Background Report
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Grants Program
State Wildlife Grants
Agenda Item C1
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FLORIDA'S STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
620 South Meridian Street
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Use the State Wildlife Action Plan and State Wildlife Grant funds to leverage resources with partners to sustain Florida's legacy of native wildlife and their habitats

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INTRODUCTION

The primary support and focus for wildlife conservation and management within the United States has historically come from state hunting and fishing interests and Federal Assistance programs for game species under the Pittman–Robertson, Dingle–Johnson, and Wallop–Breaux Acts. Additionally, the Endangered Species Act has provided support to recover federally threatened and endangered species. Although these programs have been successful, the majority of wildlife species have unmet conservation needs and many are at risk of becoming imperiled. To encourage a new conservation paradigm of working towards managing species before they become imperiled, the U. S. Congress created the State Wildlife Grants Program. This program is focused on the conservation of species not encompassed by historical efforts. As a requirement of participating in the State Wildlife Grants Program (Program), the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (Commission) has joined the other 55 states, territories, and district by developing a State Wildlife Action Plan (Action Plan) for the state.

To meet the intent of the Program and to foster the Action Plan, the Commission created Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative (Initiative). The Initiative was a program designed to create a strategic vision for conserving all of Florida's wildlife including fish and invertebrates. The three main components of the Initiative were: 1) to implement Florida's Action Plan; 2) to create partnerships for wildlife conservation across the state of Florida; and 3) to support partnership building and use of the Action Plan by making funding available through Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program. In 2020, the Initiative was integrated into a new section of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation. The Action Plan and State Wildlife Grants Program continue to be maintained and implemented by the Commission. These guidelines are designed to direct the Program.

State Wildlife Action Plan

Florida's Action Plan is a comprehensive strategy that provides an essential foundation for the future of wildlife conservation in the state of Florida. While the Commission led the Action Plan development process, the aim is to create a strategic vision not just for the Commission, but one that multiple partners across the state of Florida can implement. The Action Plan addresses conservation issues, management needs, and priorities, and it is a stimulus to engage conservation partners to strategically think about their individual and coordinated roles in prioritizing conservation efforts in Florida. The Commission is working to ensure the Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and adaptively managed to guarantee its long term conservation success.

The Action Plan sets a vision and a plan of action for wildlife conservation that is solidified by providing our partners and stakeholders with opportunities for funding. To meet this need, the Program was developed to coordinate grant opportunities and provide funding support for projects that are in line with the goals and priorities identified in the Action Plan.

State Wildlife Grants

The U.S. Congress created the State Wildlife Grants Program in 2000. The Program provides funds for developing and implementing projects that benefit wildlife and their habitats, including species that are not hunted or fished.

State Wildlife Grant funding is distributed through both the Competitive State Wildlife Grants Program and Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program.

COMPETITIVE STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS PROGRAM

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service typically publishes a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and Application Instructions for the Competitive State Wildlife Grant Program each year. This is a funding opportunity that is available to Florida residents partnering with other state agencies, and supports implementation of the Action Plan. Currently, all parties wishing to apply for these funds must work with their state fish and wildlife agency or with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Any proposals that will be submitted through the Commission must be received by the State Wildlife Grant Coordinator no later than 45 days BEFORE the deadline given in the NOFO. Proposals submitted to the Commission must be complete and include all parts of the proposal from all states involved in the proposal. This lead time is needed to ensure that the proposal documents can be reviewed for completeness, be approved by the Commission's Executive Director, be reviewed and approved by the Governor's Office, and be submitted through grants.gov by the deadline given in the NOFO. Any proposals submitted to the State Wildlife Grants Coordinator less than 45 days prior to USFWS's deadline may not be submitted through grants.gov.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's NOFO will be placed on MyFWC.com and noticed in the Florida Administrative Register as quickly as possible after publication. The notification will include the 45 day lead-time deadline to help ensure partners have an opportunity to apply for Competitive State Wildlife Grant funding. Close coordination with the State Wildlife Grants Coordinator at early stages of project development is strongly encouraged and typically produces stronger applications. Funding is not guaranteed if an application is submitted. Applications go through a review process at the national level and are subject to the availability of funding. The Commission's Division of Habitat and Species Conservation must also have the spending authority available to receive any awards.

FLORIDA'S STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS PROGRAM

The Florida State Wildlife Grants Program receives funding that is annually apportioned based on the state's size and population. Although the allocation comes directly to the Commission, funding may be made available to other state agencies, local government entities, educational facilities, organizations, or persons. Funds are to be used in accordance with congressional intent and federal guidelines for the State Wildlife Grants program. State Wildlife Action Plans, required by the State Wildlife Grants program, have been developed by each state and help guide spending to ensure that funds are spent wisely and effectively in ways that will benefit wildlife populations and their habitat.

The purpose of the Program is to provide support for conservation projects that benefit Florida's wildlife and their habitat. Additional information about the Program is available at http://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/fwli/grant/. The Program will provide a financial impetus for conservation partners to work together to address the conservation threats and actions identified in the Action Plan. Applications will be evaluated for adherence to Program federal and state guidelines and relevance to conservation needs identified in the Action Plan. Identified needs and priorities for funding will be addressed in the annual Announcement of Florida's State Wildlife Grants Cycle notice.

