

Historically Underserved Farmers Subaward Program: Supporting Farmer Changemakers in the Mississippi River Basin

Updated May 12, 2023

New questions in green

Commonly asked questions (repeated from below sections)

1. Question: Who can I contact with questions or feedback?

Response: Please email WallaceGrants@winrock.org and we will direct your question or feedback to the appropriate person. We will try to answer within three business days. We will edit questions for clarity and remove any identifying information and add our response to this running Questions & Responses list, as well.

2. Question: What definition of historically underserved does the program use?

Response: The program uses the [USDA definition of historically underserved farmers](#). Please note that this program is specifically focused on approaches that support those harmed historically and build intersectional power. Intersectionality means an approach that considers the simultaneous experience of social categories such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Power means having the resources and relationships to realize equitable, resilient, and sustainable farming systems.

3. Question: Can program funding be used for organizing farmers, building the capacity of their associations and cooperatives, or working to develop value chains or markets for crops?

Response: Yes, these could be eligible activities, if they will result in improved water quality or habitat, or support sustainability or resiliency on cropland, grazing lands, or forest lands. We encourage you to make that case in your concept!

4. Question: Is there a map and list showing all/each county covered by the grant?

Response: Yes! The map is available in [Appendix C](#).

5. Question: How will the program measure the impact on waterways and habitats? What metrics has EPA specified?

Response: Basic estimation of environmental results across all subawardees will be provided by Wallace Center and its Ecosystem Services colleagues in Winrock International. This includes a modelled approach to estimate nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loss reductions for practices where data is available. This approach will require subawardees to regularly submit information on farmers reached, acres with new practices or restoration activities (including location, baseline, and practice or habitat type), and expected lifespan of practice. The results will be provided back to subawardees and to EPA for use in their respective communications. This approach will be approved by EPA in a quality assurance project plan developed by Wallace Center staff. We anticipate finalizing the evaluation framework with subawardees once they are determined to make sure the system works for them and meets their needs.

Subawardees are not required to do additional environmental monitoring or modelling and will not be assessed on whether those activities are included. However, subawardees are

encouraged to include these activities to the extent they will be helpful. Organizations that have never done environmental modeling or monitoring are encouraged to apply. The Wallace Center team can support subawardees to develop modeling and/or monitoring processes during the co-design and implementation phases of the program.

General questions

1. Question: Who can I contact with questions or feedback?

Response: Please email WallaceGrants@winrock.org and we will direct your question or feedback to the appropriate person. We will try to answer within three business days. We will edit questions for clarity and remove any identifying information and add our response to this running Questions & Responses list, as well.

2. Question: Does any/all lobbying make an organization ineligible?

Response: Organizations that have 501(c)(4) status are not eligible for funding. Organizations with 501(c)(3) status that conduct limited lobbying are eligible for funding, but funding from this program cannot be used for lobbying.

3. Question: Can one organization apply for funding from the EPA Gulf of Mexico Division subaward programs in other regions?

Response: Yes, organizations can apply for funding from the other EPA Gulf of Mexico Division supported subaward programs. Funding from different programs cannot be used to support the same activities in the same geographic region (which should be mostly a nonissue given that the different programs do not overlap geographically, except for Mississippi). Different programs can fund similar work in different geographies or different work in the same geography. See [pg. 2 of the RFA](#) for information about the other regional subaward programs.

4. Question: Is this the first year of this program?

Response: Yes, this is a new program for the EPA Gulf of Mexico Division and for the Wallace Center.

5. Question: What can prospective applicants expect from the informational webinars on April 5 and April 11?

Response: The Wallace Center team will provide a brief overview of the opportunity and answer questions. Concepts are due **May 15, 2023**. [Register here for upcoming informational webinars.](#)

6. Question: Do all four categories of “Historically Underserved” farmers as defined by USDA (Beginning, Socially Disadvantaged, Veterans, and Limited Resource) qualify for this program?

Response: Yes, we are using the [USDA definition of historically underserved farmers](#). This program is specifically focused on approaches that support those harmed historically and

build intersectional power. Intersectionality means an approach that considers the simultaneous experience of social categories such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Power means having the resources and relationships to realize equitable, resilient, and sustainable farming systems.

7. Question: Can the Wallace Center connect prospective subawardees with other organizations that provide services or technical assistance that are complementary to their concept?

Response: We cannot connect prospective subawardees during the concept phase. During the co-design phase, Wallace Center can work with subawardees to identify potential partners.

