation or management strategy.

In addition, our highest priority is given to projects designed to have a direct impact on the recovery of listed species, prevent extinction of a listed species or prevent the need to list a species. Proposals to monitor candidate, at-risk, and recently delisted species may be addressed even though no recovery plan exists. Proposals, that involve only research, must provide information that can be directly used to prevent listing, recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a species. Proposals involving only public education and outreach activities must demonstrate a high probability of improving or increasing public understanding of and participation in conservation activities.

Department of Interior Priorities

In addition, the Traditional Conservation Grants Program, as currently executed, supports the following Department of Interior priorities for Federal financial assistance.

Restoring trust with local communities:

- Be a better neighbor with those closest to our resources by improving dialogue and relationships with persons and entities bordering our lands;
- Expand the lines of communication with Governors, state natural resource offices, Fish and Wildlife Service offices, water authorities, county commissioners, Tribes, and local communities.

Striking a regulatory balance:

- Ensure that Endangered Species Act decisions are based on strong science and thorough analysis.

The Traditional Conservation Grants Program meets the Department's priorities by recognizing that, in the exercise of their general governmental powers, States possess broad trustee and police powers over fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats within their borders. Unless preempted by Federal authority, States possess primary authority and responsibility for protection and management of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. The Section 6 cooperative agreements between the States and Service reflect a common commitment to advance the purpose and policies of the ESA, including providing a means to foster relationships with public and private partners, reduce conflicts between listed species and economic development activities, and promote long-term conservation of listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend. The grants authorized through Section 6 encourage the cooperative implementation of the ESA by leveraging Federal investment in species recovery and demonstrate the Service's commitment to cooperative conservation at the local level. Through these grants, the Service works collaboratively with State governments to manage and conserve listed species and their habitats in a manner that respects State management authority over wildlife resources.

Further, State agencies often possess scientific data and valuable expertise on the status and distribution of listed, candidate, at-risk, and recently delisted species. State agencies, because of their authorities and their close working relationships with local governments and landowners, are in a unique position to assist the Service in implementing all aspects of the ESA. Activities funded through Traditional Conservation Grants such as species status surveys, captive propagation and reintroduction, and genetic studies provide the States and Service with the best available science to determine best management practices for species, guide future conservation efforts, and make informed decisions on ESA listing and delisting actions. The activities funded through these grants ensure that ESA decisions are based on strong science and thorough analysis. Activities funded through these grants can also contribute to the recovery of species, resulting in down or delisting, and thus contributing further to the priority of striking a regulatory balance.

II. Federal Award Information

Federal financial assistance, provided in the form of Traditional Conservation Grants, can be used to support the implementation of State programs to conserve and recover threatened and endangered species under Service jurisdiction that reside within the State. Grants can also be used to support monitoring of candidate, at-risk, and recently delisted species.

Proposals may address new or ongoing species conservation work. Projects supporting ongoing work in which the scope, objectives, and expected outcomes remain consistent over time are considered continuation projects. Proposals for continuation projects must include a brief discussion of accomplishments to date and a justification for the continuation in the Project Narrative (See Section IV Application Requirement B).

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019, included \$12,508,000 dedicated to Traditional Conservation Grants. The Service estimates 250 grants maybe funded should the average grant amount remain consistent with previous fiscal years.

Per Section 6(d) of the ESA, the allocation of Traditional Conservation Grant funds are made based on the considerations of:

- (a) The international commitments of the United States to protect endangered or threatened species;

- (b) The readiness of a State to proceed with a conservation program consistent with the objectives and purposes of the Act;
- (c) The number of endangered and threatened species within a State;
- (d) The potential for restoring endangered and threatened species within a State; and
- (e) The relative urgency to initiate a program to restore and protect an endangered or threatened species in terms of survival of the species.

Funding is allocated by formula to the Service Regions based on the number of listed species covered by the Section 6 cooperative agreements with the States within that Region. Regional offices then further allocate the funding to the States within that Region by formula, a competitive process, or a combination of both, see below.

Allocation Methodology for Region 1: Available funds are allocated to States and Territories within Region 1 based on a formula. Projects compete at the State level. Percent of funding by State or Territory: Hawaii 50%, CNMI 10%, Guam 10%, Idaho 10%, Oregon 10%, Washington 10%.

Allocation Methodology for Region 2: Available funds are allocated to States based on the number of listed species in that State divided by the total number of listed species in the Region. Projects compete at the State level.

Allocation Methodology for Region 3: Available funds are allocated to States based on the number of species covered by their respective cooperative agreement divided by the total number of species covered by cooperative agreements in the Region. Projects compete at the State level.

Allocation Methodology for Region 4: Available funds are allocated to States based on the number of species covered by their respective cooperative agreement divided by the total number of species covered by cooperative agreements in the Region. Projects compete at the State level.

Allocation Methodology for Region 5: Available funds are allocated to States based on the number of species covered by their respective cooperative agreement/ total number of species covered by cooperative agreements in the Region. However, no State will be given a target of less than 5% or more than 20% of the total available funding. Targets will be further divided proportionally by plant and animal for each State. When different agencies have jurisdiction over plants and animals this breakdown will be applied in deciding awards; however, if a State agency with authority for both plants and animals requests only funds for one group (i.e., plants or animals), the State's full amount will be distributed to that group. Similarly, if only one agency in a State applies for funding, that agency will be awarded the full target amount for the State. Projects compete at the State level. However, any funds remaining after application of the target formula and any recovered funds are awarded based on competition at the regional level.

Allocation methodology for Region 6: Funds are awarded competitively within the Region with the intention of fully funding each State's top priority proposal.

Allocation methodology for Region 7: Projects compete at the State level as there is only one State in Region 7.

Allocation methodology for Region 8: Available funds are allocated to States based on the number of species covered by their respective cooperative agreement divided by the total number of species covered by cooperative agreements in the Region. Projects compete at the State level. If only one agency in a State applies for funding, that agency will be awarded the full target amount for the State.

Awards for the fiscal year 2019 CESCO Traditional Conservation Grants will be announced by the Regional Offices through direct notification of the applicant. The Service's goal is to obligate CESCO funds to States within 120 days of the award announcement. States will assist the Service in meeting the 120-day target by providing the documents necessary for grant issuance as soon as possible following the grant award announcements.

Awarded grant funds must be expended in a timely manner or returned to the Service for reallocation through the next grant award cycle. Service policy is to allow for up to three years from the date of award announcement. If an approved grant award will not be completed within the grant award period, the State Director or Commissioner may request an extension from the Regional Director. Any awarded grant project that will not be completed, and from which funds are deobligated, may be eligible for funding in future competitions. These projects will not be provided any preferential treatment and will be assessed along with all other proposals submitted in response to the current solicitation based solely on the merits of the project.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Participation in the CESCO grant programs is only available to States with a current Section 6 cooperative agreement with the Secretary of the Interior. The Service requires a complete, signed cooperative agreement before it can obligate Federal funds to a project [50 CFR 81.3, 50 CFR 81.5, 43 CFR 12.50(b)(3)]. While funding can only be granted to States, individuals or groups (for example counties or conservation organizations) may work with a State agency that has a cooperative agreement on conservation efforts that are mutually beneficial, as a subgrantee.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

A proposal must include a minimum 25 percent non-Federal cost share. The cost share may be cash or an in-kind contribution, such as volunteer efforts and donations of goods or services. This cost share requirement decreases to 10 percent when two or more States having a common interest in one or more species, the conservation of which may be enhanced by cooperation of such States, enter jointly into a project [50 CFR 81.8(a)]. The Insular Areas of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands are exempt from grant matching requirements up to \$200,000 under all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grant Programs (based on a May 9, 2003, Director's Memorandum).

The cooperating States may designate a lead State to coordinate with the Region. To seek an increased rate of Federal participation for a cooperative project within a grant, cooperating States must provide documentation that meets the needs of the cooperating States and must contain the responsibilities and work to be carried out by EACH of the cooperating States.

Documentation may be in any form (e.g., memorandum, letter of agreement, recovery plan, implementation program). Examples include:

- (1) Either (a) one State submits an Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and a letter of agreement from another State sharing cooperative efforts, or (b) each State identifies the joint recovery action from the recovery plan in existing Applications for Federal Assistance (SF 424).
- (2) Each cooperating State submits a proposal for the joint project and separate Applications for Federal Assistance (SF 424).
- (3) When one or more States are participating in a recovery implementation program, one or more may submit separate Application(s) for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and certification that they are

participating in the recovery implementation program, such as "The Colorado River Recovery Implementation Program."

Each cooperating State is responsible for submitting performance and financial reports related to the joint project, when they are actively participating in Federal reimbursement funding. Incomplete work by any one of the cooperating States may result in a recovery of Federal funds from all States, if it is determined that the joint cooperative objective will not be accomplished.

C. Other Eligibility Criteria

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Registration: This requirement does not apply to individuals applying for funds as a private citizen (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization you may own or operate in your name) or any entity with an exception approved by the Service under 2 CFR 25.110(d). All other applicants are required to obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet and then register in SAM.gov prior to submitting a Federal award application. Federal award recipients must continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information through the life of their Federal award(s). See the "Submission Requirements" section of this document below for more information on SAM.gov registration. The Service may not make a Federal award to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the Service is ready to make an award, the program may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. The program can use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Prohibition on Issuing Awards to Entities that Require Certain Internal Confidentiality

Agreements: Domestic (U.S.) non-Federal entities requiring their employees or contractors to sign internal confidentiality agreements or statements that prohibit, or otherwise restrict, such employees or contractors from lawfully reporting waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information are not eligible to compete for or receive a Federal award. See Pub. L. 113-235, Title VII, Division E, Section 743 for more information.

Excluded Parties: The Service conducts a review of the SAM.gov Exclusions database for all applicant entities and their key project personnel prior to award. The Service cannot award funds to entities or their key project personnel identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or otherwise excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits, as their ineligibility condition applies to this Federal program.

IV. Application Requirements

A. Requesting Paper Application Package

Applicants can request paper application packages through the appropriate Regional Coordinator listed below in Section VIII. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts.

B. Application Form and Content Requirements

Applicants must submit the following:

1. SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance

Applicants must submit the appropriate Standard Form (SF)-424, Application for Federal Assistance. Individuals applying as a private citizen (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization you may own or operate in your name), must complete the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance-Individual form. All other applicants must complete the standard SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. All of the required application forms are available on the

“Packages” tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. The SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance must be complete, and signed and dated. Please note: Enter only the amount requested from this Federal program in the “Federal” funding box on the SF-424 Application form. Include any other Federal sources of funding in the “Other” box, and provide details on those Federal source(s) and funding amount(s) in the required Budget Narrative (see the “Budget Narrative” section below).

2. SF 424, Assurances

Applicants must submit the appropriate signed and dated Assurances form. Complete either the SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs or the SF-424D, Assurances for Construction Programs, as applicable to your project. All of the required application forms are available on the “Packages” tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. The SF-424 Assurances forms include a statement that some of the assurances may not be applicable to your organization and/or your project or program. Signing the required SF-424 Assurances form does not make you or your organization subject to laws that are otherwise not applicable to you or your organization. Changing, crossing out, or making notations on the form before signing has no impact on the applicability of law.

3. Project Narrative

1. **Statement of Need:** Describe why this project is being undertaken and how it advances program priorities.
2. **Project Goals and Objectives:** What is to be accomplished during the period of the project pursuant to the stated need? Specify fully what is to be accomplished within the time (including timetable), money, and staffing allocated and specify end point.
3. **Expected Results or Benefits:** Proposals should include clear and specific information about how the work being proposed would contribute to species conservation or benefit the public. Try to provide quantifiable or verifiable resource benefits.
4. **Approach:** How will the objective be attained? Include specific project procedures and activities and describe how they relate to the stated objectives.
5. **Description of Entities Undertaking the Project:** Provide a brief description of the applicant organization and all participating entities and/or individuals. Identify which of the proposed activities each agency, organization, group, or individual is responsible for conducting or managing. Provide complete contact information for the individual within the organization that will oversee/manage the project activities on a day-to-day basis.
6. **Location:** Where will the work be done? Describe habitat type(s) to be affected and relevant ecosystem/watershed characterization.

