

**Request for Proposals – Montana Community-Bear Conflict Prevention  
Efforts Fund**  
*Spring 2025 Cycle*



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## Funding Overview

The Montana Community-Bear Conflict Prevention Efforts Fund (Fund) provides funding for the development and implementation of community-led, non-lethal carnivore conflict prevention tools through the geographic range of grizzly bears in Montana. The Fund is made available by America the Beautiful Challenge grant funds through Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MT FWP) and is administered by Heart of the Rockies Initiative (HRI).

In 2023, MT FWP and HRI applied for the America the Beautiful Challenge grant to support existing and new partnerships that are implementing and expanding locally-led carnivore conflict reduction programs, which are hindered by inadequate funding resources. MT FWP was awarded \$4,972,308, with approximately \$1 million of the award being dedicated to new(er) partnerships forming in Montana communities to address bear-conflicts. America the Beautiful Challenge grant funds are made possible by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, through cooperative agreements from the Department of Interior, Department of Defense, and the Department of Agriculture's US Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

## Available Funding

There is approximately \$1 million available for community-bear conflict prevention efforts, to be distributed in at least two (2) funding cycles. A second funding cycle will be announced in the fall of 2025. The amount of available funding for the Spring 2025 cycle is approximately \$500,000. Applicants may request a **minimum of \$10,000** and a **maximum of \$150,000**. The number of \$150k awards made in the funding cycle will depend on the number of applications received and the overall scoring/quality of the applications.

The Montana Community-Bear Conflict Prevention Efforts Fund is a reimbursement grant program. If awarded, an entity may receive reimbursement only **after** the entity has expended funds on an eligible expense and submitted adequate documentation. The applicant entity may request reimbursement on a monthly basis.

## Application Period

The application period is open **February 25, 2025** and closes **March 24, 2025 at 5:00pm**. Applications are accepted via a submitted Word document, *Montana Community-Bear Conflict Prevention Efforts Fund Application*, found at <https://heart-of-rockies.org/ccr/grants/application-materials/>. MT FWP and HRI anticipate announcing grant awards in April 2025 and issuing subrecipient agreements in May 2025.

Completed applications must be submitted as a Word document to [atbcsubmission@heart-of-rockies.org](mailto:atbcsubmission@heart-of-rockies.org) before the closing date and time. Please note that character counts, which includes spaces, are associated with application questions. **Any application response that exceeds the character count limit will be deleted at the limit by the HRI Rural Initiatives Manager prior to the review panel scoring.**

## Project Period

Projects may begin once the subrecipient agreement has been fully signed. It is expected that agreements will be signed and projects may begin by the end of May 2025. Project expenses incurred prior to the start date are ineligible for reimbursement.

Funding is available through July 31, 2027. Single and multi-year funding is available. For single year projects (2025), project work must be completed by December 31, 2025 and a final report and final invoice is due by January 31, 2026. For multi-year projects, the following project close and reporting schedule will be followed:

- For projects from May 2025 – December 2026: Projects must be completed by December 31, 2026. An interim report will be required by January 31, 2026. A final report and final invoice will be due January 31, 2027.
- For projects from May 2025 – July 2027: Projects must be completed by July 31, 2027. Interim reports will be required by January 31, 2026 and January 31, 2027. A final report and final invoice will be due August 31, 2027.

## Match Requirements & Documentation

There is no match requirement for this Request for Proposals (RFP). However, applications providing up to 10% in matching funds is preferred. Up to 7.5% of the matching funds can come from in-kind contributions; 2.5% of the matching funds **must** be cash contributions. All matching funds must come from **non-federal** sources. Project expenses incurred prior to the start date are ineligible match. Documentation tracking match will be required. Documentation includes providing receipts and/or other supporting documents for expenses incurred, including cash or in-kind matching contributions.

## Eligible Applicants

### Definitions

*Applicant:* For the purpose of this RFP, an “Applicant” is defined as the entity requesting grant funds to implement the proposed project activities. The applicant is responsible for the administration and management of grant activities.

*Fiscal Sponsor:* For the purpose of this RFP, a “Fiscal Sponsor” is defined as an entity that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services if the applicant entity is not an eligible applicant as defined below.

Eligible applicants may include Tribal, county, or local municipal governments, school districts, and nonprofit entities. If an applicant entity, such as a local collaborative/working group, does not fit eligibility requirements, the applicant may utilize a fiscal sponsor that is an eligible applicant organization. Please see *Project Support/Approval* on page 4 for more information regarding fiscal sponsorship requirements. Eligible applicants will be asked to provide their Employer Identification Number (EIN) in the application. If awarded grant funding, the eligible applicant will be required to provide a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and maintain an active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). This process can take time, so it is encouraged to be ahead of the registration process. The details and processes for registration can be found at <https://sam.gov/entity-registration>.