The remainder of this documents specifically speaks to processes developed for Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program. For more information on the Service's Competitive State Wildlife Grants Program, please refer to the most recent NOFO.

Implementation Goals and Goal Teams

The Commission works with partners and stakeholders to cooperatively prioritize specific goals from the many actions outlined in the Action Plan (see Appendix I). The goals are intended to direct the use of commission resources including State Wildlife Grant funding. Ideally, the goals will guide conservation efforts outside the realm of State Wildlife Grants, provide opportunities for partners to work together and help leverage resources to conserve Florida's fish and wildlife.

Goal Teams are developed during grant cycles to address each implementation goal, unless emerging issues are determined to be paramount by Program staff and Grants Committee. The Goal Team will identify partners that relate to the goal, prioritize needs for achieving the goal and associated objectives, identify targeted and general grant opportunities, and ultimately recommend projects to the Grants Committee. Once projects are fully developed, the Grants Committee will be responsible for conducting the final review and recommending projects for funding.

Grants Committee

The Grants Committee serves an integral role in managing Florida's State Wildlife Grants funding. The Grants Committee is comprised of members from the Commission. Members of the Grants Committee are responsible for determining allocations of each federal fiscal year State Wildlife Grants apportionment and reviewing and recommending projects for funding (Rule 68-1.003, F.A.C.).

Targeted and General Grants

As allowed under the Commission's Grant Issuing Authority per Rule 68-1.003, F.A.C., the Commission awards State Wildlife Grant funding through two different grant processes, 1) targeted, and 2) general. Due to the nature of some projects, the Commission may target a specific pre-qualified applicant that possesses the specialized knowledge, skills and capabilities required to perform a scope of work to help address one of the implementation goals. This is referred to as a targeted grant. The Commission may also make grants available for projects in a broadly defined area where specific information required by the Commission has not been fully identified and any potential and eligible applicant for the grant may submit a proposal. This is referred to as a general grant and the Commission requests proposals through a General Grants Announcement, usually made one time per goal cycle. Proposals that are submitted in answer to the General Grants Announcement go through a competitive process and series of reviews before being recommended for funding by both the Goal Team and Grants Committee.

Submitting Applications

Targeted Grants – The Commission may request and award State Wildlife Grant funds at any time of the year through targeted grants as allowed under the Commission's Grant Issuing Authority per Rule 68-1.003, F.A.C. The Program will contact the targeted, pre-qualified applicant, explain the needs of the Commission in addressing a particular project idea, and request an application.

General Grants – The Program will publicize grant application dates and any other application information by publishing an Announcement of Florida's State Wildlife Grants Cycle notice for applications at least 30 days prior to the submission deadline. The Program expects to announce funding opportunities during the first quarter of the fiscal year. Applications will be accepted from persons affiliated with other state agencies, local government entities, educational facilities, organizations, or individuals in response to the Announcement of Florida's State Wildlife Grants Cycle notice. Applications may be submitted from other states and countries as long as the proposed projects involve or

are relevant to populations of wildlife that inhabit Florida. Interested applicants may contact Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program for information on current and future funding cycles.

Funding Considerations

The total amount of funds available each year for new and continuing projects cannot exceed the maximum funds allotted by the Commission for the Program. The Commission's intent is to fund projects at the approved budget level, as specified in the agreements, to their scheduled termination; however, the amount of available funding cannot be guaranteed until funds have been appropriated by the Legislature. The Program will provide written notification to current projects if funding changes occur once final budget allocations have been made each fiscal year. If the obligations for ongoing projects exhaust the projected available funds for the upcoming fiscal year, the Commission may place a moratorium on the Program for new projects for the upcoming funding cycle. This information will be published on the Program's website at http://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/fwli/grant/apply/.

APPLICATION PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

Applications submitted to Florida's State Wildlife Grant Program should clearly present their value to the conservation and management of wildlife in Florida and relevance to Florida's Action Plan. Applicants should carefully review their applications to be certain they are complete and all information essential for a critical evaluation of the project is included. Any omissions are the responsibility of the applicant. Applications may be rejected if they do not adhere to these guidelines and to the additional criteria described in the application notice.

The Program Coordinator will acknowledge the receipt of each application submitted for funding consideration. If the applicant does not receive acknowledgment of the application within five (5) working days after the submission deadline, he/she should contact the Program immediately.

Upon submission, the applications will be reviewed for completeness, correct format, and adherence to requirements in the notice for applications. The Program can reject any application based on this review. Applications received after the final submission deadline may be rejected without review unless the Program publishes or otherwise provides alternate instructions.

Each application package must include the required sections listed below. Successful applications are attached to, and become a part of the grant agreement for principal investigators not employed by the Commission.

Preparation Instructions

All applications must carefully follow the preparation and submission instructions provided in these guidelines. Adherence to these instructions will be strictly enforced unless the Program publishes or otherwise provides alternate written instructions. Applications may be returned for failure to comply with proper preparation and submission instructions. It is recommended that prior to submission applicants review their application for completeness and check with the Program staff to answer any questions they may have.

Applications must be submitted in English. An electronic copy of the application is required for each submission. The application should be provided via electronic mail. Alternative delivery methods may be approved if file size is an issue. All application materials must be received prior to the final submittal deadline.