8. Question: Can organizations that are not based in the eligible geography submit an application as the lead organization?

Response: Yes, as long as the proposed project activities fall entirely within the eligible geography.

9. Question: Do Amish farmers qualify as underserved?

Response: This program uses the USDA definition of historically underserved farmers. Amish farmers may fit under one of the USDA categories. Please note that this program is specifically focused on approaches that support those harmed historically and build intersectional power. Intersectionality means an approach that considers the simultaneous experience of social categories such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Power means having the resources and relationships to realize equitable, resilient, and sustainable farming systems.

10. Question: How will the program measure the impact on waterways and habitats? What metrics has EPA specified?

Response: Basic estimation of environmental results across all subawardees will be provided by Wallace Center and its Ecosystem Services colleagues in Winrock International. This includes a modelled approach to estimate nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loss reductions for practices where data is available. This approach will require subawardees to regularly submit information on farmers reached, acres with new practices or restoration activities (including location, baseline, and practice or habitat type), and expected lifespan of practice. The results will be provided back to subawardees and to EPA for use in their respective communications. This approach will be approved by EPA in a quality assurance project plan developed by Wallace Center staff. We anticipate finalizing the evaluation framework with subawardees once they are determined to make sure the system works for them and meets their needs.

Subawardees are not required to do additional environmental monitoring or modelling and will not be assessed on whether those activities are included. However, subawardees are encouraged to include these activities to the extent they will be helpful. Organizations that have never done environmental modelling or monitoring are encouraged to apply. The Wallace Center team can support subawardees to develop modelling and/or monitoring processes during the co-design and implementation phases of the program.

11. Question: Will grantees be required to disclose what management practices are installed as a result of project investment?

Response: Yes, Wallace Center will need this information for all projects so that we may estimate nutrient and sediment loss reductions. We can report only aggregated results to EPA so information on specific projects will remain with Wallace Center.

12. Question: Can multiple tribal nations apply together?

Response: Intertribal consortia are eligible to apply.

13. Question: How many awards will this program fund?

Response: We expect to award between 8-20 subawards between \$75,000-\$250,000 per subaward.

14. Question: How are farmers defined for the purposes of this program? Due to system inequity and histories of enslavement, forced labor, and land theft, many Indigenous and Black communities do not have many “farmers” or people who consider themselves to be “farmers”.

Response: Thank you for raising this. Wallace Center acknowledges this program is embedded in a long history of violence and inequities that have resulted in the “farming” population we have today, and that some definitions of “farmer” aren’t inclusive of many land stewards. For this program, “farmers” include individuals that make management decisions concerning agriculture lands, including cropland, forestland, and grazing lands. Projects can also work with underserved communities to the end of supporting sustainable or resilient management of cropland, forestland, or grazing land. Participants do not have to consider themselves “farmers” as long as activities are focused on cropland, grazing lands, or forest lands.

15. Question: Am I eligible to apply for a subaward as a farmer or farm business?

Response: Individuals and for-profit organizations are not eligible applicants. Individuals and for-profit organizations may receive passthrough funding from organizations that receive subawards. If you are an individual farm, consider sharing this opportunity with organizations you look to for support.

16. Question: If your concept note is selected, are you guaranteed to receive funding for a full proposal?

Response: We expect that all applicants that are selected in the competitive concept phase will move into the co-design phase to develop full project implementation plans. All of these applicants are expected to be funded in the award phase as long as they meet expectations and submit required implementation, communications, and evaluation materials. Organizations may withdraw during the co-design phase if any prohibitive issues arise, as well.

17. Question: Is there a Tribal set aside for program funding?

Response: No, but Native American tribes and tribal organizations are encouraged to apply!

18. Question: Will funding through this program be offered in the future?

Response: Wallace Center will only offer another funding round if all funds are not allocated in this round (submission date May 15, 2023). We're currently not aware of EPA's future plans to offer this program again. The EPA Gulf of Mexico Division's website and any funding announcements are at: <https://www.epa.gov/gulfofmexico>

19. Question: Do the farmer participants need to be landowners?

Response: No, participating farmers do not have to be landowners.

20. Question: We intend to use an existing approach to report water quality and other parameters for farm practices. Do we have to use a specific system for reporting?

