

# How to Apply for a NMBCA IMPACT Program Grant

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These instructions are specific to the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) IMPACT (Identifying Measures of Performance and Achieving Conservation Targets) Program. All applications to the IMPACT program must include the minimum 3-to-1 match contributions and follow the [NMBCA Core program application instruction guidance](#) while including the additional following guidance.

**NOTE: 2020 IMPACT Program Initiatives:** We are soliciting high priority conservation projects described in the [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative \(AFSI\)](#) and the [Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy \(PASCs\)](#).

## Will funding for Bird Conservation Investment Strategies (Business Planning) continue in the Fiscal Year 2020 Program?

Pending sufficient Congressional appropriations to the NMBCA program, we will be allocating approximately \$150,000 of the IMPACT Program towards supporting the further development of Bird Conservation Business Plans (BCBP) (i.e. complete annual life cycle conservation planning) also called Conservation Investment Strategies benefitting Neotropical migratory birds, such as the ones started at the Partners in Flight V conference in August 2013. Please see below question: “How does the IMPACT Program support Bird Conservation Business Planning?”

NOTE: If you apply for BCBP funding, you need to do so in a separate proposal. We prefer that you not combine your BCBP proposal with another NMBCA proposal. The match for a BCBP proposal can come from activities that are not directly funding BCBP development, but you must explain how that match fits into the BCBP.

## What are the objectives of the IMPACT Program?

The IMPACT (Identifying Measures of Performance and Achieving Conservation Targets) Program focuses a portion of available NMBCA funding in support of projects having the highest potential to leverage resources and interest into partnerships and projects that contribute significantly to the conservation of select, high-priority species and initiatives within the next 5-10 years. We seek to fund on-the-ground conservation projects that will directly improve the population status of these (and associated) species and can demonstrate the improvement. We will also consider research, monitoring or assessment projects for a broader set of species of conservation concern that significantly contribute to filling information gaps that currently inhibit implementation of the most effective conservation actions. These proposals, like those in the Core program, have a request limit of \$200,000 for a two year project duration (\$100,000 for a single year project duration). The goal of the IMPACT Program is to invest in projects that **can demonstrate a measurable biological improvement** in the population or **increase our knowledge and understanding of the factors limiting populations** of these species. Additionally, in 2020, at least \$150,000 of the IMPACT Program allocation will continue to be made available to support the further development of Bird Conservation Business Plans (BCBPs) by providing resources to: 1) develop the conceptual modeling (for example: logic modelling, theories of change and results chains), 2) convene non-U.S. stakeholders (entities working on the non-breeding grounds of these birds) to inform that modeling and 3) increase stakeholder involvement in and understanding of these BCBPs. Specifically for objective 3, we will consider proposals from the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative (AFSI), Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy (PASCs), the central Grasslands of North America and the MesoAmerican Pine-Oak Forests that seek funding to coordinate implementation of the strategies and increased involvement of non-U.S. stakeholders in the delivery of these strategies.

## Which species and initiatives does the IMPACT Program target?

On-the ground IMPACT proposals must address one of the following species or initiatives. Species targeted by the IMPACT Program are of high conservation priority, have a completed conservation plan for at least part of their range, and are expected to respond in measurable ways to the proposed activities within 5 to 10 years. On-the-ground **conservation** projects proposing to directly improve population status must focus upon one or more of the following:

Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*)  
Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Calidris subruficollis*)  
Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*)  
Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*)  
Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*)

Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) (PASCs Focal Species)  
Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*)  
Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) (PASCs)  
Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*)  
Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) (eastern subpopulation)

Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*)  
Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) (AFSI Focal Species)  
Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*)

**2020 IMPACT Program Initiatives:** We are soliciting high priority conservation projects described in the [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative](#) and the [Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy](#), which will compete with the species specific IMPACT proposals.

**Research, monitoring or assessment** projects submitted under the IMPACT Program must focus on a Bird of Conservation Concern, a Watchlist species, or a species listed under the Endangered Species Act (<https://www.fws.gov/birds/grants/neotropical-migratory-bird-conservation-act/nmbca-bird-list.php>).