Applications must include each of the following sections arranged in this order:

- Application Form (submitted in the original format, not scanned)- limited to two (2) pages
    - FWC/SWG-3, Florida State Wildlife Grants Program Application Form, October 2020 (68-1.003, F.A.C.)
- Scope of Work including
    - Public Description
    - Introduction
    - Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Standard Objectives
        - Optional sub-objectives/tasks
    - Methods
    - Data and Project Deliverables
    - Schedule

    } limited to six (6) pages total
    - Biographical Sketches- maximum of ½ page per person, single-spaced
    - Budget Narrative- maximum of three (3) pages
    - Appendices (as needed), e.g. high resolution or color graphics, charts, tables, etc.- limited to five (5) pages
- Budget Form- consists of three (3) Excel sheets
    - FWC/SWG-1, Florida State Wildlife Grants Program Budget Form for Commission Principal Investigators, February 2017 (68-1.003, F.A.C.)
    - FWC/SWG-2, Florida State Wildlife Grants Program Budget Form for Non-Commission Principal Investigators, December 2019 (68-1.003, F.A.C.)
- Letter(s) of Match Commitment for any match not provided by the Principal Investigator
- A copy of the current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA; required for all non-Commission applicants)

The entire scope of work should be formatted and submitted as follows:

- Single-spaced within sections and double-spaced between sections
- 1”x1”x1”x1” margins
- Page numbers in the top right hand corner
- 11 point Times New Roman font
- Microsoft Word® or equivalent
- Avoid using first person pronouns (e.g. I, we)

Application Form

The application form is a two page template consisting of the application cover page and project summary. The cover page includes essential information about the application and project. The project summary should include statements summarizing the project WSFR Standard Objectives and any associated sub-objectives or tasks, methods to be used, and the significance or value of the proposed project to the Implementation Goals and Florida’s Action Plan (e.g. specific Species of Greatest Conservation Need, habitats, and/or threats and actions).

Scope of Work

The scope of work is the main body of the application and should present a detailed explanation of the proposed project. The scope of work is **limited in the number of pages as instructed above** and should contain the following sections:

Public Description- This section should describe the project in a short paragraph, approximately 5 sentences, and will be utilized for U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Tracking and Reporting Actions for the Conservation of Species (TRACS) Web site. All projects supported by Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs, including State Wildlife Grants, will be entered into the TRACS system utilizing WSFR Standard Objectives (see Objectives section for more information). Please ensure that the public description is written appropriately, and with appropriate layman's terms, for a public audience.

Introduction- This section should state the source and magnitude of the problem the proposed project addresses; the background and justification of the project; the project's relevance, significance, and/or value to wildlife management and conservation in Florida, specific Species of Greatest Conservation Need that will benefit from the project, relevance to Florida's Action Plan and at least one (1) of the Implementation Goals; the expected results or benefits if project objective(s) are met; and a review of previous or similar work, including the relationship of the proposed project to such work. Implementation Goals can be found in Appendix I.

Objectives- This section should state the specific WSFR Standard Objective(s) of the proposed project (available online or upon request from Program staff). If a Standard Objective with Activity options is selected, the appropriate Activity must also be identified. Sub-objectives or tasks may be used in addition to the WSFR Standard Objective(s) to help specify particular questions to be addressed or answered, the measurable increases in knowledge expected, and any tangible products to be produced. If awarded funding, the objectives will form the basis of reporting on project progress. The Commission has been advised by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure all objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. If included in the project proposal, sub-objectives should use the following formula:

Action verb + how many + who/what + by when = project objective

For example: Project personnel will apply prescribed fire to 200 acres of publicly owned land by the end of 2020.

Please ensure that the objectives listed in the submitted Scope of Work are the same objectives listed in the submitted Application Form.

Methods- This section should describe the plan of proposed work relating to the project objectives, including the design of experiments to be undertaken, and a detailed description of approach, analyses, techniques, and procedures. Description of methods and procedures must be broken down by WSFR Standard Objective(s) and sub-objective(s) if specified and be of sufficient detail to enable Commission staff and reviewers to evaluate the project's technical merit. Special emphasis should be made regarding an estimate of variability, statistical power, or justification of the sample size to determine if the study will be effective. When animal handling is to be part of a project, describe what accepted humane methods will be used and, if possible, cite a reference for the standards to be followed. Also, describe potential research impacts on the species being studied and include citations of supporting literature.

State Wildlife Grant projects are expected to include performance monitoring of outputs and/or outcomes. Performance monitoring of outputs and outcomes acts as a feedback loop; if the project action(s) did not produce the desired output or outcome, action(s) can be modified and improved during future efforts. Typically, output is tracked at the objective level and the principal investigator states whether the objectives/actions and deliverables of the project have been successfully completed during reporting. Outcomes, or effectiveness monitoring, link the actions taken to change in species or habitat status (e.g. the target species increases in number throughout the project footprint, habitat quality in the

project footprint improves). If possible, State Wildlife Grant projects should include methods to monitor effectiveness and indicate if project action(s) are leading to the desired outcome.

Data and Project Deliverables- This section should list the specific data and project deliverables of the proposed project. Please see below for more information on possible data and project deliverables. All applicable data and project deliverables should be included.

Schedule- This section should provide a narrative and an illustrative table or graph specifying the timing of tasks in the proposed project such as the beginning and completion dates for project planning, study site selection, data collection, data analyses, and report preparation. See example table below. The schedule should detail what specific objectives will be initiated, worked on, or completed and what deliverables will be provided in each quarter. Unless different dates are specified in the grant agreement, the quarters are July 1 to September 30 (Q1), October 1 through December 31 (Q2), January 1 through March 31 (Q3), and April 1 through June 30 (Q4).