Response: In order to estimate consistent results across all subawardees and to increase the flexibility for subawardees who do not want to pursue their own water quality analyses, there will be a centralized approach led by the Wallace Center to estimate nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loss reductions for practices where data is available. This approach will require subawardees to regularly submit information on farmers reached, acres with new practices or restoration activities (including location, baseline, and practice or habitat type), and expected lifespan of practice. You are also encouraged to use your existing approach and we will work with you in the co-design phase to streamline data collection as much as possible. Your approach may also require quality assurance documentation per EPA policies. We can support you to generate this documentation if you do not already have it.

21. Question: Can programs provide farmers with stipends for contributing their involvement in the program or in exchange for implementing new practices?

Response: Yes, farmer stipends, incentives, cost share, and other participant support costs are all eligible.

22. Question: Do the farmers need to be known at the time of concept submission? What information about the farmers needs to be shared in the concept note?

Response: No, the farmers do not need to be known at the time of concept submission. Please provide as much detail as you know about the geography, demographics, and characteristics of the farmers you will serve in your concept note, as this is part of the evaluation criteria.

23. Question: Who are the "subawardees"? Do applications have to regrant to other organizations beyond the applicant to be eligible?

Response: For this program, the "subawardees" are the successful applicants who will implement three year programs. The "awardee" is Wallace Center at Winrock International, who is administering the program. The mechanism for subawards from Wallace Center to successful applicants is expected to be grants. Applicants are not required to have lower-tier subawards or grants, though this is an eligible expense if it makes sense for your program.

Geography eligibility questions

1. Question: Are proposed activities based in Iowa eligible for funding from this subaward program?

Response: No, Iowa is not included under this program. Wallace Center's subaward program can only support activities that fall entirely within the Gulf drainage portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

However, Wallace Center's program is one of four different competitive subaward programs supported by the EPA Gulf of Mexico Division. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is serving the state of Iowa with their subaward program. [More information on Iowa DNR's program is available here.](#)

2. Question: Are proposed activities in North Dakota along the Missouri River eligible for funding from this subaward program?

Response: No areas within North Dakota are included under this program. Wallace Center's subaward program can only support activities that fall entirely within the Gulf drainage portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Wallace Center's program is one of four different competitive subaward programs supported by the EPA Gulf of Mexico Division ([see map at the bottom of this page](#)) but none of them include the Dakotas.

3. Question: Is there a map and list showing all/each county covered by the grant?

Response: Yes! The map is available in [Appendix C](#).

4. Question: If my organization serves the entire state of Minnesota (which has partial eligibility for this program based on watershed boundaries), can I only able to submit projects for farmers located in eligible counties? Or can I propose statewide activities?

Response: Because this program is funded by the EPA Gulf of Mexico Division, project activities and impacted acres must be located within the Gulf drainage portion of Minnesota ([see eligibility map for more](#)). Activities located outside of that region in Minnesota are not eligible for funding. Broader communications activities to the end of supporting underserved farmers and acreage within the Gulf drainage are eligible for funding.

5. Question: If an organization covers more than one state in the eligible program geography (i.e., Illinois and Wisconsin), should applicants submit separate concepts for funding by state or submit a multi-state concept?

Response: Applicants may only submit one application per prime organization under this Request for Applications. Multi-state projects are eligible for funding.

Activity eligibility questions

1. Question: Is widescale restoration of a particular crop or species on underserved farmers' land an eligible activity?

Response: Restoration of a particular species working with underserved farmers could definitely be eligible. Make your case in your concept note that your proposed solution can support improved water quality or habitat, or sustainability or resiliency on cropland, grazing lands, or forest lands!

2. Question: Can program funding be used for organizing farmers and building the capacity of their associations and cooperatives?

Response: Yes, these could be eligible activities, if they will result in improved water quality or habitat, or support sustainability or resiliency on cropland, grazing lands, or forest lands. We encourage you to make that case in your concept!

3. Question: If it will be challenging to determine the potential number of farmers or acres reached as part of the project (e.g., too hard to identify yet because of the novelty of the practice or crop), is a concept focused on that practice at a disadvantage or ineligible?

Response: Part of the concept evaluation criteria is to understand the proposed approach to work within a specific community and how many underserved farmers will be included in that approach. We are open to novel approaches that have the potential to reach people beyond the three-year period of the project.

4. Question: How is the eligibility of a given conservation or management practice determined (i.e., are all NRCS practices eligible)?

Response: Proposed practices do not need to meet NRCS practice standards. Proposed practices should support either water quality, habitat, or forestry sustainability and resilience.

5. Question: Are practices that impact water quantity eligible?

Response: Water quantity is not a specific target of this program. However, water quality and water quantity are related so water quantity practices (like spring water development) may be considered if they are demonstrated to also impact water quality.