**BCBP development** projects do not have any specific Neotropical migratory bird species requirements.

## Should I apply to the IMPACT Program?

You should apply to the IMPACT Program if: 1) your proposed project seeks to conserve one or more of the IMPACT Program's 13 primary target species, associated species that share the same habitat as the target species, or implement high priority activities in the **2 coastal shorebird initiatives**, 2) you can explain how project activities will contribute to conservation needs outlined in existing conservation plans for these species, and 3) you can demonstrate the desired improvement in the species' conservation status in some measurable way (for example, increase population of X species by Y% in 10 years). Alternatively, you should apply if you are proposing research, monitoring, or assessment activities that will significantly and measurably advance our understanding of information gaps that critically limit more effective conservation of Birds of Conservation Concern, Watch list species or species listed under the Endangered Species Act (<https://www.fws.gov/birds/grants/neotropical-migratory-bird-conservation-act/nmbca-bird-list.php>). For example, you may propose to investigate at what stage in the annual cycle of a Bird of Conservation Concern appears to be most limiting to its annual survival and explain how the information gained in the study will improve conservation decision-making.

Project activities for conservation, research, monitoring or assessment can occur anywhere in the range of these species, although we strongly encourage the development of projects addressing key limiting factors on non-breeding grounds where financial resources for conservation of these species are less available.

Additionally, for this year's November 2019 deadline (Fiscal Year 2020) you should apply to the IMPACT Program if you wish to further the development of an emerging Bird Conservation Business Plan through conceptual modeling or convening non-U.S. stakeholders.

## How will you know I am submitting my proposal to the IMPACT Program?

**Proposal narratives to the IMPACT Program must clearly indicate this on their cover page by stating "Submitted to the 2020 IMPACT Program" immediately after the project title.** Proposals submitted to this program may request up to \$200,000 for a two year project, unless you are seeking Bird Conservation Business Planning support, which is limited to \$20,000. Outside of the above, all other aspects of the IMPACT Program proposal are the same as those of the Core Program and you should follow the guidance in the instructions for the Core Program. Proposals from the [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative](#) and [Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy](#), central North American Grasslands, or MesoAmerican Pine-Oak Forests that seek funding to coordinate implementation of the strategies and increase involvement of non-U.S. stakeholders in the delivery of these strategies may request up to \$40,000.

## What information must be included in an IMPACT Program proposal narrative for on-the-ground conservation projects, and for research, monitoring or assessment projects?

Proposal narratives must clearly address the most important factors limiting growth or stability in populations of targeted species. Proposal narratives should show clear cause-and-effect linkages between the proposed short-term (1-2 year) objectives and activities and identified long-term goals for improved population status. In their Proposal Narrative, Section 3. *Project Description*, applicants should:

1. Define the desired status of the population to be achieved in the long term over the next 5 to 10 years. If possible, this goal should be linked to measurable biological outcomes that have been identified in a species conservation plan. However, local or regional measurable biological objectives or other indicators established by the applicants may also be appropriate if desired population goals

are not clearly identified in the plans. *A recommended reference for developing objectives and measures of success is the Conservation Measures Partnership website, <http://www.conservationmeasures.org/initiatives/standards-for-project-management>.*

Examples of long-term goals might be to:

- a. increase a species' reproductive success by X% on a portion of its breeding grounds as measured by local or regional surveys,
- b. improve the population trend of a species as measured by the North American Breeding Bird Survey,
- c. improve the survival of a species by X% on a portion (used by Y% of the population) of its wintering grounds, or
- d. reduce by X% the most significant threat to a target species in a locality or region.

2. Explain in your proposal narrative what actions will be taken in the short term (1-2 years of your proposal) to help achieve your desired long-term status goal. These project objectives should be specific, measurable, practical and results-oriented. It is likely that the desired long-term goal may only be achievable through multiple projects over 5-10 years. For example, in your 1-2 year project you might protect and restore a percentage of breeding or wintering habitat that contributes to a longer-term habitat goal in your project area. Ideally, you would have data showing the numbers of birds you expect to benefit from the conserved habitat.

3. Describe how you will evaluate your success in achieving the short-term project objectives (1-2 years) and how you will assess progress towards the desired population status improvement over the longer term (5-10 years). This is where well-defined and measurable biological outcomes are needed. For example, if you propose to protect and improve winter habitat for species X, you might describe how you will measure changes in winter survival resulting from project activities. Other examples of desired short-term measurable impacts could be increases in protected or restored habitat and the number of individual birds this stands to benefit, quantifiable reductions in threats to a species at some local or regional scale, or documented increases in local abundance or reproductive success. Demonstration of long-term improvements in population status should relate more directly to measures of abundance at scales most relevant to overall populations, and evaluation may involve increased reliance on regional or national data sources and programs. You must adequately budget for your evaluation costs to measure your short-term objectives, and, if applicable, to gather data to track your long-term goal, which may include gathering baseline measurements and annual measurements thereafter. You will be expected to report these evaluation results back to the NMBCA program at the end of the grant period, and, if you are funded again in the future in subsequent phases.

4. For research, monitoring, or assessment projects, you must explain how your project will help to identify the key limiting factors for a species. For example, it might be suspected that the quality of available wintering habitat is limiting a bird population, but your research project intends to confirm or disprove this hypothesis. If you are working to advance understanding of a critical limiting factor for a population, you should identify the plan or body of work that identified the limiting factor.

**5. If you are submitting a subsequent phase of a previously funded IMPACT project, you must speak to progress made towards your long-term desired status and the outcomes that have been measured to date.**

## **What are the additional expectations of grant recipients funded by the IMPACT Program?**

Grant recipients are required to report their outcomes at the end of the grant period (usually two years), measured as described in their proposal, along with all other requirements associated with the Core Program.

## **What additional information must be included in a proposal narrative for a Bird Conservation Business Plan development project?**

The intent of this opportunity is to advance the conceptual modelling at the core of BCBPs and/or to facilitate non-U.S. stakeholder involvement in the evolution of the BCBPs so that they build a road map to sustain Neotropical migratory bird species throughout their lifecycles. Each proposal should address a single Bird Conservation Business Plan and although not required, proposals to address both priorities are encouraged. The grant request limit for advancing Bird Conservation Business Planning is \$20,000. The 3-to-1 match requirement applies to these proposals, as well as the rules for matching activities occurring in the US or Canada with cash matching funds. If activities are occurring outside of the U.S., then in-kind contributions are allowable match and can be comprised of non-Federal investments in BCBP development up to two years prior to the date we receive the proposal. {NOTE: Proposals from the [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative \(AFSI\)](#), [Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy \(PASCS\)](#), central North American grasslands region, or MesoAmerican Pine-Oak Forest region that seek funding to coordinate implementation of the strategies and increase involvement of non-U.S. stakeholders in the delivery of these strategies may request up to \$40,000.}

In the Project Description section of your proposal, you should allocate up to 2 pages to describe the conservation business planning process you have used to date and what will be accomplished in your project to further the development of the BCBP. You should provide detailed information about what process and methodology you are using to build your conceptual model and how the individuals you are convening or engaging will contribute to the building of your plan.

You must consider at least one of these elements in your proposal:

1. **Details of Conceptual Model:** Proposals to develop the conceptual modeling necessary to prioritize conservation actions should explain in detail what methodology will be used to develop the model. For example, you might choose to follow the [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#) process to build your conceptual model of change and develop results chains using Miradi Adaptive Management Software. Whatever process you use, you should explain how you will be using it to help to prioritize your strategies and actions for the species and habitats relevant to your BCBP.
2. **Foreign Stakeholder involvement:** Proponents are encouraged to convene the foreign stakeholders necessary to inform these conceptual modeling sessions and expand the awareness of, and buy-in to, BCBPs. You should include a list of the organizations and individuals to be invited. The idea is to expand stakeholder involvement to include all relevant entities needed to inform the conceptual modeling of migration and non-breeding grounds priorities and strategies.
3. **[AFSI](#), [PASCS](#), central North American grasslands, or MesoAmerican Pine-Oak Forest region implementation and coordination advancement:** Proponents must explain how the proposal will engage the foreign stakeholders necessary to expand the awareness of, buy-in to, and implementation of these strategies. The idea is to expand stakeholder involvement to include all relevant entities (including governmental organizations, private industry and funders) needed to deliver the high priority actions identified in these strategies.

## How can I make my IMPACT proposal more competitive?

Competitive *conservation* projects under the IMPACT Program must be able to demonstrate compelling need, link project activities to measurable biological outcomes (or threat reductions) and describe the significance of these outcomes in the context of long-term conservation objectives for the targeted species. For example, following the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation may help you to develop a competitive IMPACT Program project. We encourage you to learn about the [Open Standards](#) or another similar methodology. IMPACT projects involving *research, monitoring or assessment* must demonstrate one or more compelling information needs, emphasize the critical conservation decisions that depend on this information, and describe how information gained through the project will actively drive decisions that lead to significant improvements in the conservation status of targeted species. **Bird Conservation Business Plan development** projects must address one of the three priority areas. Competitive projects will propose a comprehensive methodology for building the conceptual models of change or will propose to convene a diverse, inclusive, and appropriate non-U.S. stakeholder group meeting(s) to advance non-breeding ground BCBP development, engagement or delivery.

## What criteria are used to evaluate IMPACT Program proposal narratives?

The selection criteria used for the Core Program will be a central evaluation component to IMPACT Program proposals. However, the following additional criteria will assist reviewers in evaluating IMPACT Program proposals and these criteria are all valued equally.

For the on-the-ground conservation proposals to the IMPACT Program:

1. Has the applicant identified what kind of long-term improvement or goal they want to achieve for the species? Have they identified *measurable* long-term outcomes?
2. Has the applicant developed a 5-10 year plan or course of action to which the current proposal contributes to achieving their desired long-term goal?
3. Are the short-term objectives for this proposal achievable and measurable?
4. Has the applicant explained how they will measure the outcome or the difference in the short term (2 years) and longer term (5-10 years)?
5. Does the applicant have the ability to make a significant biological improvement for the target species or initiative? Is there a reasonable chance that continued investment in the partnership over the next 5-10 years will continue to lead to a measurable improvement (at a specified scale) for the species?
6. If the applicant has been supported by the NMBCA with previous IMPACT Program funding, have they measured their short-term outcomes and presented those results? Are they showing measurable progress and if not have they explained why the outcomes are not what they planned for and proposed appropriate actions in this subsequent proposal?

For evaluation of research, monitoring or assessment proposals to the IMPACT Program:

1. How compelling is the information need for the selected species?
2. Will the research improve our understanding of the key limiting factors for the population?

3. What critical conservation cannot take place without this information? Will results be available by the project end, i.e., the one or 2 years of the grant period?
4. Have the applicants described how the information gained will actively drive management or other decisions that will lead to significant improvements in the conservation status of the species?
5. Is the project well designed, with appropriate data collection techniques?

For proposals submitted to further the development of Bird Conservation Business Plans:

1. Is the proposed conceptual modelling methodology rigorous enough to prioritize actions for the conservation of the species throughout its life-cycle?
2. Are appropriate foreign stakeholders identified? Do they possess the skills, knowledge and experience to effectively inform the conceptual model? Do these stakeholders broaden the potential involvement and buy in for the BCBP?
3. Are the costs reasonable and efficient for the conceptual modelling and convening of foreign stakeholders?
4. Is the match mostly new matching contributions?

For proposals submitted to further the delivery of [AFSI](#), [PASCs](#), central North American grasslands or MesoAmerican Pine-Oak Forests:

1. Will the implementation lead to significant non-U.S. governmental buy in or support for the strategies?
2. Will non-traditional stakeholders be approached for engagement and involvement in the implementation of the strategy?
3. Will the actions lead to a more sustainable future for the strategies?

All eligible proposals submitted to the IMPACT Program will compete against each other first; all non-selected IMPACT Program proposals will be eligible to then compete in the Core Program.

## Where can I find conservation planning information for species targeted for IMPACT Program conservation projects?

Here are some links for some species:

- Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*): [Conservation Plan](#)
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Calidris subruficollis*): [Conservation Plan](#);
- Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*): [Conservation Plan](#); [Non-breeding Range Conservation Plan](#); [el Grupo Cerúleo](#); [Canadian Management Plan](#)
- Golden-checked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*): [Conservation Plan](#); [Alianza Pino-Encino](#); [Pine-Oak Conservation Plan \(Spanish\)](#)
- Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*): [Conservation Plan](#); [BMP\\_PA\\_MD](#); [GWWCi](#); [GWWA\\_WHIP](#); [BMP and other guides](#)
- Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*): [Conservation Plan](#)
- Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*): [Spotlight Species Action Plan](#); [Canadian Recovery Strategy](#) ; [Action Plan in Canada](#)
- Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*): [Conservation Plan](#); [Canadian Management Plan](#)
- Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*): [Conservation Plan](#)
- Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*): [Gulf Coast Joint Venture](#); [Reddish Egret Working Group](#); [Plan Summary](#)
- Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*): [Conservation Plan](#);
- Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*): [Conservation Plan](#); [Canadian Recovery Strategy](#)

Regional and country plans for shorebirds are also available: [Regional plans](#); [regional plans](#) in Spanish