The project schedule should be as detailed as possible since it will serve as a measure against which Commission staff evaluate the progress made in the ongoing project and determine whether the project is meeting its agreement objectives as required. Although funds for a given fiscal year should be available on July 1, completion of all tasks relating to agreement finalization and the subsequent release of funds may be delayed until the end of the first quarter.

Example Table.

	FY__				FY__			
Task/Objective/Deliverable	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Collect samples	x	x						
Run analyses (Obj 1)			x	x				
Write Annual Report				x				
Continue sample collection				x	x			
Run analyses (Obj 2)						x	x	
Final Report								x

Biographical Sketches- Brief biographical sketches of the principal investigator(s) and other project personnel are required [limit to one half (½) page, single spacing for each individual]. They should include educational background, experience, and publications produced that relate directly to the project. The required qualifications for graduate students and/or personnel who will work on the proposed project must be stated if the individuals themselves have not already been selected. Principal investigators must specifically state the qualifications, experience, and available facilities that uniquely qualify them (or their institution) to conduct the proposed project.

Budget Narrative- The budget narrative fully describes and justifies the requested funds and matching contributions for salaries, equipment purchase(s), travel, equipment operation and rental, materials and supplies, computer/data processing, consultant services, other direct costs, and indirect costs. Information provided in the budget narrative should be consistent with that in the budget form. The budget narrative should be limited to three (3) pages.

State Wildlife Grants projects are statutorily limited to funding education and outreach at no more than ten percent of the project's total cost. If the proposal contains an education component, clearly define in the budget narrative what will be spent on the educational component(s). State Wildlife Grants cannot support law enforcement activities.

Grantees cannot keep any profit resulting from a State Wildlife Grant project. Final invoice payments for non-Commission Grantees will be reduced to meet allowable, actual expenditures under their agreement.

Match- All State Wildlife Grant funded projects will be required to provide non-federal contributions of a specified percentage of total project costs to match awards. The matching requirements for funds requested from the Program will be specified in the grant agreement. The requirement for non-federal match is set annually by Congress and typically ranges from 35-50% of total project cost. Match contributions must be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of project or program objectives. Matching may be in the form of allowable costs incurred. Costs are allowable under the applicable Federal Grants and Agreements regulations, which are in accordance to the type of entity incurring the costs. Additionally, match may come from third party in-kind contributions that are applicable to the project and occurring with the project period. Funds may be requested as match for an existing or pending agreement with another state agency or non-profit entity as allowed by any applicable program rules or law. In-kind match may come from volunteer time spent addressing project objectives. Applications should include how volunteer time will be valued and, if the project is approved, volunteer time must be documented appropriately (i.e. volunteer name, volunteer signature, date, number of hours, task/activity, and signature of authorizing official who reviewed and approved the volunteer time). All sources of matching or cost sharing contributions must be stated in the budget narrative and summarized in the budget form for each state fiscal year. Other state agencies applying for SWG funds or partnering on applications may contribute to the match requirements. All proposals must include letters of commitment for match being provided by people and entities other than the Principal Investigator.

For all projects that include Commission match, the proposal must identify the Commission Division, state fund, and state category that the matching funds will come from, as well as the amount of matching funds by fiscal year. If the applicant is external but the project will include Commission matching funds, please request this information from partnering Commission employee(s). You may use the below table to show this requested information:

	Commission Division	State Fund	State Category	Amount of Match
FY _____				
FY _____				
FY _____				

Salaries and Wages- The Commission emphasizes that the primary use of project funds should be for logistic support of projects and not for salaries and wages of personnel. The Commission understands that salaries and wages of some researchers and other personnel directly associated with a proposed project may constitute appropriate costs in proportion to their time devoted to the project. The budget narrative must include the following for each position associated with the proposed project:

- position title (e.g., project director, graduate research assistant, laboratory technician);
- detailed description of the work requirements; time allocation of work (e.g., full time, ½ time, 10 hours/week);
- dates the position is to begin and end; and
- the total amount of funds requested.

The budget sheets must include all position title(s) and details of salaries/wages for each fiscal year.

College/University Faculty: The Commission considers research to be one of the normal duties of most college and university faculty. Project funds may not be used to augment the salaries or rates received by faculty members during the period covered by their faculty appointments. Summer salaries

for faculty on academic-year appointments may be funded for not more than three (3) months using the previously stated rates.

Graduate Research Assistants: The budget may include funds for graduate research assistant stipends. The amount requested and time allocation (e.g., ½ time, ¼ time) for the stipend must be consistent with the regular practices of the applicant's department. Tuition fee waivers, or any other fees, must be identified in the budget narrative and be included in the stipend dollar amount in the budget form. In order to request funds for tuition, a class schedule must be submitted showing a direct relation between classes and the proposed project. Tuition costs for classes unrelated to the proposed project will not be allowed.

Commission Employees: If an applicant is a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission employee, the applicant's Division assumes all financial or other liabilities. By accepting State Wildlife Grant funding, the respective Division agrees to assume the liability to pay any unemployment compensation, worker's compensation, and any other liabilities (financial or otherwise) due to claims from someone employed in a position while it is funded by State Wildlife Grant funds.