An applicant can submit one (1) grant application per funding cycle. If awarded, the applicant/fiscal sponsor will enter into a subrecipient agreement. HRI will administer and be the liaison of the subrecipient agreement and MT FWP will provide oversight and guidance to special conditions of the overall grant award.

## Project Eligibility

The Montana Community-Bear Conflict Prevention Efforts Fund will support community initiatives that are designed to prevent conflict with bears, with special focus on grizzly bears, in Montana. Grant funding will support **conflict prevention and bear awareness** projects that are seeking funding for staff capacity, outreach and education initiatives/events, electric fencing and mats, and bear-resistant/attractant mitigation infrastructure.

Examples of eligible project activities include:

- Staff time to support carnivore conflict reduction program activities (program coordination, budget management, data analysis, and program reporting).
- Staff time for education and outreach activities.

- Outreach and education initiatives/events that increase the public’s awareness and knowledge of grizzly bear behavior, ecology, conflict reduction strategies, safety, and resources available to reduce conflict and promote connectivity.
- Printed materials for outreach and education initiatives.
- Portable or permanent electric fencing and/or electric drive-over mats to secure both temporary and permanent attractants. Attractants include, but are not limited to, fruit trees, apiaries, existing compost piles, trash cans/dumpsters, residential areas, livestock/animal carcasses, and granaries.
- Purchase and distribution of bear-resistant garbage cans, dumpsters, grease traps, food storage lockers, etc.
- Modification of existing transfer stations and/or container sites to better secure attractants.
- Establishment of new, and secured, transfer stations in rural areas to serve communities where no sanitation services currently exist.
- Modification of grain bin doors to better secure attractants.
- Equipment **may** be eligible for grant funding, but will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Examples of ineligible project activities include:

- Establishment of a carcass composting site.
- Carcass removal programs.
- Range riding programs.
- Trail camera programs.
- Staff time unrelated to eligible activities listed above.

If an applicant is interested in range riding and/or carcass management, please reach out to Steve Primm, HRI Carnivore Conflict Reduction Manager, at [steve@heart-of-rockies.org](mailto:steve@heart-of-rockies.org).

## **Permissions/Project Considerations**

If the applicant is awarded grant funding as a subrecipient, there are a variety of permissions/project considerations that will be required. While these aren’t required to be identified within the application proposal, the information provided below is for applicant awareness and preparation. The full permissions/project considerations that will be required can be found in [Appendix A: Special Conditions](#) and [Appendix B: Example Subrecipient Agreement](#).

*Environmental Review Requirements:* If the project is proposing any permanent electric fence or electric drive-over mats, the subrecipient must notify Heart of the Rockies Initiative and the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. The Partners Program will provide support to secure all required environmental and archaeological/cultural permits before any installation or construction commences.

*Procurement/Subcontracting:* The subrecipient must follow federal cost principles as defined in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E and Procurement Standards/Property Standards in 2 CFR 200 Subpart D. In addition, any subletting or subcontracting by Subrecipient subjects subcontractors to the same provisions in accordance with 49-3-207, MCA, and Executive Order No. 04-2016.

*Buy America Build America Act:* The subrecipient must comply with the Buy America Build America Act as required by Section 70914 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

*Requirement to Report Duplicative Funding:* The subrecipient agrees that if it currently has an open award of federal funds or if it receives a federal award other than this award, and those award funds have been, are being used, in whole or in part, for one or more of the identical cost items for which funds are being provided under this award, the subrecipient will promptly notify, in writing, the State Project and Administrative Liaison to eliminate any inappropriate duplication of funding.

*Communications:* The subrecipient must acknowledge MT FWP, HRI, and the federal funding source in any public notices, reports, publications, audiovisual productions, project literature, and at all public meetings and programs where the project is discussed.

*Risk Assessment:* The subrecipient must conduct a risk assessment with MT FWP before an award is made and may be deemed necessary throughout the life of the agreement.

## Project Support/Approval

For applicants that require a fiscal sponsor, a letter of commitment is **required** from the chosen fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor's letter of commitment must meet the following requirements:

- Letter is typed, signed, and dated from the primary contact listed in the application.
- Letter is current and references the specific project/grant year for which the applicant is applying.
- Letter states their commitment as a fiscal sponsor throughout the duration of the proposed project period.
- Letter states that they are committed to entering into a subrecipient agreement.
- Letter acknowledges that it is understood that the Fund is a reimbursement grant program and that the fiscal sponsor is willing/able to support project costs until reimbursements are made.