6. Question: The program description states that projects can work with underserved farmers AND communities, are concepts that focus more on underserved communities eligible for funding?

Response: Proposed activities must include support for underserved farmers on conservation practices, but broader community outreach and engagement are encouraged.

7. Question: Is technology utilized in conservation practices eligible for funding under this program?

Response: Equipment purchases are allowable under this program as long as the equipment is necessary to fulfill the habitat, water quality, or forestry outcomes of the proposed project.

8. Question: Do proposed conservation and management practices need to improve water quality, habitat, AND forestry resilience/sustainability?

Response: No, proposed practices must improve either water quality, habitat, OR forestry resilience or sustainability. Proposed practices can improve outcomes across all three categories but are only required to improve outcomes in one.

9. Question: Would a project that focused on identifying and surveying underserved farmers in the program geography be eligible for funding?

Response: Activities that focus on outreach to underserved farmers in the program geography are eligible for funding. However, projects must include working directly with underserved farmers to achieve conservation goals in at least one of the following areas: water quality initiatives, habitat restoration, and/or sustainable forage management.

10. Question: Are food distribution-focused projects eligible for funding?

Response: Projects must directly work with underserved farmers on improving water quality and increasing the environmental sustainability or resilience of their operations. Projects that support markets and value chains for farmers can be part of a project to the extent that they support those outcomes also. Projects will need to track acres with new practices including location, baseline practices, and new/added management practices and their expected lifespan.

11. Question: Are land surveys an allowable financial assistance for forest landowners?

Response: Yes. Please indicate in your concept note how you anticipate land surveys will help forest landowners improve water quality, habitat, or forestry outcomes.

12. Question: Could projects address water concerns related to PFAS and/or neonicotinoids?

Response: Yes, addressing community water quality resource concerns is encouraged! The program's centralized evaluation framework will focus on sediment and nutrient nonpoint pollution but we encourage applicants to propose their own water quality resource concerns and environmental monitoring as it will help them reach their goals.

13. Question: Can farmer cooperatives seek funding?

Response: Please ensure that the lead applicant is an eligible entity (state or interstate agency, federal or state designated tribe, intertribal consortia, institution of higher learning, or nonprofit). Multiple organizations can work together. Additionally, projects must directly support water quality, habitat, or sustainable forest outcomes. Please explain in your concept how the cooperative will support those outcomes.

14. Question: Is urban farming an eligible activity to receive funding?

Response: Urban farming may be an eligible activity if the activities supported on those farms will result in improved water quality or habitat, or support sustainability or resiliency on cropland, grazing lands, or forest lands. We encourage you to make that case in your concept! We are not evaluating concepts on the magnitude of acres or water quality improvements, but we can only fund projects that do improve water quality or environmental resilience and work with underserved farmers.

15. Question: Are farms that are not near a water source eligible to participate in this program?

Response: Yes, the only geographic requirement for participating farms is that they fall entirely within the Gulf drainage portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Concept/application questions

1. Question: Can Wallace Center give feedback on specific ideas?

Response: In the concept phase, Wallace Center cannot answer anything that gives feedback on specific project activities or would give any applicant an advantage over any other. We can speak to eligibility questions or clarify aspects of the Request for Applications. Once we have entered the co-design phase of the project after the submission of concept notes, we are able to discuss anything about your proposed project, including offering feedback.

2. Question: Are applicants required to use the application and budget templates?

Response: No. These templates are offered as a way to simplify the application process and include the required information. An excel budget is not required for submission and will not be evaluated in the concept phase (though it is encouraged to the extent it helps you right-size your proposed work). You are welcome to use other formats as long as they meet the requirements of the RFA.

3. Question: Will funded projects need to track how many underserved farmers are served by project activities?

Response: Yes, one of the metrics of the program is underserved farmers served. During the three-year implementation phase, funded projects will need to track and report the number of underserved farmers served (disaggregated by type of undeserved farmer) and the location and number of acres under improved management as a result of project activities. Funded projects will also need to track and report what practices were in place on those acres prior to project activities and what practices are in place as a result of project activities.

The Wallace Center team will use these data to model nutrient and sediment loss reduction estimates across the full program and by individual subawardee project. These results will be shared with subawardees for use in subawardee communications.

4. Question: Is there a minimum number of farmers that should be served by proposed projects?

Response: No, there is no minimum number of farmers.