Fringe Benefits- Fringe benefits may be treated as direct costs. The applicant must state how the amount of fringe benefits used by his/her institution is normally determined.

Equipment- Requests for equipment with a usable life expectancy over one year and costing $5,000 or more must be included in the budget narrative and budget form. The requested equipment must be essential to conduct the proposed project and not available from the applicant or the institution. General-purpose office equipment will not normally be considered for support. Equipment items only should be requested if equipment requirements are unique for the proposed project. Vehicles, boats, motors, computers, and other major equipment should be rented unless purchase of used equipment (including anticipated repairs) is documented as being less expensive. Commission staff will evaluate the need and justification for the requested equipment, the capability of the applicant and the institution to provide the requested equipment, and the useful life expectancy of the requested equipment. Properly justified equipment with usable life expectancies greater than the project duration typically will be funded on a prorated basis. The balance of the equipment costs will be the responsibility of the project director or the institution. Final disposition (retention, sale, transfer) of all equipment upon project termination will be determined on a case-by-case basis. If the applicant lists the prorated equipment costs in the budget, he/she must clearly state that he/she has done so and also indicate the new cost of the equipment.

Travel- Funds may be requested for travel that is necessary to conduct the proposed project. Travel is calculated based on the established state travel reimbursement rates. The state travel reimbursement rate has been established at $0.445/mile. The daily meal rate is $36.00 ($6.00 breakfast, $11.00 lunch, $19.00 dinner). The flat rate per diem is $80.00. The type and extent of travel and its relationship to the proposed project must be specified in the budget narrative. Normally, travel for project personnel to attend meetings and conferences is limited to two national or one international venue(s) per year. Funds for travel are disseminated on a reimbursement-per-trip basis and should be included in payments made at scheduled intervals as specified in the grant agreement. It is the project director's responsibility to coordinate the disbursement of travel funds to project personnel from these payments.

Equipment Operation- Funds may be requested for mileage in excess of "normal" operation; reasonable, anticipated equipment repairs; and other costs to operate equipment. Mileage and other costs must be estimated and justified for each fiscal year.

Equipment Rental- Requests for equipment rental must include the type of equipment, intended use, rental rate, and length of time needed. Equipment rental must be included in the budget narrative and budget form for each fiscal year.

If an applicant will be providing equipment use to the project and plans to use equipment use as project match, please be aware that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does not accept equivalent rental rates as an acceptable way to value this use. You must calculate and use actual commercial or private operating and depreciation rates.

Total operating cost/total miles driven = operating cost per mile
(Acquisition cost – salvage value)/life of the vehicle = annual depreciation
Annual depreciation /total annual miles = depreciation recovery rate

Operating cost per mile + depreciation recovery rate = operating and depreciation rate

Materials and Supplies- Funds may be requested for required expendable materials and supplies not available from the applicant or the institution. Costs for materials and supplies must be itemized in the budget narrative and budget form for each fiscal year.

Computer/Data Processing- Funds may be requested for computer services. A justification of the need for such services and a statement of established computer service rates must be included for each fiscal year needed.

Consultant Services - Funds may be requested for consultant services, if such services are necessary to conduct the proposed work. The request must be fully justified in the budget narrative. Information must be given on the consultant's expertise, institutional affiliation, compensation rate, and expected duration of work. Travel costs for consultants must be listed separately with the other travel costs in the budget narrative. Consultant salaries will be evaluated similarly to other salary requests.

Other Costs- Funds requested for costs that cannot be placed in one of the previous categories must be listed with a brief description, and an itemized cost list must be included in the budget narrative and budget form for each fiscal year.

Indirect Costs- The indirect rate paid may not exceed that supported by audit, the rate set by a federal cognizant agency (for public entities), or that set in applicable Federal Grants and Agreements regulations for a non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate. Non-Commission applicants must not exceed their current negotiated indirect cost rate in proposals and must include a copy of their entity or agency's NICRA in the application package. If indirect costs are included in either the request for funds or matching funds, indirect costs should be applied as the entity or agency's NICRA dictates (e.g. salaries and wages only, modified total direct cost).

All Commission applicants will use an estimated indirect cost rate of 15% of salaries and wages. If awarded, annual indirect cost rates will be adjusted to match the NICRA of the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation. This will be reflected on Commission cost sheets.

Appendices- Appendices may be used to present data, reprints, or other pertinent material to be considered in the application evaluation. Appendices should be relevant to the proposal and **not exceed five (5) pages in total**.

Budget Form

Budget information must be submitted in U.S. dollars. The budget form summarizes requested funds and matching contributions in specified budget categories (see the Budget Narrative section above) for **each state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30)**. A detailed line-by-line budget is required for project evaluation; but, if an agreement is awarded to an external recipient, payments are typically made at scheduled intervals according to the agreement.

Note that sufficient time and funds must be built into the schedule and the budget to accommodate preparation of the draft final report following completion of fieldwork for the project. Each applicant is expected to submit complete budgetary needs, identifying any and all support, whether pending or current. Commission support of a project must enable the applicant to achieve all of the objectives specified in the scope of work and produce a complete final product, regardless of additional pending support.

Please remember to fill out all requested information on the first tab of the budget form. If approved, this information is needed to process your award. Non-Commission applicants, please take care in entering your indirect rate on the budget form. Formulas may have to be adjusted to ensure indirect rate or modified total direct cost is calculated correctly.

APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Applications determined to be complete through the submission process will be reviewed by the Goal Teams and Grants Committee for merit and to ensure the projects meet the needs of the Program. This applies to submissions to both targeted and general grants. The Goal Teams will score all of the projects submitted for general grants using the Initial Review Form (FWC/SWG-4, Florida State Wildlife Grants Initial Review Form, October 2020 [68-1.003, F.A.C.]), which will then be ranked based on the mean score. The rankings and proposals are provided to the Grants Committee along with recommendations from the Goal Teams for those projects that should be distributed to technical experts for review. Although the Program may choose to have a targeted grant proposal technically reviewed, technical review is typically used for applications for general grants as a means of identifying the most qualified application(s).

The technical reviewers will have research or other expertise in the subject area covered by the project. Reviewers include internal and external experts; for example, representatives from state or private universities and other educational facilities, industry, research, and other for-profit and nonprofit organizations, federal, state or local governmental agencies and private individuals. Reviewers evaluate and score applications according to a standard review format for technical merit and the capabilities of the proposed project personnel and their institution to meet the project objectives. Using the Technical Review Form (FWC/SWG-5, Florida State Wildlife Grants Technical Review Form, October 2020 [68-1.003, F.A.C.]), applications are evaluated on content and format as submitted and not on potential for improvement. Each application will receive a minimum of three (3) technical reviews.

The mean score of the technical reviews for each application is calculated then tabulated with all other application scores to compile a ranking. The Goal Team members may use the Final Review Form (FWC/SWG-6, Florida State Wildlife Grants Final Review Form, October 2020 [68-1.003, F.A.C.]) and rankings in their final evaluation of the applications. The Goal Teams and Grants Committee considers the following important criteria: the overall feasibility of project; the capability of project personnel for completing the project; the reasonableness of the requested budget; and how closely the project addresses one or more of the conservation needs identified in the Action Plan.

Applications may be negatively affected by an applicant's past performance under previous Commission agreements if there is evidence of any deficiencies including a history of late deliverables. Poor past performance alone is not sufficient reason to reject an application from further consideration. However a new agreement cannot be executed until all prior obligations have been met. In such cases, the Grants Committee may provide a conditional recommendation for funding, but must require that all prior obligations be cleared within 90 calendar days of the Grants Committee meeting including, but not limited to the development and execution of any required settlement agreements with the Commission.

Applications are ranked by the Goal Teams and then recommended to the Grants Committee. The Grants Committee reviews the project applications and recommendations of the Goal Teams and endorsed projects are then presented to the Commission's Executive Director or a designee for approval.

All applications submitted to the Commission may be subject to public inspection pursuant to Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, but not until at least ten (10) days after the application deadline.

AGREEMENTS, REPORTING CRITERIA AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance

After an applicant is approved for funding by the Commission, the Program will request complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 compliance forms. Projects that will take place in estuarine or marine environments or impact marine species will also need to complete an ESA Section 7 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Section 7 Checklist. Projects that will include ground disturbance will also need to provide information for State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices review. Successful receipt of a grant award will depend upon USFWS and NMFS' approval of the compliance forms for each project.

Agreements

The Program will negotiate and execute written grant agreements with successful applicants not employed by the Commission (external) to obligate funds pursuant to all applicable rules of the Commission and State law. All agreements will have a maximum award amount, be written as cost reimbursement agreements, and will be invoiced by period of service. Grantees will be required to produce documentation of project expenditures and match with each invoice. Cooperative Agreements may be used if Program determines that there is a substantial amount of involvement between the Commission and a recipient. All out-of-state applicants will have to agree to abide by Florida law in an executed grant agreement. If this is not possible, please do not apply for funding.

Successful applicants that are employed by the Commission (internal) will not negotiate and execute written grant agreements; they will be provided with Project Identification numbers with which to code project expenses. By accepting SWG funds, external and internal applicants, recognize that the Commission, the State of Florida, and the federal awarding agency, USFWS, have proprietary rights to all data, writings, graphics, and works of similar nature that are produced from activities supported by SWG funds.

Reports

Recipients of Commission funds will be required to provide periodic reports documenting progress towards project objectives and deliverables to assist the Program in monitoring the ongoing activities and progress of the project. A copy of the Program's *Report Guidelines* will be provided as guidance for the preparation of progress, annual, and final reports. The Commission expects such reports

to be carefully prepared, complete, and **submitted on time** according to the schedule specified in the agreement for external recipients or specified in electronic mail internal recipients. Invoices associated with required reports for external recipients cannot be paid until the report has been properly reviewed and approved by the Commission. Invoice payments may be delayed because of untimely report submission and invoices may be returned if the required deliverable is not received within 45 days of the scheduled due date.

Unless otherwise indicated in the agreement for external recipients or electronic mail notifications for internal recipients, reports will be designated and required as follows:

Progress Reports- Typically, no more than three (3) progress reports will be required during the state fiscal year and may be scheduled according to periods of performance corresponding to the following quarterly schedule:

Quarter	Date report covers	Due on or before
First (Q1)	July 1 – September 30	October 15
Second (Q2)	October 1 – December 31	January 15
Third (Q3)	January 1 – March 31	April 15
Annual	July 1- June 30	July 15

Annual Reports- Annual reports run on a yearly basis according to the date of the grant agreement and are submitted in lieu of the fourth quarterly progress report. The report should cover all details of the project for the preceding 12 months. Annual reports must contain a comprehensive and quantitative description of the progress made during the year.

