

How to Apply for a NMBCA IMPACT Program Grant

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 matching contributions and follow the [NMBCA Core program application instruction guidance](#) while addressing the **additional** following IMPACT program guidance.

All IMPACT applications must address each additional criteria related to the application type, or they will not be considered under this opportunity (E.g., set short and long-term measurable goals and objectives, budget resources to measure them, and report on previous phases' short- and long-term indicators or measures of success).

FY2024 IMPACT Program Initiatives: Besides species group specific on-the-ground proposals, we are soliciting high priority conservation projects described in the [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative \(AFSI\)](#) and the [Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy \(PASCS\)](#) and the [Conservation Investment Strategy for the Mid-elevation Forests of Central and South America \(Draft in Spanish here\)](#) as well as research projects that investigate the population limiting factors or migratory connectivity for key species prioritized by [Partners in Flight](#) and others responding to the [3 Billion Birds lost report](#) (as of this posting the list may be called the "[Road 2 Recovery Urgency List](#)").

NOTE: Common weaknesses in IMPACT proposals are 1) Failure to engage local communities, 2) Failure to include (and budget for) measuring short- and long-term indicators and outcomes (measurable goals and objectives), and 3) Failure to report on proposed measured outcomes from prior phases.

Will funding for Conservation Investment Strategies continue in the Fiscal Year 2024 Program?

Pending sufficient Congressional appropriations to the NMBCA program, we will be allocating approximately \$200,000 of the IMPACT Program towards supporting the further development of Conservation Investment Strategies (CIS) (i.e., complete annual life cycle conservation planning) benefitting Neotropical migratory birds, such as the ones started at the Partners in Flight V conference in August 2013.

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

What is the IMPACT Program?

The IMPACT (Identifying Measures of Performance and Achieving Conservation Targets) Program focuses a portion of available NMBCA funding to support proposals having the highest potential to contribute significantly to the conservation of select 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 or measure 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. IMPACT 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 **have a high likelihood to demonstrate a measurable biological improvement** in the population or **increase our knowledge and understanding of the factors limiting populations and the migratory connectivity** of these species. Additionally in 2024, at least \$200,000 of the IMPACT Program allocation will continue to be made available to support the further development of Conservation Investment Strategies (CISs) by providing resources to: 1) develop the conceptual modeling (for example: logic modelling, theories of change), 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 the CISs to coordinate implementation of the strategies with, and increase involvement of, non-U.S. stakeholders in their implementation and delivery.

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. We have grouped birds by their associated geographies or habitats and each of those groupings has a developed or developing Conservation Investment Strategy. On-the-ground **conservation** projects proposing to directly improve population status should focus upon one or more of the following species:

Caribbean

Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*)

Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*)

Prairie Warbler (*Setophaga discolor*)

Mesoamerican Pine Oak Forest

Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*)

Grace's Warbler (*Setophaga graciae*)

Mexican Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus arizonae*)

Gulf Coast-Caribbean C. America Lowlands

Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis formosa*)

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*)

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*)

Central-South American Highlands

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*)

Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*)

Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*)

South American Grasslands

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)

American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*)

Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Calidris subruficollis*)

Chihuahuan Grasslands

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*)

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*)

Baird's Sparrow (*Centronyx bairdii*)

Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*)

Gulf of Mexico/Caribbean

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*)

Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*)

Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*)

Atlantic Flyway/Pacific Flyway Shorebirds

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*)

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*)

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*)

Research, monitoring or assessment projects submitted under the IMPACT Program must focus on a Bird of Conservation Concern or a species listed under the Endangered Species Act. We are particularly interested in population limiting factor or migratory connectivity research on the species listed above (**in bold blue**) as well as the follow high priority species:

Priority Limiting Factor Research and Monitoring Species

Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*)

Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*)

Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*)

Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*)

Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*)

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*)

Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*)

Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*)

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*)

Elegant Tern (*Thalasseus elegans*)

Ashy Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma homochroa*)

Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*)

Bendire's Thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*)

Thick-billed Longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*)

Black-chinned Sparrow (*Spizella atrogularis*)

Virginia's Warbler (*Leiothlypis virginiae*)

Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*)

FY2024 IMPACT Program Initiatives: We are soliciting high priority conservation projects described in the [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative](#) (AFSI), the [Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy](#) (PASCS), and the Conservation Investment

Strategy for the Mid-elevation Forests of Central and South America ([Draft in Spanish here](#)) which will compete with the species group specific IMPACT proposals as well as research projects that investigate the population limiting factors for key species prioritized by [Partners in Flight](#) and others responding to the [3 Billion Birds lost report](#) (as of this posting the lists may be called the “[Road to Recovery Urgency Lists](#)”).

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 primary target species groups, associated species that share the same habitat as the target species groups, or implement high priority activities in the **3 Conservation Investment Strategies targeted above**, 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/media/neotropical-migratory-bird-conservation-act-nmbca-species-list>). 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. In particular we seek proposals on key species prioritized by [Partners in Flight](#) and others responding to the [3 Billion Birds lost report](#) (as of this posting the list may be called the “[Road to Recovery Urgency List](#)”).

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 2023 deadline (Fiscal Year 2024) you should apply to the IMPACT Program if you wish to further the development of an emerging Conservation Investment Strategy 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 2024 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 CIS support, which is limited to \$50,000. The 3-to-1 match requirement applies to these proposals, as well as the rules for matching activities occurring in the U.S. 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 CIS development up to two years prior to the date we receive the proposal. Examples of existing and developing CISs are the [Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative](#) and [Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy](#), central North American Grasslands, Mesoamerican Pine-Oak Forests, or the Conservation Investment Strategy for the Mid-elevation Forests of Central and South America. 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.

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 target species. Proposal narratives should show how the proposed short-term (1-2 year) objectives and activities will contribute to reaching the 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, <https://conservationmeasures.org/>.*

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 short-term project objectives and long-term goal. The project objectives should be specific, measurable, practical and results oriented. It is likely that the 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 long-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 objectives 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 non-breeding 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 hypothesized 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 goal(s) and the outcomes that have been measured to date. If the goals and outcomes measurements are not included, your proposal may not be considered for the IMPACT program.

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 Conservation Investment Strategy development project?

The intent of this opportunity is to advance 1) the conceptual modelling at the core of CISs and/or 2) to facilitate non-U.S. stakeholder involvement in the evolution of the CISs so that they build a road map to sustain Neotropical migratory bird species throughout their lifecycles. Each proposal should address a single CIS and although not required, proposals to address both priorities are encouraged. **Examples of landscapes or initiatives with existing and developing CISs are the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative and Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy, central North American Grasslands, Mesoamerican Pine-Oak Forests, or the Conservation Investment Strategy for the Mid-elevation Forests of Central and South America .**

In the Project Description section of your proposal, you should allocate up to 2 pages to describe the conservation investment strategy process you have used to date and what will be accomplished in your project to further the development or implementation of the CIS. 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 (Situation) Model:** Proposals to develop the conceptual modeling necessary to prioritize conservation actions should explain in detail what methods will be used to develop the model. For example, you might choose to follow

the [Conservation Standards](#) 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 CIS.

2. **International Stakeholder involvement:** Proponents are encouraged to convene the non-U.S. stakeholders necessary to inform these conceptual modeling sessions and expand the awareness of, and buy-in to, CISs. 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. **Existing or developing CIS implementation (such as [AFSI](#), [PASCS](#), central North American grasslands, Mesoamerican Pine-Oak Forest, or the Conservation Investment Strategy for the Mid-elevation Forests of Central and South America) implementation and coordination advancement:** Proponents must explain how the proposal will engage the non-U.S. 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. These implementation strategies may include CIS coordination costs.

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 goals for the target species. For example, following the Conservation Standards may help you to develop a competitive IMPACT Program project. We encourage you to learn about the [Conservation 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. **Conservation Investment Strategy 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 CIS 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 goal?
2. Has the applicant developed a 5–10-year plan or course of action to which the current proposal contributes to achieving their 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 objectives and presented those results? Are they showing measurable progress and if not have they explained why the objectives have not been met 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 a Conservation Investment Strategy:

1. Are the proposed conceptual modelling methods rigorous enough to prioritize actions for the conservation of the species throughout its annual cycle?
2. Are appropriate non-U.S. 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 CIS?
3. Are the costs reasonable and efficient for the conceptual modelling and convening of non-U.S. stakeholders?
4. Is the match mostly new matching contributions?

For proposals submitted to further the delivery of Conservation Investment Strategies:

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 project result in better coordination, collaboration, and implementation of the strategy?
4. 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, this is not a comprehensive list, there may be more up-to-date resources available online (also see the [Partners in Flight Resource library](#)).

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*): [Conservation Plan](#)

Cerulean Warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*): [Non-breeding Range Conservation Plan](#); [el Grupo Cerúleo](#); [Canadian Management Plan](#)

Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*): [Conservation Plan](#); [Alianza Pino-Encino](#); [Pine-Oak Conservation Plan \(Spanish\)](#)

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*): [Conservation Plan](#); [BMP_PA_MD](#); [GWWCI](#);

Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*): [Conservation Plan](#)

Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*): [Reddish Egret Working Group](#)

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*): [Conservation Plan](#);

Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*): [Canadian Recovery Strategy](#)

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*): [Conservation Plan](#)

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