4. SF-424, Budget Information

Applicants must submit the appropriate SF-424 Budget Information form. Complete either the SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs or the SF-424C, Budget Information for Construction Programs, as applicable to your project. All of the required application forms are available on the “Packages” tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. Federal award recipients and subrecipients are subject to Federal award cost principles as detailed in the Service’s “Financial Assistance Award Terms and Conditions”. Please note: Show funds requested from this Federal program separately from any other Federal sources of funding. In the

“Budget Summary” section, use the first row for funding requested from this Federal program. Use subsequent row(s) for other Federal funding. Enter each Federal program’s CFDA number(s) in the corresponding fields on the form. The CFDA number(s) for this Federal program appears on the first page of this Funding Opportunity.

5. Budget Narrative

Describe and justify requested budget items and costs. Detail how the SF-424 Budget Information, Object Class Category totals were determined. For personnel salary costs, include the baseline salary figures and the estimates of time. Describe any item of cost that requires prior approval under the Federal cost principles. See 2 CFR 200.407 “Prior written approval (prior approval)” for more information. If equipment purchased previously with Federal funds is available for the project, provide a list of that equipment and identify the Federal funding source.

6. Indirect Costs: Individuals

Individuals applying for and receiving funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget and skip the next section.

7. Indirect Costs: Organizations

The Federal awarding agency that provides the largest amount of direct funding to your organization is your cognizant agency for indirect costs, unless otherwise assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). If the Department of the Interior is your organization’s cognizant agency, the Interior Business Center will negotiate your indirect cost rate. Contact the Interior Business Center by phone 916-930-3803 or using the IBC Email Submission Form. See the IBC Website for more information.

Organizations must have an active Federal award before they can submit an indirect cost rate proposal to their cognizant agency. Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award. Recipients must have prior written approval from the Service to use amounts budgeted for direct costs to satisfy cost-share or match requirements or to cover unallowable indirect costs. Recipients shall not shift unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

Required Indirect Cost Statement

All organizations must include the applicable statement from the following list in their application to the Service, and attach to their application any documentation identified in the applicable statement:

We are:

- A U.S. state or local government entity receiving more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding each year with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We submit our indirect cost rate proposals to our cognizant agency. Attached is a copy of our most recently approved rate agreement/certification.
- A U.S. state or local government entity receiving less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We have prepared and will retain for audit an indirect cost rate proposal and related documentation.
- A [insert your organization type; U.S. states and local governments, please use one of the statements above or below] that has previously negotiated or currently has an approved

indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. [Insert either: “Attached is a copy of our most recently approved but expired rate agreement. In the event an award is made, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award is made.” or “Attached is a copy of our current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.”]

- A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. If we receive an award, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award date.
- A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency and has an indirect cost rate that is lower than 10%. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate; must be lower than 10%]. However, if we receive an award we will not be able to meet the requirement to submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after award. We request as a condition of award to charge a flat indirect cost rate of [insert rate; must be lower than 10%] against [insert a clear description of the direct cost base against which your rate is charged (e.g., salaries; salaries and fringe benefits; or modified total direct costs)]. However, please note that your organization cannot charge indirect costs in excess of the indirect costs that would be recovered if applied against modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. We understand that we must notify the Service in writing if we establish an approved rate with our cognizant agency at any point during the award period.
- A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency and has an indirect cost rate that is 10% or higher. Our indirect cost rate is [insert your organization’s indirect rate; must be 10% or higher]. However, if we receive an award we will not be able to meet the requirement to submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after award. We request as a condition of award to charge a flat *de minimis* indirect cost rate of 10% to be charged against modified total direct project costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. We understand that we must notify the Service in writing if we establish a negotiated rate with our cognizant agency at any point during the award period. We understand that additional Federal funds may not be available to support an unexpected increase in indirect costs during the project period and that such changes are subject to review, negotiation, and prior approval by the Service.
- A [insert your organization type] that is submitting this proposal for consideration under the [insert either “Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program” or “Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Network”], which has a Department of the Interior-approved indirect cost rate cap of [insert program rate]. If we have an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that we must apply this reduced rate against the same direct cost base as identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement. If we do not have an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that we must charge indirect costs against the modified total direct cost base defined in 2 CFR 200.68 “Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC)”. We understand that we must request prior approval from the Service to use the 2 CFR 200 MTDC base instead of the base identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement. We understand that Service approval of such a request will be based on: 1) a determination that our approved base is only a subset of the MTDC (such as salaries and wages); and 2) that use of the MTDC base will still result in a reduction of the total indirect costs to be charged to the award. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.405, we

understand that indirect costs not recovered due to a voluntary reduction to our federally negotiated rate are not allowable for recovery via any other means.

- A [insert your organization type] that will charge all costs directly.

8. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Applicants must state in their application if any actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of submission. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter that might place the recipient, including their employees and subrecipients, in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest include direct or indirect financial interests; close personal relationships; positions of trust in outside organizations; consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization; and decision-making authority related to the proposed project. Conflicts of interest are those circumstances real or perceived that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the applicant, or the applicant's employees or subrecipients, in matters pertaining to the proposed project. Applicants must notify the Service in writing in their application if any employees, including subrecipient and contractor personnel, are related to, married to, or have a close personal relationship with any Federal employee in the Federal program receiving this application or who otherwise may be involved in the review and selection of their proposal. The term employee means any individual to be engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the Federal award application. Failure to disclose and resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in the rejection or disqualification of the application.

9. Single Audit Reporting Statement

All U.S. states, local governments, federally recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in the applicant's fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System. U.S. state, local government, federally recognized Indian tribal government, and non-profit applicants must state if your organization was or was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year. If your organization was required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year, provide the EIN associated with that report and state if it is available through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse website.

10. Certification Regarding Lobbying

Applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funding must certify to the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If this application requests more than \$100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Official's signature on the appropriate SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance form also represents the entity's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A.

11. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

Applicants and recipients must not use any federally appropriated funds (annually appropriated or continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a Federal award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any U.S. agency, a Member of the U.S. Congress, an officer or employee of the U.S. Congress, or an employee of a Member of the U.S. Congress connection with the award. Applicants and recipients must complete and submit the SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities if the Federal share of the proposal or award is more than \$100,000 and the applicant or recipient has made or has agreed to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying

in connection with the application or award. The SF-LLL form is available on the “Packages” tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. See 43 CFR, Subpart 18.100 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

12. Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

Applicants must provide a statement indicating if there is any overlap between this Federal application and any other Federal application, or funded project, in regards to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel. If no such overlap or duplication exists, state, “*There are no overlaps or duplication between this application and any of our other Federal applications or funded projects, including in regards to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel*”. If any such overlap exists, provide a complete description of overlaps or duplications between this proposal and any other federally funded project or application in regards to activities, costs, and time commitment of key personnel, as applicable. Provide a copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity and identify when that proposal was submitted, to whom (entity name and program), and when you anticipate being notified of their funding decision. When overlap exists, your statement must end with “*We understand that if at any time we receive funding from another source that is duplicative of the funding we are requesting from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in this application, we will immediately notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service point of contact identified in this Funding Opportunity in writing.*”

13. APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance or Application for Federal Assistance-Individual**
- SF-424B or D, Assurances**
- Project Narrative**
- SF-424A or C, Budget Information**
- Budget Narrative**
- Indirect Cost Statement and related documentation (when applicable)**
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure (when applicable)**
- Single Audit Reporting Statement (when applicable)**
- SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (when applicable)**
- Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement**

Failure to provide complete information may cause delays, postponement, or rejection of the application.

V. Submission Requirements

A. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Registration

These requirements do not apply to any individual applying for funds as a private citizen or any entity with an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d). All other applicants are required to obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet and provide that number in the application; complete SAM.gov registration before submitting an application; and continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information at all times when the entity has an active Federal award or application under consideration. **There is NO COST to register with Dun & Bradstreet or SAM.gov.** There are

third-party vendors who will charge a fee in exchange for registering entities with Dun & Bradstreet and SAM.gov; **please be aware you can register and request help for free.**

1. Obtain a DUNS Number

Request a DUNS Number through the Dun & Bradstreet website. The official website address is <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. For technical difficulties, send an email to the D&B SAM Help Desk. Please ensure that you are able to receive emails from SAMHelp@dnb.com. The Grants.gov “Obtain a DUNS Number” webpage also provides detailed instructions. Once assigned a DUNS number, your organization must maintain up-to-date information with Dun & Bradstreet. Applicants must enter their DUNS number in the “Organizational DUNS” field on the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance form.

2. Register with SAM

Register on the SAM.gov website. The official website address is <http://www.sam.gov>. The “Help” tab on the website contains User Guides and other information to assist you with registration. The Grants.gov Register with SAM” webpage also provides detailed instructions. You can also contact the supporting Federal Service Desk for help registering in SAM. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least once every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly encouraged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure their information is up to date and reflects changes that may have been to the entity’s DUNS or IRS information. Foreign entities who want to receive payment directly to a U.S. bank account must enter and maintain valid, current banking information in SAM.

B. Submission Dates and Times

Grant project proposals submitted by hardcopy must be received by the appropriate Regional Program Coordinator listed in Section VIII within 60-days of the opening of this announcement by 5:00 pm in that time zone. To confirm the receipt of your proposal, you must contact the Regional Program Coordinator listed in Section VIII. Applications submitted after the deadline may not be considered.

C. Intergovernmental Review

Prior to application submission, U.S. state and local government applicants should visit the OMB Office of Federal Financial Management website and view the “State Point of Contact (SPOC) List” to determine whether their application is subject to the state intergovernmental review process under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372 “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” States not on the list do not participate in the intergovernmental review process, and therefore do not have a SPOC. If you are located within a State that does not have a SPOC, you may send application materials directly to a Federal awarding agency. If your state is on the list, contact the designated entity for more information on the state’s prior review requirements for Federal assistance applications.

D. Funding Restrictions

Proposals involving ongoing projects with open CESCO grants will not be accepted unless a detailed description of how the existing funds will be spent and how the projects differ.

E. Submission Instructions

Download the Application Package linked to this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov to begin the application process. Downloading and saving the Application Package to your computer makes the required government-wide standard forms fillable and printable. Completed applications may be submitted by mail, by email, electronically through Grants.gov, or as otherwise described in the Grants.gov funding opportunity. Please select ONE of the submission options:

To submit an application by e-mail: (preferred submission option)

Format all of your documents to print on Letter size (8 ½” x 11”) paper. Format all pages to display and print page numbers. Scanned documents should be scanned in Letter format, as black and white images only. Where possible, save scanned documents in .pdf format. E-mail your application to the Service program point of contact identified in Section VIII. Agency Contacts below.

The required SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance and Assurances forms and any other required standard forms MUST be signed by your organization’s authorized official. The Signature and Date fields on the standard forms downloaded from Grants.gov are pre-populated with the text “Completed by Grants.gov upon submission” or “Completed on submission to Grants.gov.” Remove this text (manually or digitally) before signing the forms.

To submit an application by mail:

Number all pages of your printed application. Mail one, single-sided, unbound copy (do not staple or otherwise permanently bind pages) of your complete application to the Service program point of contact identified in the Grants.gov funding opportunity.

This program encourages applicants to submit their applications online through Grants.gov. Follow these steps to apply through Grants.gov.

1. Register with Grants.gov

Applicants must first register an account with Grants.gov and complete all steps of the registration process before they can apply through Grants.gov. Grants.gov registration requires the entity to create an account, create an account profile, and establish authorized profile roles, including the applicant’s authorized representative. Registration can take three to five business days or longer, if you do not complete the required steps in a timely manner.

2. Grants.gov Workspace Application

Grants.gov applicants apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, you can create individual instances of a workspace. To apply, the applicant will create, complete, and submit a Workspace application package for this Funding Opportunity directly on Grants.gov. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to allow time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission. When attaching files to the Grants.gov application, please do not assign file names longer than 20 characters, including spaces. File names longer than 20 characters will prevent your application received by Grants.gov from automatically downloading into the Service’s financial assistance management system. Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that the transmission of the application to Grants.gov takes time. Grants.gov sends either an error message or a “successfully received” message by email to the applicant’s authorized representative once the transmission is complete. Please do not end the transmission process before receiving that message.