Final Reports and Other Deliverables- Each funded project will require the submission of a final report as well as data and other project deliverables that will be specified in the agreement and will vary according to type and the overall objectives of the project. Draft final reports are typically due three (3) months before the end of the grant agreement to allow sufficient time for a final review and revisions to the final report in time to approve final invoices before the end of the grant. Draft and Final Report preparation should be properly accounted for within the project's timeframe. Amendment requests for additional time are discouraged and, for purposes of future application evaluations and selections, such an amendment may be considered a late deliverable.

Final reports should be carefully prepared, completed, and submitted on time and must include a thorough description of all project activities and results. Draft final reports do not receive outside review, but are reviewed by Commission staff to ensure all project objectives were achieved. In addition, final reports are reviewed for clarity, consistency, style, format, and typographical errors. If Program staff determines that a final report or deliverables are not acceptable or needs revision, a copy of the edit-marked manuscript and a letter will be sent to the project director for review. Responses will be required for all requested clarifications, comments, and suggestions and where appropriate should be incorporated in a revised draft final report and resubmitted to the Commission within the timeframe specified in the agreement for the final report.

It is to the benefit of the project director to ensure that all review comments are fully addressed by providing separate additional supportive explanations or justifications of techniques, results, etc., if appropriate. Payment authorization for invoices will not be provided until requested actions are completed and an acceptable report is received.

Final reports generally follow the style for Journal of Wildlife Management (with the exception of avoiding use of first person pronouns). As stated above, sufficient time and funds must be built into the project schedule and budget to accommodate preparation of an acceptable final report prior to agreement termination. If the proposed schedule does not have enough time for these requirements, Commission staff may add up to one more fiscal year and withhold funds accordingly.

All reports should be submitted in an electronic format (Microsoft Word® or equivalent format). They should be provided via electronic mail, made available on a specified ftp site, or sent by mail on a disk of acceptable format.

Data and Project Deliverables

Projects funded by the Commission, including but not limited to survey, monitoring, research, or management projects, shall provide data as part of the deliverables. Due to the varied nature of funded projects, data deliverables will vary on a case by case basis. The below information is meant as guidance. Specific project data deliverables will be included in all approved proposals from 2018 forward. Principal investigators shall submit the approved data deliverables with the final report.

Photos

Principal investigators will be required to submit a minimum of ten (10) digital images with a resolution of at least 360 dpi with the final report. If the project has before and after components, 5 sets of before and after comparison images would be ideal. Funds for film and processing to complete this requirement may be requested in the project budget. Images or slides should depict various aspects of the project, including the procedures employed and the species involved. Digital images may be used in Commission presentations and publications and are helpful in sharing State Wildlife Grant "success stories."

Spatial Files

In Program-funded projects that have spatial components, spatial files should be included in the project data deliverables (e.g. prescribed burns, seagrass mapping). In most cases, spatial data should be submitted in polygon or closed polygon feature shapefile(s) (.shp) with a projection in WGS_1984_UTM_Zone_16N (or 17N) or NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_16N (or 17N) format. If satellite images were acquired for the project, those images should be provided as well.

Data and Databases

Database(s) for all project raw data will be required as part of the project deliverables. Project data forms and proposed database formats should be reviewed with Commission staff at the project's inception. Upon project completion, principal investigators shall submit legible copies of their project data forms and a copy of their database(s) containing data. Databases must be stored in an acceptable file format. The latest version of Microsoft Excel is preferred, but other quarriable formats are acceptable. Use of other formats must be approved by the Program Coordinator. Where applicable, minimal data fields for datasets will be determined during project development and included in the approved project proposal for clarification purposes. Typical data fields will include date, time, observer, species observations, and locality information (e.g. latitude and longitude and mapping datum).

Projects that focus on procuring existing data resources must provide a resource directory summarizing the source files procured for analysis. The directory will include the name of the source file, the 'use' status of the file in relation to final project analysis (used vs. not used), a web link to the most

current version of the source file (if available), the contact information of the person providing the source file, and the sensitivity status of the source file. Non-original data resources collected for use in analysis should be delivered in both the format in which they were obtained as well as in the format in which they were converted for analysis (if conversion was necessary). In all cases, the version of the mined dataset that was used in the final analysis is the version of the dataset that is to be provided with the final project deliverables.

If the project produces notable species observations, Commission staff will transfer project data into the appropriate Commission database. The Data Management staff may spot-check entries for accuracy, as well as spot-check latitude/longitude coordinates. Questions about data entry will be referred back to the principal investigator for clarification or justification. While observing species, if effects of disturbance may be possible, data should include causes and effects of disturbance.

Metadata

Metadata must be created and maintained for each database. Metadata answers the who, what, where, when and how of data collection. Grantees are required to input metadata information for completed projects into MetaRep or provide all necessary information for Program staff to do so on their behalf.

Partnership Participation and Workshops

Many Program-funded projects include heavy partnership/collaborator participation, for example workshops and/or trainings. In such cases, directories for partner participants/attendees may be required as part of the project data deliverables.