5. Question: Can subawardees report on and/or develop metrics to evaluate project impacts beyond metrics that measure specific improvements in water quality, habitat, or forestry resilience or sustainability (e.g., metrics that measure carbon reduction as a result of project activities)?

Response: Yes, Wallace Center is committed to supporting subawardees to measure outcomes that are relevant and important to them and their work!

6. Question: Do subawardees need to meet environmental goals of the program using environmental data collected over the course of their project?

Response: Wallace Center is taking a modelled approach across all funded projects to estimate nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loss reductions for practices where data are available. This approach will require subawardees to regularly submit information on farmers

reached, acres with new practices or restoration activities (including location, baseline, and practice or habitat type), and expected lifespan of practice. The results will be provided back to subawardees and to EPA for use in their respective communications.

Subawardees are not required to do additional environmental monitoring or modelling and will not be assessed on whether those activities are included. However, subawardees are encouraged to include these activities to the extent they will be helpful.

Organizations that have not ever done environmental modeling or monitoring are encouraged to apply. The Wallace Center team can support subawardees to develop modeling and/or monitoring processes during the co-design and implementation phases of the program.

7. Question: Will concepts that focus on priority watersheds score higher during the review process?

Response: No, this is not one of the evaluation criteria that will be considered during concept review.

8. Question: What will the monitoring system look like for this program and what kind of data collection/reporting (if any) on the environmental impacts will be required by the participating farmers or organizations?

Response: This system will be informed by subawardees and is still in development, but the minimum requirement will be reporting information on number of farmers served (disaggregated by race, gender, beginning farmers, and other types of info as subawardees are interested in) and acres with new practices and restoration activities (including location, baseline management, new practice or restoration activities, habitat type if relevant, and expected lifespan of practice). This information will be reported to EPA and used as an input to a modelled approach for estimating nutrient and sediment loss reductions, results of which will be shared back to subawardees for use in their communications if desired.

Subawardees are not required to do additional environmental monitoring or modelling and will not be assessed on whether those activities are included. However, subawardees are encouraged to include these activities to the extent they will be helpful, e.g. if inclusion of these activities might expand the subawardee's funding sources, build relationships with new partners such as researchers, or help tell the conservation success stories of the subawardee or participating farmers. If these activities are planned, please note that subawardees may need to develop quality assurance project plans, which the Wallace Center can support.

9. Question: Can consultants be paid under the line item of a subaward?

Response: The answer depends on the scope of work of the contracted party. If your organization has developed policies on the allocation of costs within a budget, please follow those policies for the concept phase budget. We are able to support subawardees with full budget development in the co-design phase.

10. Question: Can budgets change during the co-design phase?

Response: The budget total/ceiling cannot change. The amount budgeted to different line items (e.g., salary, travel) may change.

11. Question: Can applicants reach out to advisors for support on application development?

Response: Advisors are available to help answer and direct general questions about the program at the concept stage. After the concept stage is complete, advisors are able to advise on your specific project ideas. In addition, advisors do have relevant networks and programming open to many applicants, so feel free to reach out to be connected to their services and networks as appropriate.

12. Question: At what stage of the application process do applicants need to have confirmed the number of farmers and acres?

Response: Applicants should include the estimated number of farmers and acres reached in their concept note.

13. Question: Does this funding cover the cost of personnel?

Response: Yes.

14. Question: Does this funding have a match requirement?

Response: No, subawardees are not required to provide match and it will not benefit your application.

15. Question: Were the webinars recorded?

Response: Yes! If you scroll down to the orange boxes on the [program page](#), you'll see "Watch Pre-Application Webinar Recordings," which has the [three recordings](#) from the webinars in March and April.

16. Question: The concept paper length maximum is 4 pages. Does this include the budget included in the template?

Response: The four page limit includes the simple budget table in the template.

17. Question: Does there need to be a separate budget submitted per APPENDIX-B-OPTIONAL-Budget-Template.xlsx with the Concept?

Response: No, we do not need an excel budget—the excel template is only provided to help generate a summary budget if needed or helpful.

18. Question: How solidified do our commitments from our partner organizations need to be for the concept submission? May we use the co-design phase to solidify those plans?

Response: Please share your plans as part of the concept application, but these plans may be solidified during the co-design phase. Please note that your budget total will not be able to change after the concept phase, but line items may change.

19. Question: Can the \$8,000 co-design grant be separated out as a line item in the budget, if desired by the applicant?

Response: Yes. Please note that your program total is inclusive of this initial grant for co-design whether or not it is listed separately from the other categories.