3. Proof of Timely Submission

Grants.gov automatically generates an electronic date and time stamp in the system upon application receipt. Grants.gov sends an acknowledgement of receipt with the date and time stamp and a unique Grants.gov application tracking number to the authorized representative by email. This email from Grants.gov serves as your proof of timely submission.

VI. Application Review Information

To be considered for funding, applications must seek funding to conduct work on federally listed resident species currently included in the State's cooperative agreement with the Secretary of the Interior. States may also apply for funding to conduct work on any species that has become a candidate or at-risk species by the grant application deadline or has been delisted due to recovery within the last five years.

A. Criteria

1. Species Listing Status and Implementation of High Priority Recovery Tasks: Up to 30 points

- a. The listing status of the species. Federally listed species will be prioritized. Proposals to monitor candidate, at-risk and recently delisted species will be a lower priority for consideration. Scoring = 5-15 points, where, for example, 5=recently delisted species, 10= candidate or at-risk species, 15= threatened species, 20= endangered species.
- b. Whether or not the proposal will accomplish tasks identified in a final or draft Recovery Plan, Recovery Outline, or similar conservation strategy or management plan. Proposals addressing listed species for which the Service has released a draft or final Recovery Plan should indicate how the project would address one or more of the recovery objectives or actions identified and what priority level the actions are assigned. If a species does not have an approved recovery plan in place, the proposed activities should be described in the recovery outline, 5-year review recommendations, delisting monitoring plan, species status assessment, or other conservation or management plan for the species. Scoring = 0-10 points, where, for example, 0= no contribution to tasks identified , 5= contributes to an identified task but additional projects are necessary to complete the task, 10= completes an identified task.

2. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of the Proposal to the Program Goals: 30 Points

Reviewers will consider whether proposals clearly identify project goals and objectives and whether those goals and objectives are applicable to conservation and recovery of threatened or endangered species, candidate or at-risk species, or delisted species as specified in previous sections of this document.

Reviewers will consider whether the proposal is designed to have a direct impact on species recovery as a result of implementation of management actions. If the proposal addresses the continuation of previously funded or ongoing work, reviewers should consider whether the applicant provides an adequate justification for the continuation of the same work (e.g., what benefit would additional results have?).

Scoring: 1-30 points; where, for example, 1= no importance/relevance to the program goals or objectives, very limited potential to contribute to species recovery, no implementation of management actions; 15= moderately important/ relevant, reasonably likely to make some meaningful contribution to species recovery; 30= extremely important/relevant, extremely likely to make a significant contribution to recovery of a threatened or endangered species, involves implementation of significant management actions, addresses a high priority recovery plan action.)

3. Technical/ Scientific Merit: 20 Points

For proposals including management and outreach, this criterion addresses whether the activities and approach described in the project narrative is appropriate for achieving the stated goals and objectives, result in successful execution of the project, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the timeline specified. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient information is provided to evaluate the design of the project relative to the stated goals/objectives.

For proposals including research and monitoring, reviewers will consider the sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results, and the inclusion of quality assurance considerations for data collected.

Scoring: 1-20 points; where, for example, 1= completely unsound or unlikely to meet the stated objectives, and information insufficient to evaluate project design; 10= intermediately sound, or reasonably likely to meet the stated objectives; 20 = extremely sound and highly likely to meet the stated objectives.

4. Project Costs: 10 Points

Reviewers will evaluate the budget to determine if it is sufficiently detailed, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and timeframe. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient detail was provided to evaluate how costs were estimated.

Scoring: 1-10 points; where, for example, 1= unrealistic and lacking sufficient detail; 5= adequately detailed and realistic; 10= extremely detailed and realistic.

5. Secretarial Priorities: up to 10 points

In order to support the Department of Interior's Priorities for Federal Financial Assistance, proposals are to be evaluated with the priorities highlighted in Section I. Description of Funding Opportunity, in mind. Specifically, priority should be given to projects that fund activities that will provide the States and Service with the best available science to make informed decisions on ESA listing and delisting actions. Priority should be given to projects that will contribute to the recovery of a species, resulting in a down or delisting decision. Priority should also be given to projects that will reduce or eliminate threats to candidate or at-risk species, or undertake restoration actions that will help avert federal listing of the species, furthering the Departmental priority of striking a regulatory balance.

Scoring: 1-10 points; where 0= no importance/relevance to Secretarial priorities and 10= extremely likely to make a significant contribution to recovery of a threatened or endangered species, efforts will avert listing of candidate or at-risk species, or assure that delisted species do not return to the point at which the measures provided pursuant to the ESA are again necessary.

6. Regional Directors' Discretion

Projects will be funded by the rank order by the previous criteria unless a proposal is justified to be selected based upon the following considerations, where applicable:

- a. State priority
- b. State's ability to use partial funding
 - If a State indicates that a project cannot be completed with partial funding, a lower State priority project within the target funding amount may be funded instead of a higher priority project.
 - A State may receive less than requested, if an activity identified in the grant has been deemed ineligible, insubstantial, or in conflict with conservation goals. States may be asked to adjust project objectives, tasks, and budgets should an activity be deemed ineligible.
- c. Availability of funding
- d. Matching funds greater than the requirement
- e. Balance/distribution of funds within State or Region
 - i. Geographically
 - ii. By research areas

- iii. By project types
- vi. By species or species groups
- f. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded by Service or other agencies
- g. Whether a project would be eligible for funding through a more appropriate Service grant program
- h. The applicant's prior award performance
- i. Partnerships with and/or participation of targeted groups
- j. Adequacy of information necessary for Service staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to Regional Director.

The Service may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration of each project proposed for funding will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the State and the Service.

The Service reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of projects recommended for funding by the Regional Directors will be made through the Department of Interior's financial assistance review of discretionary grants and cooperative agreements process.

B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals submitted for consideration in the Traditional Conservation Grants program will be reviewed by the Regional Offices (see VIII. Agency Contacts).

Initial Screening:

A. Status of Cooperative Agreement: Applicants must be a party to a Cooperative Agreement pursuant to Section 6(c) to be eligible for grant funding and have provided the information necessary for annual renewal (reconfirmation) of their cooperative agreement. Applicants that have not fulfilled both criteria will not be awarded funding.

B. Completeness and Eligibility: Proposals will be screened to ensure that application packages have all required forms, application elements, and meet all eligibility criteria. Regions will review the status of applicants' administration of other grants, including Single Audit submissions, past performance, financial strength and management capabilities, and procedures and methods for monitoring sub-recipients or vendors. Applicants in poor standing may not be considered for funding. If there are any questions about the ability of the project to be completed in compliance with Federal laws and regulations, additional information may be requested from the State. A project may be disqualified if Service staff determine the project cannot meet Federal requirements. Incomplete applications will be returned for corrections. Corrections must be submitted within two weeks of the returned application. Applicants that do not respond within two weeks with corrected materials will be disqualified. The Service, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified or cured.

Merit Review: After initial screening, applications meeting the basic eligibility requirements will undergo merit review based on the criteria outlined above. Each application will be reviewed,

evaluated, and scored independently by Regional staff with appropriate subject-matter expertise (e.g., species recovery, candidate conservation, ESA policy and programs, Federal financial assistance). Reviewers may discuss individual applications but not all scoring will be based on consensus. The reviewers' scores will be averaged and used to produce a rank order of the proposals for consideration by the Regional Director.

Selection by Regional Director: After applications have undergone merit review, the Regional Director will consider the factors outlined in criterion 6 as described in Section VI. Application Review Information above. The Regional Director will decide which applications will be forwarded to the Department of Interior for final approval.

Prior to award, the Service will review any applicant statement regarding potential overlap or duplication between the project to be funded and any other funded or proposed project in terms of activities, funding, or time commitment of key personnel. Depending on the circumstances, the Service may request modification to the application, other pending applications, or an active award, as needed to eliminate any duplication of effort, or the Service may choose not to fund the selected project.

The Service may not make a Federal award to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the Service is ready to make an award, the program may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. The program can use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Prior to award, the Service will evaluate the risk posed by applicants as required in 2 CFR 200.205. Service programs document applicant risk evaluations using the Service's "Financial Assistance Recipient Risk Assessment" form. Prior to approving awards for Federal funding in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), the Service is required to review and consider any information about or from the applicant found in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System. The Service will consider this information when completing the risk review. The Service uses the results of the risk evaluation to establish monitoring plans, recipient reporting frequency requirements, and to determine if one or more of the specific award conditions in 2 CFR 200.207 should be applied the award.

VII. Federal Award Administration

A. Federal Award Notices

Awards are based on the application submitted to and approved by the Service and are subject to the terms and conditions incorporated into the Notice of Award either by direct citation or by reference to the following: Federal regulations; program legislation or regulation; and special award terms and conditions. Recipient acceptance of a Federal award from the Service carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and comply with all terms and conditions applicable to the award. Recipients indicate their acceptance of the Federal award by starting work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means.

B. Award Terms and Conditions

See the Service's "Financial Assistance Award Terms and Conditions" for the administrative and national policy requirements applicable to Service awards. The following additional criteria apply to Traditional Conservation Grants and must be satisfied for a proposal to be considered for funding:

The project must involve voluntary conservation efforts within the United States. As a voluntary program, we will not award funding for projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements of the

ESA, including complying with a biological opinion under section 7 of the ESA or fulfilling mitigation, minimization, and/or monitoring commitments of a Habitat Conservation Plan under section 10 of the ESA, or for projects that serve to satisfy other Federal regulatory requirements (e.g., mitigation for Clean Water Act permits).

Projects within a grant must be consistent with approved or draft species recovery plans or similar conservation strategy documents. Projects proposed in conflict with conservation objectives will not be funded.

The State must assure and certify that it will comply with all applicable Federal laws, regulations, and requirements as they relate to the application, acceptance, and use of Federal funds for projects under the Act [50 CFR 81.9].

A permit from the Regional Director may be required if a project within a grant involves taking, transporting across State lines, introduction into an area beyond its historic range, or holding wildlife in captivity for more than 45 days.

A proposal cannot include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) costs.

State administrative costs must either be assumed by the State or included in the proposal in accordance with Federal requirements. Grants may not be submitted to cover administrative costs alone.

Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, pre-award costs in this program are not allowed under the award unless approved by the Service in accordance with 2 CFR §200.458. Pre-award costs are those incurred prior to the effective date of the Federal award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the Federal award where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award and only with the written approval of the Federal awarding agency.

Projects that include proposed work on private or federal lands must be accompanied by documented landowner permission to access those lands.

The Recipient will conduct scientific and scholarly activities as defined in Department of the Interior policy 305 DM 3, Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities that are intended for use in Service decision-making processes and/or publications. Acceptance of this award carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and follow the Code of Scientific and Scholarly Conduct described in 305 DM 3, Section 3.7 to the best of your ability.

C. Payments

Domestic recipients are required to register in and receive payment through the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP), unless approved for a waiver by the Service program. Foreign recipients receiving funds to a final destination bank outside the U.S. are required to receive payment through the U.S. Treasury's International Treasury Services (ITS) System. Foreign recipients receiving funds to a final destination bank in the U.S. are required to enter and maintain current banking details in their SAM.gov entity profile and receive payment through the Automated Clearing House network by electronic funds transfer (EFT). The Service will include recipient-specific instructions on how to request payment, including identification of any additional information required and where to submit payment requests, as applicable, in all Notices of Award.

D. Reporting Requirements

The Service will include recipient-specific reporting requirements, including the required reports, reporting frequency, and report due dates in all Notices of Award, as applicable.

1. Financial Reports

All recipients must use the SF-425, Federal Financial Report form for financial reporting. At a minimum, all recipients must submit a **final** financial report. Final reports are due no later than 90 calendar days after the award period of performance end date or termination date. For awards with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit **interim** financial reports on the frequency established in the Notice of Award. See Service policy 516 FW 1, Monitoring Financial and Performance Reporting for Financial Assistance for more information.