Outreach and Publications

Any publications (e.g. technical reports, transcripts, journals, manuscripts, and/or white paper) produced during the project period should be included in project data deliverables. If publications occur outside of the project period, the Program requests that they be submitted for inclusion in project files. Presentations, meeting flyers, posters, etc. for projects that include outreach events and/or workshops may also be requested.

Web-based Tools and Websites

Projects that develop or enhance websites must provide a directory of web pages that were created or modified. The directory must include, at a minimum, the following fields: URL, Content State (Static or Dynamic), Page History (New or Modified), and site map. Projects that create interactive web application must provide a directory of files that are comprised within the Application.

Payments

The final determination for the disbursement of funds will be negotiated during the development of the agreement to ensure that the State receives the best delivery of service and best value. Typically, an interim or final report documenting project progress and deliverables as well as an invoice with associated financial documentation are required to complete a request for payment, and must be submitted in accordance to the schedule and with sufficient detail as negotiated in the agreement. Any match met during the reporting period should be submitted with the invoice. The match should be documented according to the budget categories shown in the budget narrative and budget form for the project; e.g. Salaries and Wages, Travel, Materials and Supplies, etc. If match gets significantly out of balance with payments received, the Commission can withhold payment.

To guarantee that the Commission receives timely and satisfactory deliverables, a percentage (typically 20-25%) of the total funds may be withheld for the receipt of the data deliverables and Certificate of Completion.

Projects developed jointly by more than one institution must specify one institution as the primary institution. The agreement will be between the Commission and the primary institution. Progress and final reports will be expected from, and payments made to, the primary institution.

Recording and Reporting the Effects of Research

Scientists have an obligation to assess the impact of their research and to minimize such impacts. Scientists should always weigh potential gain in knowledge against the adverse consequences of disruption. Principal investigators should clearly describe the nature of their disturbance including the frequency and duration of intrusions so that others can evaluate the data and conclusions. All reports should include a summary of the disturbance and effects caused by the investigation.

Permit Requirements

It will be the responsibility of all recipients either prior to or immediately after receiving notification of a grant award, to apply for and secure any permits required to conduct the proposed work. Program staff cannot lobby for or expedite the issuance of any permit on behalf of a recipient, but upon request may provide written verification of a grant award to any permitting office or agency. Recipients should be aware that up to 90 days or longer may be required to process some State permit applications. Recipients will provide the Program with a copy of permits required for the proposed work.

APPENDIX I: IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

The Program provides opportunity to shape the future of wildlife in Florida. Funding from State Wildlife Grants is applied to the State Wildlife Action Plan's priorities, which leverage additional support through matching requirements. Successful and long-term conservation of Florida's natural resources will require the combined activity of the FWC and many partners in other agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals in both the public and private sector. Partnerships need to be multidimensional – with partners contributing in numerous ways including expertise, financial and in-kind support, political strength, public support, communications and policy development. Partnering is an effective way to involve different constituencies and promote proactive conservation efforts among diverse interests.

Commission staff and partners sets goals and measurable objectives for implementing the State Wildlife Action Plan. Implementation Goals direct the use of Commission resources including State Wildlife Grants and provide opportunities for partners to align conservation priorities to conserve Florida's fish and wildlife. Commission staff revises the State Wildlife Action Plan along with the Implementation Goals approximately every five years. Regular updates allow for integration of new information, evaluation of priorities, and opportunity to engage with partners. This adaptive framework allows the Commission and citizens to assess, learn from, and modify the Action Plan. The following Implementation Goals and objectives will be achieved through five State Wildlife Grant funding cycles, with projects beginning in 2019.

Implementation Goals target high priority needs that have a significant impact to the state's Species of Greatest Conservation Need. While the objectives of each Implementation Goal measure a specific management action, they will also lead to an even more significant conservation benefit in the long term.

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT INTEGRITY

Goal: Improve and maintain the quality of upland habitats for the benefit of SGCN.

Objective: Apply fire-related management on at least 150,000 acres of priority upland habitat.

Priority habitats: sandhill, scrub, pine flatwoods, dry prairie, pine rockland and associated wetlands

AQUATIC HABITAT RESILIENCY

Goal: Improve aquatic ecosystem habitat quality and connectivity for the benefit of SGCN.

Objective**:** Improve physical habitats in aquatic systems by restoring and enhancing at least 3000 feet of stream habitat and 1000 acres of wetlands utilized by SGCN.

Priority habitats: forested and non-forested wetlands, rivers and streams

MARINE & ESTUARINE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

Goal: Improve marine and estuarine ecosystem habitat quality for the benefit of SGCN.

Objective 1: Complete at least 4 acres of high priority coastal habitat improvement by creating or restoring habitat in each of oyster reef, mangrove, salt marsh, and upland buffer.

Objective 2: Increase coral cover by at least 25% on no fewer than 60 reefs through the repeated outplanting of no less than 60,000 colonies of reef-building elkhorn, brain, boulder, and star corals and monitor outplant success for at least a five-year period.

Priority habitats: saltmarsh, mangrove, oyster reef, seagrass, coral reef

RESEARCH & MONITORING

Goal: Produce research and monitoring results that will improve management of SGCN and their habitats.

Objective 1: Acquire information necessary to improve the management of at least 5 SGCN or their habitats.

Objective 2: Address climate change vulnerability of at least 2 SGCN by identifying or implementing adaptation strategies.

Objective 3: Maintain and use species and habitat status assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation actions.

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