General letters of support are not required, but are accepted. If the applicant chooses to submit any letters of support, they must meet the following requirements:

- Letters are typed, signed, and dated.
- Letters are current and reference the specific project/grant year for which the applicant is applying.
- Letters are unique and offer additional context and/or add/confirm context from the project proposal.

## Application Questions & Scoring Criteria

The application is broken into six (6) sections and worth a total of 150 points. The application review panel will score applications based on the criteria described in the following subsections (see *Application Review* page 6). For applications to be considered for funding, a minimum of 100 average points must be received from the review panel scoring. For a full list of the application questions and the scoring matrix, please see [Appendix C: Montana Community-Bear Conflict Prevention Efforts Fund Application & Ranking Criteria](#).

### Section 1: Applicant Details

This section is a Pass/Fail scoring. The applicant entity will be required to provide primary contact information, the mission/vision of the applicant entity, and identify applicant eligibility type or provide fiscal sponsor information. For the purpose of this RFP, a "Primary Contact" is defined as the individual representative from the applicant entity that is responsible for the administration and management of grant activities.

### Section 2: Project Overview

*Project Location:* The proposed project location has a defined boundary as described by town(s), county(ies), and/or watershed-scale focus area. Points are given to those projects that fall within known or projected grizzly bear habitat/connectivity corridor as defined in the map to the right (Figure 1).

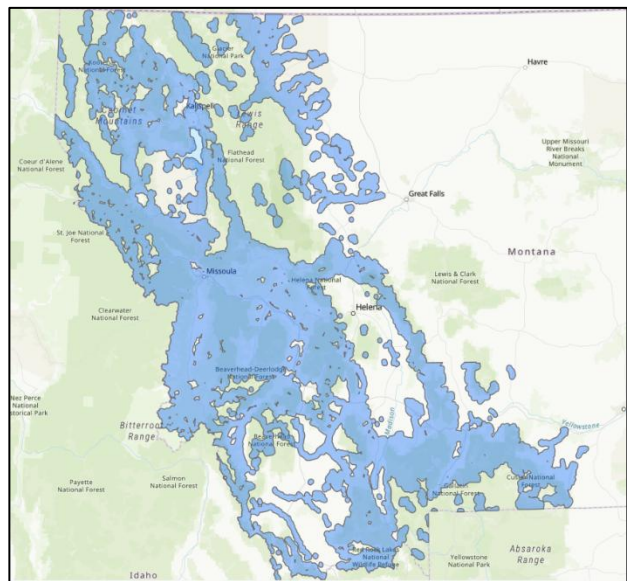


Figure 1: Grizzly bear habitat/connectivity map from model data compiled by Dr. Sarah Sells.



*Local Working Group:* The proposed project identifies and describes community/local participation and coordination to address bear-conflict in the project location and/or a plan for future/further engagement with the broader community. For the purposes of this RFP, a "local working group" is defined as collection of at least four (4) individuals, from a diverse sector of the local community(ies) within the defined project area, that come together with some regularity to address bear-conflict and lead the coordination of prevention measures. A local working group may have participation from local MT FWP game wardens and bear management specialists, as well as advisory participation from non-governmental partners that are supporting the effort.

*Project Description:* Applicant provides a clear project overview that defines what the project will accomplish.

### **Section 3: Project Description & Need**

This section is a narrative response that describes why/how the applicant organization/group is addressing conflict prevention, history of conflicts, past and current activities/efforts that address(ed) conflicts in the project area, the proposed project's goals and how they fit into a longer-term strategy/plan, and what the proposed project is seeking funding for.

### **Section 4: Project Implementation**

*Partnerships:* Applicant identifies established partnerships and their roles/responsibilities in the proposed project.

*Project Timeline:* Applicant describes a clear timeline for proposed project activities, including the month/year per activity.

*Project Budget:* Applicant provides a detailed budget breakdown of the total project costs and for each of the proposed activities that will be funded by the Fund. This includes narrative detail on how budget costs were estimated and how the funds will be spent and distributed. **An applicant requesting funding to administer the program, budget, and financial management and/or program reporting should include these costs as a part of their staff capacity activity requests.**

*Project Match:* The applicant provides matching funds/sources' name, type of match (cash or in-kind), amount, and if it is in-hand (secured), anticipated (not secured, but will likely be received), or pending (not secured, but seeking). Although matching funds are not required, applicants demonstrating the ability to contribute a minimum of 10% of the project's total costs through matching funds will receive additional consideration. For example, if an applicant's total project cost is \$100,000, a 10% matching contribution is \$10,000 and the grant request is \$90,000.