2. Performance Reports

Performance reports must contain a comparison of actual accomplishments with the established goals and objectives of the award; a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and any other pertinent information relevant to the project results. At a minimum, all recipients must submit a **final** performance report. Final reports are due no later than 90 calendar days after the award Federal end date or termination date. For awards with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit **interim** performance reports on the frequency established in the Notice of Award. See Service policy 516 FW 1, Monitoring Financial and Performance Reporting for Financial Assistance for more information.

3. Significant Developments Reports

Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the supported activity. In such cases, recipients are required to notify the Service in writing as soon as the recipient becomes aware of any problems, delays, or adverse conditions that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of any corrective action(s) taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation. The recipient should also notify the Service in writing of any favorable developments that enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

4. Real Property Reports

Recipients and subrecipients are required to submit status reports on the status of real property in which the Federal government retains an interest. The required frequency of these reports will depend on the anticipated length of the Federal interest period. The Service will include recipient-specific real property reporting requirements, including the required data elements, reporting frequency, and report due dates, as applicable.

5. Conflict of Interest Disclosures

Recipients must notify the Service immediately in writing of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that arise during the life of their Federal award. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter that might place the recipient, including their employees and subrecipients, in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest include direct or indirect financial interests; close personal relationships; positions of trust in outside organizations; consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization; and decision-making authority related to the award. Conflicts of interest are those circumstances real or perceived that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the recipient or the recipients' employees or subrecipients in matters pertaining to the award.

Recipients must notify the Service in writing if any employees, including subrecipient and contractor personnel, are related to, married to, or have a close personal relationship with any Federal employee in the Federal funding program or who otherwise may have been involved in the review and selection of the award. The term employee means any individual engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the Federal award. Failure to disclose and resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance, including termination of the award.

6. Other Mandatory Disclosures

The non-Federal entity or applicant for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Non-Federal entities that receive a Federal award including the term and condition outlined in 2 CFR 200, Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to SAM. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance, including suspension or debarment.

VIII. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

Please refer below for a list of Regional Program Coordinators. States must confer with their Regional Service Office on potential projects prior to submitting a proposal for consideration under this grant program. Coordination and communicating early and often will enable both the States and Service to ensure mutual priorities are addressed when awarding these funds. Information on the CESCO is also available from the Division of Restoration and Recovery, Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS:ES Falls Church, VA 22041-3803, or electronically at <http://www.fws.gov/angered/grants/index.html>

Regional Program Coordinators and Where to Submit Proposals

Region 1	Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Guam, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Eastside Federal Complex 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181	David Leonard (503/231-2372) David_Leonard@fws.gov
Region 2	Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 500 Gold Avenue SW, Room 6018 Albuquerque, NM 87102	Vanessa Burge (505/248-6420) Vanessa_Burge@fws.gov & Janet Huff (505/248-6477) Janet_Huff@fws.gov
Region 3	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services 5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990 Bloomington, Minnesota 55437-1458	Laura Ragan (612/713-5194) & Erik Olsen (612-713-5488) R3FedAid@fws.gov

Region 4	Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30345	Drew Becker (404/679-7226) Drew_Becker@fws.gov
Region 5	Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035-9589	Sadie Stevens (413/253-8677) FW5FARreports@fws.gov
Region 6	Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services 134 Union Blvd., Suite 645 Lakewood, CO 80228	Amelia Orton-Palmer (303/236-4211) Amelia_Orton-Palmer@fws.gov CC: Angela_Burgess@fws.gov
Region 7	Alaska	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503-6199	Drew Crane (907/ 786-3323) Drew_Crane@fws.gov
Region 8	California and Nevada	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2606 Sacramento, CA 95825-1846	Karen Jensen (916/ 414-6557) Karen_Jensen@fws.gov

**Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) Non-Traditional Grants
(Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Planning Assistance, HCP Land Acquisition,
and Recovery Land Acquisition Grants)**

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: F19AS00144

Federal Program: Department of the Interior, United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services & Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 15.615

Authorizing Legislation: Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq. and Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 16 U.S.C. 4601, as amended.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: We are collecting this information in accordance with the authorizing legislation identified above. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to conduct a competitive review and select projects for funding and, if awarded, to evaluate performance. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. We estimate that it will take you on average about 40 hours to complete an initial application, about 3 hours to revise the terms of an award, and about 8 hours per report to prepare and submit financial and performance reports, including time to maintain records and gather information. Actual time for these activities will vary depending on program-specific requirements. You may send comments on the burden estimate or any other aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

OMB Control Number: 1018-0100 (Expiration Date: 7/31/2021)

A. Program Description

More than half of all species listed as endangered or threatened spend at least part of their life cycle on non-federal lands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) recognizes that success in conserving species requires working cooperatively with local communities to foster voluntary stewardship efforts on non-federal lands. States and Territories (hereafter, "States") play a key role in catalyzing these efforts. Tools are available under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to help States and landowners plan and implement projects to conserve species.

Section 6 of the ESA authorizes the Secretary of Interior (Secretary) to enter into cooperative agreements with States that establish and maintain an "adequate and active" program for the conservation of resident threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants. A cooperative agreement sets forth the roles and responsibilities of the State and the Service in the management of threatened and endangered species. Once a State enters into a cooperative agreement with the Service, the Service is authorized to provide Federal financial assistance, to implement the State's conservation program. This financial assistance, provided in the form of competitive grants, is awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) Grant Program.

The principal objective of CESCO grants is to support the development and implementation of States' programs to conserve and recover threatened and endangered species under the Service's jurisdiction. Funding may also be used to support the conservation of candidate and at-risk species. Candidate Species are those that the Service determined warrant listing as a threatened or endangered species, but the listing is precluded by other higher priority actions. Candidate species are listed at: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/table/candidate-species.html>. Under this Notice of Funding Opportunity, we will also consider funding projects to conserve certain at-risk species, including 1) those species that are the subject of a positive 90-day finding but not yet the subject of a proposed rule, 2) species that are the subject of a proposed listing rule but not a final rule or 3) species for which the Service has initiated an ESA status review and has announced the review in the Federal Register.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity applies specifically to the Non-Traditional Grant program elements: Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Planning Assistance, HCP Land Acquisition, and Recovery Land Acquisition.

We recommend you read this solicitation in its entirety as much of the information has changed from previous years. Given the significant investment of time and money associated with projects funded through this opportunity, we also recommend you coordinate with your Regional Coordinator (VIII. Federal Agency Awarding Contact) before starting work on any potential project and proposal.

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Planning Assistance Grants

Habitat Conservation Plans

Prior to 1982, non-Federal landowners undertaking otherwise lawful activities that were likely to take listed species risked violating section 9 of the ESA, which prohibits the "taking" of a listed species. In the 1982 amendments to the ESA, Congress established a voluntary mechanism under section 10(a)(1)(B) that authorizes the Service to issue to non-Federal entities a permit for the "incidental take" of endangered and threatened wildlife species. A habitat conservation plan must accompany the application for an incidental take permit to demonstrate how the applicant intends to meet minimization and mitigation commitments to meet the permit issuance criteria under section 10(a)(2)(B) of the ESA. The commitments made by the applicant in the HCP become part of the permit.

In some States, HCPs have become a broad-based, landscape-level planning tool. In addition to conserving listed species, HCPs often include conservation measures for candidate or at-risk species, as well as other rare species in the plan area. By including these species in the HCP, developers and landowners can also help prevent their decline or need for future listing under the ESA. Should a non-listed species that is covered in the HCP become listed during the permit term, the HCP can provide a seamless process to authorize the take to the newly listed species and eliminate the need to amend the permit. Thus, landowners have an incentive to conserve both listed and unlisted species that may become listed in the future.

Established in fiscal year 2001, the HCP Planning Assistance Grant program provides funding to States to support the development of HCPs. Grants may be used to support HCP development and planning activities such as document preparation, public outreach, baseline species surveys, habitat assessments, and inventories. HCP development, especially when covering large areas, can require a significant investment of time and money. Providing Federal financial assistance to States is an added incentive for entering into the HCP process beyond the regulatory assurances these plans provide.

As in previous years, HCPPA grants will be capped at \$1 million per planning effort. New this year, the Service will consider proposals supporting efforts to amend and renew existing HCPs. Also, we will accept proposals for the development of an HCP that includes only candidate or at-risk species (i.e., no listed species present), such that the HCP would be in place as close to the time of listing as feasible.

HCP Land Acquisition Grants

Established by Congress in FY 1997, the HCP Land Acquisition Grant program was designed to reduce conflicts between the conservation of listed species and competing land uses on specific parcels of land associated with approved and permitted HCPs. Under this program, the Service provides matching grants to States for specific land acquisition projects that will conserve species habitat in perpetuity through fee simple acquisition or the acquisition of permanent conservation easements. The Service considers the use of Federal acquisition dollars by States for habitat protection associated with HCPs to be an important and effective mechanism to promote species recovery, prevent extinction, and preclude the need to list species under the ESA in the future. All land acquired through these grants complements, but does not replace, the mitigation, minimization, and/or monitoring commitments of the HCP. Thus, this work is additive to the conservation commitments entered into when HCPs are permitted and serves as a meaningful way to leverage non-Federal investment in species recovery and connect conservation lands across the landscape.

The HCP Land Acquisition grant program supports acquisitions associated with both single-species and multiple-species HCPs. As in previous years, 10 percent of the funding available through the HCP Land Acquisition program will be targeted to support single-species HCP land acquisition projects.

New this year, Congress directed the Service to remove the funding cap for HCP Land Acquisition grants; however, proposals should be “project ready” meaning all required information for funding obligation should be submitted with the application package, including specific parcel data (see application requirements, below).

Recovery Land Acquisition Grants

Established in FY 2001, the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant program was designed to promote species recovery through the permanent protection of specific parcels of land in support of approved or draft recovery plans, or similar species conservation documents. Loss of habitat is the primary threat to most listed species and land acquisition is often the most immediate, effective, and efficient means of protecting habitat necessary for the recovery of listed species. Under this program, the Service provides matching grants to States for specific land acquisition projects that will conserve listed species habitat in perpetuity through fee simple acquisition or the acquisition of permanent conservation easements. The Service considers the acquisition and permanent protection of habitat supporting listed species recovery plans or similar conservation documents to be an important and effective mechanism to preventing species extinction and promoting recovery.

General Program Funding Priorities

All proposals must be consistent with the conservation objectives outlined in approved or draft species recovery plan, recovery outline, species status assessment, or similar conservation document. Highest priority projects are designed to have a direct and timely impact on the recovery of listed species, ideally moving the target species toward down or delisting. Further, projects that complement State and

Service efforts to prevent the extinction of a listed species and preclude the need to list candidate and at-risk species under the ESA in the future are also prioritized.

The National program priorities and funding considerations identified for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants are:

- Listing status of the target species. Federally listed and candidate species will be given priority.
- Relative urgency of taking recovery or protection measures to assure survival of a species (prevent extinction).
- Ability to accomplish priority actions for species recovery as identified in a draft or final species recovery plan or similar conservation document.
- Readiness of the State to proceed with the project.
- Recovery potential for the target species with projects promoting down or delisting, or precluding the need to list.
- Number of endangered and threatened species benefitted.
- Potential for restoring an endangered or threatened species within a State or potential for restoring the ecosystems (habitat) upon which the target species depend.

As in previous years, Regional Directors will use considerations beyond national program priorities when making funding recommendations for projects within their respective Regions. Regional Directors' discretion will be taken into consideration to represent the collective priorities of the States and the Service. These considerations are addressed in more detail in Section VI below.

Department of Interior Priorities for Federal Financial Assistance

In addition, the CESCO Grant Program supports the following Department of Interior priorities for Federal financial assistance.

Restoring trust with local communities

- Expand the lines of communication with Governors, state natural resource offices, Fish and Wildlife offices, water authorities, county commissioners, Tribes, and local communities.

Striking a regulatory balance

- Ensure that Endangered Species Act decisions are based on strong science and thorough analysis.

The Service recognizes that, in the exercise of their general governmental powers, States possess broad trustee and police powers over fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats within their borders. Unless preempted by Federal authority, States possess primary authority and responsibility for protection and management of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. The Section 6 cooperative agreements entered into by the States and Service reflect a common commitment to actively advance the purpose and policies of the ESA, including providing a means to foster relationships with public and private partners, reduce conflicts between listed species and economic development activities, and promote long-term conservation of listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend. The grants authorized through Section 6 encourage the cooperative implementation of the ESA by leveraging Federal investment in species recovery and demonstrate the Service's commitment to cooperative conservation at the local level. Through these grants, the Service works collaboratively with State governments to manage and conserve listed species and their habitats in a manner that respects State management authority over wildlife resources.

II. Federal Award Information

The Service may award an estimated \$78 million in competitive grants through this funding opportunity for the CESCO Non-Traditional Grant Program as follows:

- Approximately \$15 million to support the HCP Planning Assistance Grant Program. In FY 2017, the Service awarded approximately \$7.4 million to 13 projects with an average award of \$571,000. The Service estimates 26 grants may be funded through this notice should the average grant amount remain consistent.
- Approximately \$40 million in support of the HCP Land Acquisition Grant Program. In FY 2017, the Service awarded approximately \$31.6 million to 17 projects with an average award of \$1.86 million. The Service estimates 21 grants may be funded should the average grant amount remain consistent. However, the funding cap of \$2 million will be lifted as directed by Congress; thus a fewer number of grants may be awarded.
- Approximately \$23 million in support of the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Program. In FY 2017, the Service awarded approximately \$18.5 million to 22 projects with an average award of \$880,000. The Service estimates 26 grants may be funded through this notice should the average grant amount remain consistent.

Period of Performance (PoP): The maximum period of performance for CESCO grants is three years. If an approved project cannot be completed within the PoP, the State Director/Commissioner may request an extension of up to 12 months from the Director of the Service provided appropriate justification. Any awarded project that will not be completed within the PoP, and from which funds are deobligated, may be eligible for funding in future competitions.

Proposals may address new or ongoing work. If the proposal includes a continuation of previous or ongoing work, a brief discussion of accomplishments to date and a justification for the continuation of work must be included in the project narrative in order to receive full consideration. While proposals for ongoing work may be selected for funding, it will be awarded as a new grant with discrete deliverables.

If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, the Service has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, pre-award costs in this program are not allowed under the award unless approved in accordance with 2 CFR §200.458. We cannot reimburse you for the time that you expend or costs that you incur in developing a project or preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations you may have with us prior to the award.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be entered into a Cooperative Agreement pursuant to Section 6(c) of the ESA to be eligible for funding, and have provided the information necessary for annual renewal (reconfirmation) of their cooperative agreement. Applicants that have not fulfilled both criteria will not be considered for funding. . While funding can only be granted to States, individuals or groups (for example counties or conservation organizations) may work with a State agency that has a cooperative agreement on conservation efforts that are mutually beneficial, as a subgrantee.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

General

Non-Federal cost share requirements are detailed in 50 CFR 81.8(b) and allow the non-Federal cost share to be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, including real property, in accordance with the regulations at 2 C.F.R. § 200.306. Proposals must identify the appropriate minimum non-Federal cost share in the SF-424 Budget Information form and in the budget narrative. The amount of non-Federal cost share and documentation of cost share commitment will be used to evaluate project readiness (See VI. Application Review Information).

In accordance with section 6(d) of the ESA, the maximum Federal cost share is 75 percent of the total project cost, i.e., the amount requested from the CESCO Grant Program plus the amount of non-Federal cost share. Other funds that are related to the project or are part of a larger project but are not Federal or designated as cost share should not be included in the total project costs when calculating the maximum Federal cost share.

If a proposal involves collaboration of two or more States, the minimum non-Federal cost share decreases to 10 percent of the total project cost. The project proposal and budget must reflect the work and responsibilities to be carried out by each of the cooperating States. The source or sources of the non-Federal cost share is up to the particular applicants involved and may come from more than one entity. Each cooperating State is responsible for submitting performance and financial reports related to the joint project. Incomplete work by any one of the cooperating States may result in a recovery of Federal funds from all States, if it is determined that the joint cooperative objective will not be accomplished.

The Insular Areas of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands are exempt from grant matching requirements up to \$200,000 under all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grant Programs.

HCP and Recovery Land Acquisition Grants

Land management costs may be used as part of the non-Federal cost share if funds sufficient to cover the management costs for a specified time period are secured and documented at the time the land or easement is purchased. The amount of funding for management costs included as part of the total project cost, may not exceed the purchase price for the land or easement.

C. Other Eligibility Criteria

General Eligibility Criteria - All grants under this funding opportunity must meet the following criteria:

- Projects must involve voluntary conservation efforts within the United States.
- A proposal cannot include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) costs.
- Projects proposed must be consistent with draft or final species recovery plans or similar conservation documents.
- We will not award funding to projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements of the ESA, including complying with a biological opinion under section 7 of the ESA or fulfilling mitigation, minimization, and/or monitoring commitments of a permitted HCP under section 10 of the ESA, or for projects that serve to satisfy other Federal requirements (e.g., mitigation for Clean Water Act permits). These funding restrictions do not apply to elements of HCPs that satisfy conservation obligations pursuant to State law or local ordinances that are above and beyond (additive to) the Federal mitigation, minimization, and/or monitoring requirements for that HCP provided that such proposals identify that general funds, fees collected or used, lands acquired,

or other conservation actions presented as cost share in the grant proposal satisfy the specific obligations of a State or other non-Federal conservation obligation of the HCP, above and beyond the Federal mitigation requirement.

- State administrative costs must either be assumed by the State or included in the proposal in accordance with Federal requirements. Grants may not be submitted to cover administrative costs alone.

In addition to the general eligibility criteria listed above, to be eligible for funding under the **HCP Planning Assistance Grant Program**, a proposal must meet all of the conditions listed below.

- Applications must include a list of discrete activities proposed for funding and each must have an identified start and end point. Examples of discrete activities include developing public outreach brochures, gathering baseline data for an HCP, preparing a draft HCP, or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. For proposals involving an ongoing project, funding cannot be sought to support activities to meet deliverables that were identified for completion through prior year funding. For example, if a prior HCP Planning Assistant grant was awarded to a State to complete a draft NEPA document, funding from this notice cannot be sought to complete a draft NEPA document.

In addition to the general eligibility criteria listed above, to be eligible for funding under the **HCP or Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Programs**, a proposal must meet all of the conditions listed below.

- The specific parcel(s) proposed for acquisition (or cost share) is identified and sufficiently described to facilitate merit review based on the evaluation criteria listed in Review and Selection section below. Parcels must be individually identified but can be grouped and described for evaluation purposes at the transaction level as described in greater detail below.
- Evidence demonstrating that the landowners are willing sellers (e.g., a letter or other form of written acknowledgment) is considered as part of the project readiness (see VI. Application Review Information) and is required prior to expenditure of funds if the project is selected for funding.

Federal land acquisition grant programs fund the purchase of land at market value, from willing sellers. Market value must be determined by appraisals performed in accordance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions, and all other applicable laws and regulations. Appraisals are not required to be submitted with the grant proposals, but will contribute to the project readiness criteria. Appraisals are required prior to expenditure of funds if the project is selected for funding. Please be aware that if an appraisal to Federal standards is not provided with the grant application, the amount specified in the award announcement will be based on the estimate of the property's value as provided in the grant proposal. However, the actual purchase price will not be greater than the current market value as determined by an appraisal and appraisal review completed to Federal standards. States or other non-Federal partners will be responsible for ensuring that appraisal and title work are completed. The cost of conducting an appraisal(s) and completing title work, in accordance with Federal requirements, must either be assumed by the State or a non-Federal subgrantee (as matching funds), or included as part of the Federal request in the project proposal.

- The proposal must state a commitment to funding for and implementation of management of the habitat in perpetuity, consistent with the conservation needs of the species.
- **For HCP Land Acquisition Grants** - Only one proposal per HCP may be submitted. The land proposed for acquisition (or as non-Federal cost share) must be associated with an approved (i.e., permitted) HCP. The proposed land acquisition complements, but does not replace, the Federal mitigation requirements contained in the HCP. For regional HCPs with subarea plans, please submit multiple acquisition proposals under the one regional plan title. The proposal must specifically identify the parcel(s) to be acquired in order to be considered. Acquisition of more than one parcel per HCP may be funded. If submitting more than one parcel for consideration, the proposal must include the relative acquisition priorities for each parcel as well the other evaluation factors identified below. We encourage you to include more than one parcel, but not an exhaustive list of parcels, in the proposal in the event the transaction for the highest priority acquisition cannot be completed; subject to the outcome of fund reassignment procedures, funding of the next highest priority parcel acquisition identified in the proposal may be approved. Parcels not included in the proposal will not be eligible for substitution for parcels that are not acquired. However, lists of potential parcels that do not include the relative acquisition priorities for each parcel, the price of each parcel, and the amount of the request (purchase price minus the non-Federal match) for each parcel will not be considered. Projects eligible for HCP Land Acquisition Grant funding will not be considered for Recovery Land Acquisition funding.
- **For Recovery Land Acquisition Grants** - The funds must contribute to the recovery of at least one listed species pursuant to a draft or final recovery plan or similar conservation document in which habitat protection or land acquisition is identified as a priority action necessary for species recovery. Projects eligible for Recovery Land Acquisition Grant funding will not be considered for HCP Land Acquisition funding.

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Registration: This requirement does not apply to individuals applying for funds as a private citizen (i.e., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization you may own or operate in your name) or any entity with an exception approved by the Service under [2 CFR 25.110\(d\)](#). All other applicants are required to obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet and then register in SAM.gov prior to submitting a Federal award application. Federal award recipients must continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information through the life of their Federal award(s). See the "[Submission Requirements](#)" section of this document below for more information on SAM.gov registration. The Service may not make a Federal award to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the Service is ready to make an award, the program may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. The program can use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Prohibition on Issuing Awards to Entities that Require Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements: Domestic (U.S.) non-Federal entities requiring their employees or contractors to sign internal confidentiality agreements or statements that prohibit, or otherwise restrict, such employees or contractors from lawfully reporting waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to

receive such information are not eligible to compete for or receive a Federal award. See [Pub. L. 113-235, Title VII, Division E, Section 743](#) for more information.

Excluded Parties: The Service conducts a review of the SAM.gov Exclusions database for all applicant entities and their key project personnel prior to award. The Service cannot award funds to entities or their key project personnel identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or otherwise excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits, as their ineligibility condition applies to this Federal program.

IV. Application Requirements

A. Requesting Paper Application Package

Applicants can request paper application packages through the appropriate Regional coordinator listed below in Section VIII. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts.

B. Application Form and Content Requirements

1. SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance

All applicants must complete the standard [SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance](#). All of the required application forms are available on the “Packages” tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. The SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance must be complete, and signed and dated. Please note: Enter only the amount requested from this Federal program in the “Federal” funding box on the SF-424 Application form. Include any other Federal sources of funding in the “Other” box, and provide details on those Federal source(s) and funding amount(s) in the required Budget Narrative (see the “Budget Narrative” section below).

2. SF 424, Assurances

Applicants must submit the appropriate signed and dated Assurances form. Complete the [SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs](#) for HCP Planning Assistance or the [SF-424D, Assurances for Construction Programs](#) for HCP and Recovery Land Acquisition. All of the required application forms are available on the “Packages” tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. The SF-424 Assurances forms include a statement that some of the assurances may not be applicable to your organization and/or your project or program. Signing the required SF-424 Assurances form does not make you or your organization subject to laws that are otherwise not applicable to you or your organization. Changing, crossing out, or making notations on the form before signing has no impact on the applicability of law.

3. Project Narrative

The narrative description of your project proposal should specifically address each of the eligibility criteria described above and each of the criteria included in the Section VI. Application Review section Narratives that clearly address the specific evaluation and ranking criteria in an organized manner will facilitate proposal review and scoring.

For land acquisition grants that include real property as non-Federal cost share, proposals must include sufficient information on both the parcels proposed for acquisition with grants funds as well as the parcels proposed as cost share.

We recommend the following format for the project narrative:

PROJECT TITLE:

NEED: Why is the project being undertaken? For example, how will the project address or ameliorate threats to a species.

OBJECTIVE: What is to be accomplished during the period of performance pursuant to the stated need? Specify fully what is to be accomplished within the time, money, and staffing allocated and the amount of time necessary to accomplish each of the stated objectives.

EXPECTED BENEFITS AND RESULTS: How will the project improve fish and wildlife resources or benefit the public? Try to provide quantifiable or verifiable resource benefits.

APPROACH: How will the objective be attained? Include specific procedures, schedules, key cooperators and respective roles.

LOCATION:

For HCP Planning Assistance what are the covered species and where is the planning area? Describe habitat type(s) to be affected and relevant ecosystem/watershed characterization. For land acquisition, identify specific parcels, value information, and provide willing seller letters (if available).

MAPS/PHOTOGRAPHS: Include maps of the proposed acquisition, including parcels targeted for acquisition, that characterize the following:

- Species habitat and other important ecosystem information,
- Location in relation to other conservation lands funded outside this grant as part of larger, landscape level conservation effort;
- Any other information that will assist reviewers in proposal evaluation and ranking.

4. SF-424, Budget Information

All of the required application forms are available on the “Packages” tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. Federal award recipients and subrecipients are subject to Federal award cost principles as detailed in the Service’s [“Financial Assistance Award Terms and Conditions.”](#) Show funds requested from this Federal program separately from any other Federal sources of funding. In the “Budget Summary” section, use the first row for funding requested from this Federal program. Use subsequent row(s) for other Federal funding. Enter each Federal program’s CFDA number(s) in the corresponding fields on the form. The CFDA number(s) for this Federal program appears on the first page of this Funding Opportunity.

Applicants should use the SF-424A for HCP Planning Assistance grants and the SF-424C for HCP or Recovery Land Acquisition grants. When developing your budget, keep in mind that financial assistance awards and sub-awards are subject to the Federal cost principles in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, as applicable to the recipient organization type. The full text of the Federal cost principles is available [here](#).

5. Budget Narrative

Applicants must submit a separate narrative titled “Budget Narrative” to explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the SF-424 Budget Object Class Category totals were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. The justification for each budget category should be a brief general description of the costs that make up that category, yet provide enough detail to demonstrate that you have a financial plan for implementation of the proposed objectives. Describe any item of cost that under the applicable Federal cost principles in 2 CFR 200.407 requires the Service’s approval and estimate its cost (e.g., equipment and other capital expenditures, pre-award costs, etc.). Also include any:

- Useful life, if applicable – Propose a useful life for each capital improvement with a value greater than \$100,000, and reference the method used to determine it.
- Program Income, if any – Estimate the amount of program income that the project is likely to generate and indicate the method of applying and disposing of the program income.
- In-Kind Match – Include the source, the amount, and the valuation methodology used to arrive at the total. If you propose to use the value of real property as all or a portion of the non-Federal cost share, you must include information on both (a) parcels proposed for acquisition with CESCO grant funds, and (b) parcels proposed for acquisition to serve as non-Federal cost share. Both are subject to the appraisal standards identified below.
- States providing cost share are not required to submit letters of commitment, unless the match is being used to receive additional consideration and points under project readiness evaluation factor detailed below. Match sources and attributed values from partnering entities must also be documented in a letter of commitment that is signed by an individual with the authority to commit funds on behalf of the entity to receive additional consideration and points under this evaluation factor. Letters must detail the amount of matching funds or value of land and/or services to be contributed to the project within the period of performance. The State is responsible for ensuring availability of the full amount of the non-Federal match identified on the SF-424.

6. Indirect Costs: Organizations

The Federal awarding agency that provides the largest amount of direct funding to your organization is your cognizant agency for indirect costs, unless otherwise assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). If the Department of the Interior is your organization’s cognizant agency, the Interior Business Center will negotiate your indirect cost rate. Contact the Interior Business Center by phone 916-930-3803 or using the [IBC Email Submission Form](#). See the [IBC Website](#) for more information.

Organizations must have an active Federal award before they can submit an indirect cost rate proposal to their cognizant agency. Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award. Recipients must have prior written approval from the Service to use amounts budgeted for direct costs to satisfy cost-share or match requirements or to cover unallowable indirect costs. Recipients shall not shift unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.

Required Indirect Cost Statement

All organizations must include the applicable statement from the following list in their application to the Service, and attach to their application any documentation identified in the applicable statement:

We are:

- A U.S. state or local government entity receiving more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding each year with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We submit our indirect cost rate proposals to our cognizant agency. Attached is a copy of our most recently approved rate agreement/certification.
- A U.S. state or local government entity receiving less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We have prepared and will retain for audit an indirect cost rate proposal and related documentation.
- A [insert your organization type; U.S. states and local governments, please use one of the statements above or below] that has previously negotiated or currently has an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. [Insert either: "Attached is a copy of our most recently approved but expired rate agreement. In the event an award is made, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award is made." or "Attached is a copy of our current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement."]
- A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. If we receive an award, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award date.
- A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency and has an indirect cost rate that is lower than 10%. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate; must be lower than 10%]. However, if we receive an award we will not be able to meet the requirement to submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after award. We request as a condition of award to charge a flat indirect cost rate of [insert rate; must be lower than 10%] against [insert a clear description of the direct cost base against which your rate is charged (e.g., salaries; salaries and fringe benefits; or modified total direct costs). However, please note that your organization cannot charge indirect costs in excess of the indirect costs that would be recovered if applied against modified total direct costs as defined in [2 CFR 200.68](#)]. We understand that we must notify the Service in writing if we establish an approved rate with our cognizant agency at any point during the award period.
- A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency and has an indirect cost rate that is 10% or higher. Our indirect cost rate is [insert your organization's indirect rate; must be 10% or higher]. However, if we receive an award we will not be able to meet the requirement to submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after award. We request as a condition of award to charge a flat *de minimis* indirect cost rate of 10% to be charged against modified total direct project costs as defined in [2 CFR 200.68](#). We understand that we must notify the Service in writing if we establish a negotiated rate with our cognizant agency at any point during the award period. We understand that additional Federal funds

may not be available to support an unexpected increase in indirect costs during the project period and that such changes are subject to review, negotiation, and prior approval by the Service.

- A [insert your organization type] that is submitting this proposal for consideration under the [insert either “Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program” or “Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Network”], which has a Department of the Interior-approved indirect cost rate cap of [insert program rate]. If we have an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that we must apply this reduced rate against the same direct cost base as identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement. If we do not have an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that we must charge indirect costs against the modified total direct cost base defined in 2 CFR 200.68 “Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC)”. We understand that we must request prior approval from the Service to use the 2 CFR 200 MTDC base instead of the base identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement. We understand that Service approval of such a request will be based on: 1) a determination that our approved base is only a subset of the MTDC (such as salaries and wages); and 2) that use of the MTDC base will still result in a reduction of the total indirect costs to be charged to the award. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.405, we understand that indirect costs not recovered due to a voluntary reduction to our federally negotiated rate are not allowable for recovery via any other means.
- A [insert your organization type] that will charge all costs directly.

7. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Applicants must state in their application if any actual or potential conflict of interest exists at the time of submission. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter that might place the recipient, including their employees and subrecipients, in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest include direct or indirect financial interests; close personal relationships; positions of trust in outside organizations; consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization; and decision-making authority related to the proposed project. Conflicts of interest are those circumstances real or perceived that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the applicant, or the applicant’s employees or subrecipients, in matters pertaining to the proposed project. Applicants must notify the Service in writing in their application if any employees, including subrecipient and contractor personnel, are related to, married to, or have a close personal relationship with any Federal employee in the Federal program receiving this application or who otherwise may be involved in the review and selection of their proposal. The term employee means any individual to be engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the Federal award application. Failure to disclose and resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in the rejection or disqualification of the application.

8. Single Audit Reporting Statement

All U.S. states, local governments, federally recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in the applicant’s fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse’s Internet Data Entry System](#). U.S. state, local government, federally recognized Indian tribal government, and non-profit applicants must state if your organization was or was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year. If your organization was required to submit a Single Audit report

for the most recently closed fiscal year, provide the EIN associated with that report and state if it is available through the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse](#) website.

9. Certification Regarding Lobbying

Applicants requesting more than \$100,000 in Federal funding must certify to the statements in [43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying](#). If this application requests more than \$100,000 in Federal funds, the Authorized Official's signature on the appropriate [SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance](#) form also represents the entity's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A.

10. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

Applicants and recipients must not use any federally appropriated funds (annually appropriated or continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a Federal award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any U.S. agency, a Member of the U.S. Congress, an officer or employee of the U.S. Congress, or an employee of a Member of the U.S. Congress connection with the award. Applicants and recipients must complete and submit the [SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities](#) if the Federal share of the proposal or award is more than \$100,000 and the applicant or recipient has made or has agreed to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with the application or award. The SF-LLL form is available on the "Packages" tab of this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov. [See 43 CFR, Subpart 18.100](#) for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

11. Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

Applicants must provide a statement indicating if there is any overlap between this Federal application and any other Federal application, or funded project, in regards to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel. If no such overlap or duplication exists, state, *"There are no overlaps or duplication between this application and any of our other Federal applications or funded projects, including in regards to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel."*

If any such overlap exists, provide a complete description of overlaps or duplications between this proposal and any other federally funded project or application in regards to activities, costs, and time commitment of key personnel, as applicable. Provide a copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity and identify when that proposal was submitted, to whom (entity name and program), and when you anticipate being notified of their funding decision. When overlap exists, your statement must end with *"We understand that if at any time we receive funding from another source that is duplicative of the funding we are requesting from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in this application, we will immediately notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service point of contact identified in this Funding Opportunity in writing."*

12. Letters of Commitment (if applicable)

States providing cost share are not required to submit letters of commitment, unless the match is being used to receive additional consideration and points under project readiness evaluation factor detailed below. Match sources and attributed values from partnering entities must also be documented in a letter of commitment that is signed by an individual with the authority to commit funds on behalf of the entity to receive additional consideration and points under this evaluation factor. Letters must detail the amount of matching funds or value of land and/or services to be contributed to the project within the period of performance. The State is responsible for ensuring availability of the full amount of the non-Federal match identified on the SF-424.

13. Willing Seller Letters (if applicable)

We encourage you to include willing seller letter(s) for maximum consideration under the project readiness evaluation factor detailed below. In absence of a letter, the applicant must submit a statement that describes current negotiations regarding the potential sale of the property to describe likelihood of success for the proposed project. However, only proposals with attached willing seller letter(s) will receive points under this evaluation factor.

14. APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Failure to provide complete information may cause delays, postponement, or rejection of the application.

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424B or D, Assurances
- Project Narrative
- SF-424A or C, Budget Information
- Budget Narrative
- Indirect Cost Statement and related documentation (when applicable)
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure (when applicable)
- Single Audit Reporting Statement (when applicable)
- SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (when applicable)
- Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement
- Letters of Commitment
- Willing Seller Letters

V. Submission Requirements

A. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov) Registration

These requirements do not apply to any individual applying for funds as a private citizen or any entity with an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under [2 CFR 25.110\(d\)](#). All other applicants are required to obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet and provide that number in the application; complete SAM.gov registration before submitting an application; and continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information at all times when the entity has an active Federal award or application under consideration. **There is NO COST to register with Dun & Bradstreet or SAM.gov.** There are third-party vendors who will charge a fee in exchange for registering entities with Dun & Bradstreet and SAM.gov; **please be aware you can register and request help for free.**

1. Obtain a DUNS Number

Request a DUNS Number through the [Dun & Bradstreet website](#). The official website address is <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. For technical difficulties, send an email to the [D&B SAM Help Desk](#). Please ensure that you are able to receive emails from SAMHelp@dnb.com. The [Grants.gov "Obtain a DUNS Number" webpage](#) also provides detailed instructions. Once assigned a DUNS number, your organization must maintain up-to-date information with Dun &

Bradstreet. Applicants must enter their DUNS number in the “Organizational DUNS” field on the [SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance](#) form.

2. Register with SAM

Register on the [SAM.gov website](#). The official website address is <http://www.sam.gov>. The “Help” tab on the website contains User Guides and other information to assist you with registration. The [Grants.gov Register with SAM” webpage](#) also provides detailed instructions. You can also contact the supporting [Federal Service Desk](#) for help registering in SAM. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least once every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly encouraged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure their information is up to date and reflects changes that may have been to the entity’s DUNS or IRS information. Foreign entities who want to receive payment directly to a U.S. bank account must enter and maintain valid, current

B. Submission Dates and Times

Grant project proposals submitted by hardcopy must be received by the appropriate Regional Agency Contact listed in Section VIII by May 17, 2019. The proposals must be received at the appropriate office by 5:00 pm in that time zone. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

C. Intergovernmental Review

Prior to application submission, applicants should visit the [OMB Office of Federal Financial Management website](#) and view the “State Point of Contact (SPOC) List” to determine whether their application is subject to the State intergovernmental review process under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372 “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” States not on the list do not participate in the intergovernmental review process, and therefore do not have a SPOC. If you are located within a State that does not have a SPOC, you may send application materials directly to a Federal awarding agency. If your state is on the list, contact the designated entity for more information on the state’s prior review requirements for Federal assistance applications.

D. Funding Restrictions

The following additional criteria apply to all CESCFC grants and **must be satisfied** for a proposal to be considered for funding:

A proposal cannot include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) costs.

A proposal cannot seek funding for projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements of the Act, including complying with a biological opinion under Section 7 of the ESA or fulfilling Federal mitigation, minimization, and/or monitoring requirements of an HCP permitted under Section 10 of the ESA, or that serve to satisfy other Federal regulatory requirements (e.g., mitigation for Clean Water Act permits). An exception is granted for HCPs that include conservation obligations pursuant to State law or local ordinances that are above and beyond (additive to) the Federal mitigation requirements for that HCP. Proposals may be submitted that include as non-Federal match general funds, fees collected or used, lands acquired, or other actions (e.g., other State permit requirements) to satisfy State or other non-Federal conservation obligations of the HCP, above and beyond the Federal mitigation requirement.

State administrative costs must either be assumed by the State or included in the proposal in accordance with Federal requirements. Grants may not be submitted to cover administrative costs alone.

E. Submission Instructions

If you require assistance obtaining the application templates contact the appropriate Regional Coordinator as listed in Section VIII.

This program encourages applicants to submit their applications online through Grants.gov. Follow these steps to apply through Grants.gov.

1. Register with Grants.gov

Applicants must first [register an account with Grants.gov](#) and complete all steps of the registration process before they can apply through Grants.gov. The registration requires the entity to create an account, create an account profile, and establish authorized profile roles, including the applicant's authorized representative. Registration can take three to five business days or longer, if you do not complete the required steps in a timely manner.

2. Grants.gov Workspace Application

Grants.gov applicants apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, you can create individual instances of a workspace. To apply, the applicant will [create, complete, and submit a Workspace application package for this Funding Opportunity directly on Grants.gov](#). Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to allow time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission. When attaching files to the Grants.gov application, please do not assign file names longer than 20 characters, including spaces. File names longer than 20 characters will prevent your application received by Grants.gov from automatically downloading into the Service's financial assistance management system. Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that the transmission of the application to Grants.gov takes time. Grants.gov sends either an error message or a "successfully received" message by email to the applicant's authorized representative once the transmission is complete. Please do not end the transmission process before receiving that message.

3. Proof of Timely Submission

Grants.gov automatically generates an electronic date and time stamp in the system upon application receipt. Grants.gov sends an acknowledgement of receipt with the date and time stamp and a unique Grants.gov application tracking number to the authorized representative by email. This email from Grants.gov serves as your proof of timely submission.

VI. Application Review Information

A. Criteria

The following evaluation criteria will be used by Service staff participating on review panels. Reviewers will consider only the evaluation factors described below in order to score, rank, and recommend proposals for funding. Proposals that clearly address all criteria in an organized manner will facilitate proposal evaluation and ranking. There are criteria that apply to all grants under this NOFO and criteria specific to each grant type.

All Non-Traditional CESCO Grants:

Number of listed and candidate species benefited (15 pts maximum)

Proposals that will benefit a greater number of listed and candidate species will score higher. For HCP Land Acquisition Grants, only species listed on the HCP permit will be considered. For HCP Planning Assistance, only species proposed to be covered by the HCP permit will be considered. For all land acquisition grants, species benefit must be tied to the specific parcels or transaction-level grouping of parcels. Please note, species included here must also be included in the magnitude of species benefit evaluation factor below. For land acquisition proposals, listed and candidate species identified here must also be included in the ecosystem functionality and habitat connectivity evaluation factors below.

Score: Number of listed and/or candidate species benefited by the proposed project.

- 1 species (1 pt)
- 2-5 species (5 pts)
- 6-10 species (10 pts)
- 11+ species (15 pts)

Number of at-risk species benefited (10 points maximum)

For HCP Land Acquisition Grants, only species listed on the HCP permit will be considered. For HCP Planning Assistance, only species proposed to be listed on the HCP permit will be considered. For all land acquisition grants, species benefit must be tied to the specific parcels or transaction-level grouping of parcels. Please note, at-risk species identified here must also be included in the magnitude of species benefit evaluation factor below. For land acquisition proposals, at-risk species identified here must also be included in the ecosystem functionality and habitat connectivity evaluation factors below.

Score: Number of at-risk species benefited by the proposed project.

- 1 species (1 pt)
- 2-5 species (5 pts)
- 6-10 species (7 pts)
- 11+ species (10 pts)

Magnitude of species benefit (15 points maximum)

Projects that will provide greater benefit to listed, candidate, or at-risk species will score higher. This factor should be scored based on benefits to each listed, candidate, or at-risk species. To facilitate in the review process, you may include a table identifying all of the listed, candidate, and at-risk species to benefit from the proposed project, the expected benefit to the species, the degree of benefit (low, medium, or high) and justification for the degree of benefit designated.

For proposals including multiple species, the majority (more than 50%) of the benefits to species must be shown and justified as high in order to score the full 15 points under this evaluation criterion. For

example, a proposal covering five species must include justifications showing high benefits (as defined below) to at least three of the five species in order to score the full 15 points.

High benefit to species conservation: The benefits to species will be considered high, if through the project,

- 75% or greater of the species' range-wide habitat or an essential piece (as identified in a draft or final recovery plan or similar conservation document) of habitat will be protected, or
- Protecting a major population necessary for recovery or to preclude the need to list, or
- a source population that provides individuals for future emigration is protected, or
- major threats to the species will be eliminated, or
- acquisition is necessary to avoid extinction within the next five years, or the acquisition will assist the species in achieving down or de listing criteria within the next five years, or preclude the need to list a species.

Medium benefit to species conservation: The benefits to species will be considered medium, if through the project,

- 26-74% of the species' range-wide habitat is protected, or
- acquisition is necessary to avoid a significant decline of the populations that will be protected, and will contribute to recovery or help preclude the need to list, but other actions are still necessary to achieve these goals.

Low benefit to species conservation: The benefits to species will be considered low, if through the project,

- only a small percentage (25% or less) of the species' range-wide habitat will be protected, or
- individual populations(s) to be covered contribute little to the overall recovery of the species, or
- may not contribute to precluding the need to list, or
- threats addressed are not imminent, or
- acquisition will provide habitat that is currently unoccupied.

Score: The magnitude of species benefit the project is expected to provide to listed, candidate, and at-risk species).

- ___ Mostly Low benefit to species conservation (5 pts)
- ___ Mostly Medium benefit to species conservation (10 pts)
- ___ Mostly High benefit to species conservation (15 pts)

Readiness of State to Proceed (20 points maximum)

This criteria is additive, check each statement that applies.

Score:

___ Proposed activities can be completed within 1 year. All discrete activities identified in the proposal for which funding is sought must be completed in one year to receive points in this category. It is not sufficient for one or more discrete activities to be completed in one year with other identified discrete activities being completed in subsequent years, if funding for those additional activities is being sought through this proposal. For proposals involving ongoing projects, a State may not claim these points if a previously funded phase of the project claimed the points. For example, if an HCPPA proposal received these points in FY 2017 and failed to complete the associated tasks by December 2018, the State cannot claim these points for the

same planning effort under this opportunity. The Service will not consider requests to extend the period of performance of grants awarded to projects that claimed these points during evaluation. (5 pts).

Proposal includes a greater than minimum non-Federal cost share (5 pts).

Documentation of cost share provided through letter(s) of financial commitment (5 pts).

Willing seller letter(s) provided (5pts).

Secretarial Priorities (5 points maximum)

In order to support the Department of Interior's Priorities for Federal Financial Assistance, proposals are to be evaluated with the priorities in mind. Please include a brief description on the ways in which this specific project supports the priorities highlighted in the Program Description.

No description provided (0 points)

Project supports one or more Secretarial Priorities (5 points)

Regional Director's Discretion (25 points)

The Regional Director has 25 additional points for each of the three grant program elements that may be used to reflect Service and State priorities for funding in that Region. The Regional Director may base the distribution of these points upon the following considerations, where applicable:

a. State priority.

b. Availability of funding.

c. Matching funds greater than the requirement.

d. Balance/distribution of planning efforts within State or Region.

i. Geographically

ii. By species or species groups

e. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded by Service or other agencies.

f. Whether a project would be eligible for funding through a more appropriate Service grant program.

g. The applicant's prior award performance- special consideration given to ability to expend funds within the period of performance.

h. Partnerships with and/or participation of targeted stakeholder groups.

i. Adequacy of information necessary for Service staff to make determinations of compliance and facilitate DOI review.

HCP Planning Assistance Grants

In addition to the criteria for all non-traditional CESCO grants, **HCP Planning Assistance Grants** will also be evaluated using these criteria:

Size of Plan Area (10 points maximum)

HCPs that cover a large area are more likely to consider landscape-level or ecosystem-level planning issues. This type of regional planning benefits numerous species within an ecosystem while streamlining ESA compliance for the smaller landowners within the planning area.

Score: Size of plan area to be covered by the HCP (provides more weight for large plan areas)

0-100 acres (1 pt)

101-1,000 acres (3 pts)

- 1,001-10,000 acres (7 pts)
- 10,001+ acres (10 pts)

Stakeholder Participation (20 points maximum)

Proposals with a larger number of stakeholders involved in the development of the HCP or HCP renewal/amendment will score higher. Stakeholders are public or private entities that will play a significant role in the development, implementation, renewal, or amendment of the HCP such as: entities that participate on the HCP steering committee; those that will make a contribution in the scoping for, and preparation of, the HCP; or those that may receive certificate of Inclusions for the HCP. The Service, the State agency applying for the grant, and consultants or consulting firms preparing the HCP should not be counted.

To facilitate in the review process, consider using a chart that identifies each stakeholder as well as their specific contribution to the development of the HCP. Points will not be awarded for stakeholders listed without an identified contribution to the HCP effort.

Score: Number of stakeholders involved in the development of the HCP or HCP renewal/amendment

- 1-5 stakeholders (5 pts)
- 6-10 stakeholders (10 pts)
- Greater than 10 stakeholders (20 pts)

Initiation or completion of a Habitat Conservation Plan (3 points maximum)

Proposals that will initiate or complete the development of an HCP or HCP renewal/amendment will score higher. Proposals that involve previously funded projects may not claim initiation or finalization points if these points were claimed in proposals selected for funding in previous fiscal years. For example, a project that received points for initiating or finalizing the planning process in prior to this NOFO, cannot claim these points again.

Score: Initiation or completion of the planning process

- Instrumental in initiating a planning process (3 pts)
- Finalizes a planning process (3 pts)
- Continues an ongoing planning process (0 pts)

Data Management and Sharing (2 points maximum)

How will the applicant capture, store, and analyze data? How will the applicant share project performance results and analysis? Applicants that include a data management plan containing the analysis and sharing of project results and effectiveness will be prioritized. Further, significance of the expected uses of such data and analyses to assist decision making on species status or future habitat management decisions, will be prioritized.

- Proposal includes information on how project data will be captured; where it will be stored; and how it will be analyzed and shared broadly to inform future decision-making (2 pts)
- Proposal does not include information on how project data will be captured; where it will be stored; and how it will be analyzed and shared broadly to inform future decision-making (0 pts)

HCP Land Acquisition & Recovery Land Acquisition Grants

In addition to the criteria all non-traditional CESCO grants, HCP and Recovery Land Acquisition Grants will also be evaluated using this criteria:

Ecosystem Functionality (15 points maximum)

Lands that require little or no management to provide benefits for listed, candidate, and at-risk species will score higher under this evaluation factor. This habitat can include occupied or suitable unoccupied habitat. The level of management expected to be necessary is based on an evaluation of the biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes. Biotic factors include the structure and composition of plant and animal communities. Abiotic factors include soil, hydrology, natural topography, and salinity gradients. Ecological processes include succession, trophic energy flows, and disturbance regimes. More points will be awarded for acquisition areas containing fully-functioning ecosystems that will require little or no restoration or management to benefit the covered species.

Score: When considered in the context of the surrounding landscape, the HCP plan area or the land targeted for acquisition, contains (none, some, or all) of the naturally occurring biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes necessary to maintain a fully functioning ecosystem that contains the habitat necessary to support the listed, candidate, or at-risk species associated with that ecosystem. Proposals must discuss the level of restoration needed, if any, for each proposed acquisition.

- None: few ecological processes intact and substantial restoration needed (0 pts)
- Some: most core ecological processes intact and some restoration needed (8 pts)
- All: pristine ecological processes intact and no restoration needed (15 pts)

Habitat Connectivity (20 points maximum)

Land acquisitions that fill in critical components for land protection will score higher (e.g., lands that link two preserves together to reduce habitat fragmentation).

Score: Do the lands proposed for acquisition fill a critical void in the matrix of protected lands, such as a connection between protected areas or protection of a core population area? A justification must be included for each species for which the applicant is seeking points (20 points maximum)

- No. The parcel is isolated from other important habitat or conservation lands, but is necessary for species conservation (5 pts)
- The parcel links existing protected areas together or lies adjacent to existing protected conservation areas to reduce habitat fragmentation (10 pts)
- The parcel completes the habitat connectivity between protected areas or completes the protection of a core population area (15 pts)
- The proposed acquisition offers a unique and timely opportunity to consolidate state-managed conservation lands, will greatly enhance the State's ability to access targeted species habitat, and consistently manage for listed species conservation in perpetuity (20 pts)

B. Review and Selection Process

The Service may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration of each project proposed for funding will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the State and the Service. If the program routinely negotiates selected project scopes of work and budgets prior to award, those applicants with modified proposals will have to submit revised SF-424 forms and narratives prior to award. Service programs must make awards based on final, approved applications that parallel their awards in scope and funding amount.

The Service reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of projects recommended for funding by the Director will be made through the Department of Interior's financial assistance review of discretionary grants and cooperative agreements process.

Initial Screening:

A. Status of Cooperative Agreement: Applicants must be entered into a Cooperative Agreement pursuant to Section 6(c) of the ESA to be eligible for grant funding, and have provided the information necessary for annual renewal (reconfirmation) of their cooperative agreement. Applicants that have not fulfilled both criteria will not be considered for funding.

B. Initial screening for completeness and basic eligibility: Proposals will be screened to ensure that application packages have all required forms, application elements, and meet all of the basic eligibility criteria outlined above. The Service will review the status of applicants' administration of other grants, including Single Audit submissions, past performance, financial strength and management capabilities, and procedures and methods for monitoring subrecipients or vendors. Applicants in poor standing may not be considered for funding. If there are any questions about the ability of the project to be completed in compliance with Federal laws and regulations, additional information may be requested from the State. Incomplete applications may be returned for corrections. Corrections must be submitted within two weeks of the returned application. Applicants that do not respond within two weeks with corrected materials will be disqualified. The Service, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily rectified.

Threshold Screening: Applications must be screened for the adequacy of the budget and compliance with statutory and other requirements. A project may be disqualified if the Service determines the project cannot meet Federal requirements.

Merit Review: After initial and threshold screening, applications meeting the basic eligibility requirements will undergo merit review based on the criteria outlined above by Service staff with appropriate subject-matter expertise (e.g., HCP development, species recovery, candidate conservation, ESA policy and programs, Federal financial assistance). The reviewers will make recommendations to the Regional Director. Funding for the Recovery Land Acquisition grants will be awarded based on regional competitions. Each region will provide a list of award recommendations to the Headquarters Office. If a Region is unable to utilize their full funding allocation or should recovered funding become available, Headquarters staff will work with Regions to redistribute funding recommendations to the most

meritorious projects. A final list of recommendations will be approved by the Assistant Director of Ecological Services and forwarded to the Director for approval. Awards will then be forwarded to the Department of Interior for final approval, if necessary.

Funding for HCP Land Acquisition and HCP Planning Assistance grants will be awarded based on a national competition. Once Regional Directors have evaluated and prioritized proposals within their respective Regions, proposals will be forwarded to the Service's Headquarters Office where they will undergo a national level review using the evaluation criteria described above. Proposals will be evaluated and ranked to make award recommendations to Assistant Director of Ecological Services. Projects will be recommended for funding by the rank order unless a proposal is justified by the Assistant Director to be selected out of rank order based upon the following considerations, where applicable:

- a. Regional/ National priority
- b. Applicant's ability to use partial funding
- c. Availability of funding
- d. Balance/distribution of funds geographically within a Region
- e. Balance/distribution of funds geographically across Regions
- f. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded by Service or other Interior agencies
- g. The applicant's prior award performance
- h. Partnerships with and/or participation of targeted groups

The final list of award recommendations will be provided to the Director for approval and forwarded to the Department of Interior for final approval.

Prior to participating in any review or evaluation process, all Service reviewers must sign and return to the program office point of contact the "Department of the Interior Conflict of Interest Certification" form. For a copy of this form, contact the Service point of contact identified in the Agency Contacts section below.

Prior to award, the Service will review any applicant statement regarding potential overlap or duplication between the project to be funded and any other funded or proposed project in terms of activities, funding, or time commitment of key personnel. Depending on the circumstances, the Service may request modification to the application, other pending applications, or an active award, as needed to eliminate any duplication of effort, or the Service may choose not to fund the selected project.

The Service may not make a Federal award to an applicant that has not completed the SAM.gov registration. If an applicant selected for funding has not completed their SAM.gov registration by the time the Service is ready to make an award, the program may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award. The program can use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Prior to award, the Service will evaluate the risk posed by applicants as required in [2 CFR 200.205](#). Service programs document applicant risk evaluations using the Service's "[Financial Assistance Recipient Risk Assessment](#)" form. Prior to approving awards for Federal funding in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), the Service is required to review and consider any information about or from the applicant found in the [Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System](#). The Service will consider this information when completing the risk review. The

Service uses the results of the risk evaluation to establish monitoring plans, recipient reporting frequency requirements, and to determine if one or more of the specific award conditions in [2 CFR 200.207](#) should be applied the award.

VII. Federal Award Administration

C. Federal Award Notices

All Federal financial assistance awards must match the application in terms of funding amount and project scope. Following review and selection for award, the Service may require applicants to revise their proposed scope of work, project narrative, budget, and/or timeline to reflect the Service's final funding decision as Service programs must maintain all final approved application documents in the official award file.

Awards are based on the application submitted to and approved by the Service and are subject to the terms and conditions incorporated into the Notice of Award either by direct citation or by reference to the following: Federal regulations, program legislation or regulation, and special award terms and conditions. Recipient acceptance of a Federal award from the Service carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and comply with all terms and conditions applicable to the award. Recipients indicate their acceptance of the Federal award by starting work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means.

D. Award Terms and Conditions

See the Service's "[Financial Assistance Award Terms and Conditions](#)" for the administrative and national policy requirements applicable to Service awards.

Please be aware that when the Service funds fire management on lands other than the National Wildlife Refuge System lands, the activity must be conducted according to Chapter 18 of the Service Fire Management Handbook Regarding Prescribed Burning Off-Service Lands at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/fireplanreview.pdf> and further clarified at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/m0299.pdf> Payments

E. Payments

Domestic recipients are required to register in and receive payment through the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP), unless approved for a waiver by the Service program. Foreign recipients are not eligible to receive funds directly from the Service for this grant program. The Service will include recipient-specific instructions on how to request payment, including identification of any additional information required and where to submit payment requests, as applicable, in all Notices of Award.

F. Reporting Requirements

The Service will include recipient-specific reporting requirements, including the required reports, reporting frequency, and report due dates in all Notices of Award, as applicable.

1. Financial Reports

All recipients must use the [SF-425, Federal Financial Report](#) form for financial reporting. At a minimum, all recipients must submit a **final** financial report. Final reports are due no later than 90 calendar days after the award period of performance end date or termination date. For awards with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit **interim** financial reports on the frequency established in the Notice of Award. See Service policy

[516 FW 1, Monitoring Financial and Performance Reporting for Financial Assistance](#) for more information.

2. Performance Reports

Performance reports must contain a comparison of actual accomplishments with the established goals and objectives of the award; a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and any other pertinent information relevant to the project results. At a minimum, all recipients must submit a **final** performance report. Final reports are due no later than 90 calendar days after the award period of performance end date or termination date. For awards with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit **interim** performance reports on the frequency established in the Notice of Award. See Service policy [516 FW 1, Monitoring Financial and Performance Reporting for Financial Assistance](#) for more information.

3. Significant Developments Reports

Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the supported activity. In such cases, recipients are required to notify the Service in writing as soon as the recipient becomes aware of any problems, delays, or adverse conditions that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of any corrective action(s) taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation. The recipient should also notify the Service in writing of any favorable developments that enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

4. Real Property Reports

Recipients and subrecipients are required to submit status reports on the status of real property in which the Federal government retains an interest. The required frequency of these reports will depend on the anticipated length of the Federal interest period. The Service will include recipient-specific real property reporting requirements, including the required data elements, reporting frequency, and report due dates, as applicable.

5. Conflict of Interest Disclosures

Recipients must notify the Service immediately in writing of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that arise during the life of their Federal award. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter that might place the recipient, including their employees and subrecipients, in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest include direct or indirect financial interests; close personal relationships; positions of trust in outside organizations; consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization; and decision-making authority related to the award. Conflicts of interest are those circumstances real or perceived that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the recipient or the recipient's employees or subrecipients in matters pertaining to the award. Recipients must notify the Service in writing if any employees, including subrecipient and contractor personnel, are related to, married to, or have a close personal relationship with any Federal employee in the Federal funding program or who otherwise may have been involved in the review and selection of the award. The term employee means any individual engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the Federal award. Failure to disclose and resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in any

of the remedies described in [2 CFR 200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance](#), including termination of the award.

6. Other Mandatory Disclosures

The non-Federal entity or applicant for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Non-Federal entities that receive a Federal award including the term and condition outlined in [2 CFR 200, Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters](#) are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to SAM. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in [2 CFR 200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance](#), including suspension or debarment.

VIII. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

Region 1	Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Eastside Federal Complex 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, Oregon 97232-4181	David Leonard (503/231-2372) David_Leonard@fws.gov
Region 2	Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 500 Gold Avenue SW, Room 6018 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102	Vanessa Burge (505/248-6420) Vanessa_Burge@fws.gov & Janet Huff (505/248-6477) Janet_Huff@fws.gov
Region 3	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services 5600 American Blvd West, Suite 990 Bloomington, Minnesota 55437-1458	Laura Ragan (612/713-5194) & Erik Olsen (612-713-5488) R3FedAid@fws.gov
Region 4	Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200 Atlanta, Georgia 30345	HCP Grants: David Dell (404/679-7313) David_Dell@fws.gov RLA Grants: Drew Becker (404/679-7226) Drew_Becker@fws.gov
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