Match contributions may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions may only make up 7.5% of the total match. Qualified match must:

- Come from a **non-federal** source.
- Be an eligible Fund activity.
- Be clearly tied to the proposed project scope.
- Be incurred after the project start date.

In-kind contributions may include the value of volunteer labor, donated professional services, donated materials, etc. General volunteer labor is calculated at \$25/hour. The number of volunteer hours committed as match on the application must be justifiable based on the amount of volunteer labor the applicant utilizes on similar projects. If the applicant receives funding, volunteer hours used as match must be documented using a current volunteer log, provided by HRI, which will also require volunteer and subrecipient point of contact signatures.

## **Section 5: Metrics of Success**

*Evaluation:* Applicant describes how they will evaluate the effectiveness and success of each proposed project activity.

*Metrics:* Applicant provides a number metric that corresponds with each of the proposed project priorities/deliverables. If a metric does not apply to the proposed project, the applicant may enter "0". There are required metrics based on staff capacity, outreach and education initiatives/events, electric fencing and mats, and bear-resistant/attractant mitigation infrastructure activities.

## **Section 6: Additional Uploads (optional)**

The applicant may choose to provide additional uploads that provide context/inform previous sections. The applicant is limited to five (5) attachments and must be in a PDF format. Uploads include, but are not limited to:

- Fiscal sponsor letter.
  - Note: This is **required** for those that are submitting an application with a fiscal sponsor and will be assessed with a Pass/Fail rating.
- Letters of support.
- Photos of conflicts and/or implemented conflict reduction strategies.
- Quotes/bids that informed the budget.
- Other uploads that support the proposed project narrative.

## **Application Review**

Award decisions will be made by the end of April 2025, with subrecipient agreements being completed in May 2025.

### **Review Panel**

There will be a six (6) member review panel that will assess, score, and recommend project funding. The review panel is made up of:

- Two (2) Heart of the Rockies Initiative representatives.
- Two (2) Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks representatives.
- One (1) US Fish and Wildlife Service representative.
- One (1) USDA Wildlife Services representative.

### **Application Review Process**

*Preliminary Review and Scoring:* The review panel will score each project individually using the scoring rubric outlined in *Appendix C*. Final scores will be sent to the HRI Rural Initiatives Manager for compilation and averaging of scores per application. The Rural Initiatives Manager is not on the review panel. Applications that do not score a minimum of 100 average points will not be advanced to the panel meeting review and selection. Applicants will be notified of whether their application will proceed to the review panel.

*Review Panel Meeting:* The review panel will meet to discuss the applications that received the minimum points and will rank them against each other. The review panel may remove an application from consideration if:

- New concerns about the proposed project have materialized that were not brought to attention during the review/scoring period.
- Required documentation was not provided by the applicant and/or there was a "Fail" score in one or more sections.

The review panel may choose to award partial funding to applications. The review panel may award up to \$500k total in grant funding. Applicants that have proposals that advanced to the review panel will be notified of the date of the review panel meeting and must be available for questions that may come up during review panel discussion.

*Recommended Awards:* The review panel will submit final applicant awardees and award amounts to HRI and MT FWP immediately after the meeting.

*Decision Notice:* HRI and MT FWP will reach out to applicants and let each know of the funding decision. For the applicants that were selected for a grant award, HRI and MT FWP will work with them through a subrecipient agreement, risk assessment, and other documentation. Final awards and agreements will be in place in May 2025.

## **Additional Support**

Heart of the Rockies Initiative will provide additional support to applicants that have questions regarding the contents of this RFP, the application and scoring rubric, and/or the Fund in general. HRI will accept questions through **March 20, 2025**. Please send questions to [atbcsubmission@heart-of-rockies.org](mailto:atbcsubmission@heart-of-rockies.org).

In addition, HRI is happy to provide a one-time application pre-review to provide feedback and clarity. **This pre-review does not guarantee the project proposal will be selected for funding by the review panel.** If an applicant would like an application pre-review, please submit a Word document to the HRI Rural Initiatives Manager at [atbcsubmission@heart-of-rockies.org](mailto:atbcsubmission@heart-of-rockies.org) no later than **March 14, 2025**. Please indicate in the email subject line that the submission is a pre-review request.



*Photo courtesy of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes*