



WILDLIFE INFRASTRUCTURE AT-A-GLANCE WILDLIFE CROSSING PILOT PROGRAM (WCPP) (23 U.S.C. § 171)

FY23 Next Steps: Released on April 4, 2023, the [FY22-23 Notice of Funding Opportunity for Wildlife Crossings Program](#) (NOFO) for the Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program (WCPP) solicits applications for up to \$111,850,000 in funding for projects that seek to reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species. Although there is no minimum or maximum award size, eligible entities are encouraged to submit applications with total project costs of \$200,000 or greater. **FHWA has stated it anticipates awarding 15 - 50 grants with awards ranging from \$200,000 to \$20 million** ([Notice](#) p. 8). Applications are due no later than 11:59 p.m., EST, on August 1, 2023, and must be submitted electronically through www.grants.gov.

Key features of the Wildlife Crossing Pilot grant program are described below, including:

- ❖ The total amount of program funding
- ❖ A summary of eligible wildlife-related projects, eligible funding recipients and partners
- ❖ An overview of both the process for applying for funding and the review process
- ❖ The amount of the project that can be supported by Federal funds, and the required amount of project funding that typically has to come from non-Federal sources
- ❖ Other program details of potential interest
- ❖ *Additional resources:*
 - [FY22-23 Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\) for Wildlife Crossings Program](#)
 - [WCPP Application Checklist](#)
 - Webinars: **Free and open to the public!**
 - **Public Webinar: Wednesday April 26 1:30 – 3:00 pm ET.** [Register here](#). This webinar is intended to provide an overview of the WCPP, provide applicants with knowledge for applying to the program, and clarify any questions associated with the application process. It is intended for a broad range of attendees, including representatives of entities eligible to receive funds under the WCPP, which are State Departments of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, units of local governments, regional transportation authorities, special purpose districts of public authorities with a transportation function, Indian Tribes, and Federal Land Management Agencies.
 - **Tribal Webinar: Wednesday May 17 1:30 – 3:00 pm ET.** [Register here](#). This webinar is intended to provide an overview of the WCPP, provide Tribal applicants with knowledge for applying to the program, and clarify any questions associated with the application process. Although free and open to the public, this webinar is intended for Tribal representatives eligible to receive funds under the WCPP.
 - Additional Guidance is forthcoming and will be posted on FHWA's website at <https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/programs/wildlife-crossings>

Amount: \$350M in IIJA funds over FY22-26; \$111,850,000 available in FY22-23 ([Notice](#) p. 1).

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Eligible wildlife-related projects: FHWA seeks to award both “Non-Construction” and “Construction” projects that meet the primary program goals of reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVCs) and improving terrestrial and aquatic habitat connectivity.

Construction Projects. “Construction projects include all activities that lead to a built project ...” ([Notice](#) p. 14). Illustrative examples include ([Notice](#) p. 9):

- Design and pre-construction of an underpass or overpass for wildlife passage
- Environmental permitting and right-of-way acquisition to construct a wildlife crossing structure
- Adaptation or replacement of a culvert or bridge structure to accommodate connectivity for terrestrial species that are experiencing WVCs
- Construction of a wildlife overpass or underpass and fencing
- Preservation or restoration of habitat necessary to secure the effectiveness of a crossing project
- Construction of multiple crossing structures in an area to connect habitat for terrestrial or aquatic species

Non-Construction Projects. Non-construction projects include all projects other than those that lead to a built project ([Notice](#) p. 14). Illustrative examples include ([Notice](#) p. 9):

- Research on safety innovations to reduce WVCs
- Research and monitoring on the effectiveness of WVC mitigation
- Development of mapping tools to document WVCs
- Analysis of impacts of WVCs and best practices to reduce WVCs
- Planning studies to identify terrestrial and aquatic wildlife migration corridors and roadway barriers to habitat that lead to WVCs
- Tracking wildlife and mapping WVCs
- Outreach activities to educate the public on the hazards of WVCs

Eligible Applicants: ([Notice](#) pp. 4, 12)

- State departments of transportation (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico)
- Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)
- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Special purpose districts
- Public authorities with a transportation function
- Indian Tribes
- Federal Land Management Agencies
- Combinations of eligible applicants are also encouraged to submit a joint application

Eligible Partners: Applicants may partner on an application with the following entities ([Notice](#) p. 12)

- Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)
- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Special purpose districts
- Public authorities with a transportation function
- Indian Tribes
- Federal Land Management Agencies

- Foundation, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or institutions of higher education
- Federal, Tribal, regional, or State government entities
- Combinations of the above Eligible Partners

Process: Competitive grant, based on a Criteria evaluation, followed by a Review and Selection Process

Criteria evaluation ([Notice](#) pp. 29-36).

1. Using the data and information provided by the applicant, FHWA will first score applications against the two (co-equal) Primary Merit Criteria using the criterion rating structure noted below.
 - Criterion #1.1: Reduction of WVCs
 - *Strong Alignment:* The project will significantly protect motorists and wildlife by reducing WVCs.
 - *Alignment:* The project will moderately protect motorists and wildlife by reducing WVCs.
 - *No Alignment:* The application does not demonstrate or poorly demonstrates protection of motorists and wildlife by reducing WVCs.
 - Criterion #1.2: Improvement of terrestrial or aquatic habitat connectivity, using a rating system of *Strong Alignment*, *Alignment* or *No Alignment*.
 - *Strong Alignment:* The project will significantly improve wildlife habitat connectivity for terrestrial or aquatic species.
 - *Alignment:* The project will moderately improve wildlife habitat connectivity for terrestrial or aquatic species.
 - *No alignment:* The application does not demonstrate or poorly demonstrates an improvement to wildlife habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species.
2. Applications that receive a ranking of either *Strong Alignment* or *Alignment* in both Primary Merit Criterion #1.1 and #1.2 will then be evaluated against the following six Secondary Merit Criteria:
 - Criterion #2.1: Leveraging Investments, including projects from public-private partnerships
 - *Strong Alignment:* The application documents substantial, dedicated non-Federal contributions.
 - *Alignment:* The application documents dedicated non-Federal contributions.
 - *No Alignment:* The application does not document or poorly documents the inclusion of dedicated non-Federal contributions.
 - Criterion #2.2: Economic Development and Visitation Opportunities
 - *Strong Alignment:* The application describes how the project will improve visitation and improve the local economy.
 - *Alignment:* The application describes how the project will provide visitation opportunities and support the local economy.
 - *No Alignment:* The application does not demonstrate or poorly demonstrates inclusion of visitation opportunities and support for local economic development.
 - Criterion #2.3: Innovation, including innovative technologies, advanced design techniques and other innovative strategies to reduce WVCs and improve habitat connectivity
 - *Strong Alignment:* The application describes how the proposed project will employ at least one new technology or innovation that is expected to substantially enhance the project's efficiency and effectiveness in reducing WVCs or improving habitat connectivity for terrestrial or aquatic species.

- *Alignment*: The application describes how the proposed project will employ at least one new technology or innovation that is expected to enhance the project’s efficiency and effectiveness in reducing WVCs or improving habitat connectivity for terrestrial or aquatic species.
 - *No Alignment*: The application does not demonstrate or poorly demonstrates incorporation and application of new or innovative technologies that are expected to enhance the proposed project’s efficiency and effectiveness in reducing WVCs and improving habitat connectivity for terrestrial or aquatic species
 - Criterion #2.4: Education and Outreach, including how the “proposed project will effectively and equitably engage and educate the public on WVCs, motorist safety, and habitat connectivity”
 - *Strong Alignment*: The application describes how the proposed project will effectively and equitably engage and educate the public on WVCs, motorist safety, and habitat connectivity.
 - *Alignment*: The application describes the proposed project’s plan to engage the public on WVCs, motorist safety, or habitat connectivity.
 - *No Alignment*: The application does not demonstrate or poorly demonstrates a plan for public engagement on WVCs, motorist safety, or habitat connectivity.
 - Criterion #2.5: Monitoring and Research, including a plan to effectively “monitor, evaluate, and report on WVCs or habitat connectivity”
 - *Strong Alignment*: The application demonstrates that the proposed project includes an effective plan to monitor, evaluate, and report on WVCs or habitat connectivity.
 - *Alignment*: The application demonstrates that the project includes data collection and monitoring efforts for WVCs or habitat connectivity.
 - *No Alignment*: The application does not demonstrate or poorly demonstrates data collection or monitoring efforts for WVCs or habitat connectivity.
 - Criterion #2.6: Survival of Species, including whether the project is expected to significantly benefit Federally-Listed Threatened or Endangered Species, or Proposed or Candidate species for listing.
 - *Strong Alignment*: The application demonstrates that the proposed project is expected to significantly benefit one or more Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species or Proposed or Candidate for listing.
 - *Alignment*: The application demonstrates that the proposed project is expected to moderately benefit one or more Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species, Proposed or Candidate for listing species.
 - *No Alignment*: The application does not demonstrate or poorly demonstrates a benefit to any Threatened and Endangered, Proposed or Candidate species for listing.
3. In addition to Primary and Secondary Merit Criteria, applications will be assessed for Project Readiness based on a three-part evaluation that will be combined into an overall rating of *High*, *Medium*, or *Low*:
- Technical Assessment (using a rating of *Certain*, *Somewhat Certain*, or *Uncertain*)
 - Environmental Review and Permitting Risk (using a rating of *Low Risk*, *Moderate Risk*, *High Risk*)
 - Financial Completeness (using a rating of *Complete*, *Partially Complete*, or *Incomplete*).

Review and Selection Process. The review and selection process consists of four steps:

- (1) **Intake and Eligibility Review.** The Technical Evaluation Team will undertake an intake and eligibility review to confirm compliance with statutory eligibility requirements, including applicant eligibility and submission of a complete application by the deadline. Applications that are not eligible will be given a rating of *Not Eligible* and will not be evaluated further.
- (2) **Criteria Review.** The Technical Evaluation Team will provide all *Highly Recommended* and *Recommended* applications to the Senior-Level Review Team, based on the following assessment rubric.
- a. **Primary Merit Criteria.** The Technical Evaluation Team will assess the project’s alignment with the Primary Merit Criteria and assign a rating of *Strong Alignment*, *Alignment*, or *No Alignment* based on the data and information provided in the application. Individual criterion ratings will be translated into an overall Primary Merit Criteria ranking of *Strongly Recommended*, *Recommended*, or *Not Recommended*. Applications rated as *Not Recommended* for the Primary Merit Criteria will not be evaluated further and will not receive funding during this cycle.
 - b. **Secondary Merit Criteria.** The Technical Evaluation Team will then assess applications rated *Strongly Recommended* or *Recommended* in the Primary Merit Criteria against each of the six Secondary Merit Criteria. Individual Secondary Merit Selection Criterion ratings will be translated into an overall Secondary Merit Criteria ranking of *Strongly Recommended*, *Recommended*, or *Not Recommended* based on the following rubric:
 - *Strongly Recommended* applications have (1) *Strong Alignment* with two or more of the six Secondary Merit Criteria; and (2) *Alignment* with all the remaining Secondary Merit Criteria
 - *Recommended* applications are (1) applications that are not evaluated as *Strongly Recommended* and (2) which have *Alignment* or *Strong Alignment* with at least three of the six Secondary Merit Criteria.
 - *Not Recommended* applications have *No Alignment* with four or more of the six Secondary Merit Criteria

Applications that receive a rating of *Not Recommended* for the Secondary Merit Criteria will receive an overall rating of *Not Recommended* and will not receive funding during this cycle.
 - c. **Project Readiness Evaluation.** Applications that are *Strongly Recommended* or *Recommended* from the Primary Merit Criteria and *Strongly Recommended* or *Recommended* from the Secondary Merit Criteria will undergo a Project Readiness Review and receive an overall Project Readiness rating of *High*, *Medium*, or *Low*. Applications that receive a rating of *Low* for their Project Readiness rating will receive an overall rating of *Not Recommended* and will not receive funding during this cycle.
 - d. **Overall Rating.** The Technical Evaluation Team will assign Overall Rating based on the rankings for the Primary Merit Criteria, Secondary Merit Criteria, and Technical Assessment as follows:
 - *Highly Recommended* applications will have ratings of:
 - (1) *Strongly Recommended* in Primary Merit Criteria;
 - (2) either *Strongly Recommended* or *Recommended* in Secondary Merit Criteria; and
 - (3) either *High* or *Medium* in Project Readiness.
 - *Recommended* applications will have ratings of:
 - (1) *Recommended* in Primary Merit Criteria;
 - (2) either *Strongly Recommended* or *Recommended* in Secondary Merit Criteria; and
 - (3) either *High* or *Medium* in Project Readiness.
 - *Not Recommended* applications will have ratings of:
 - (1) *Not Recommended* in Primary Merit Criteria;
 - (2) *Not Recommended* in Secondary Merit Criteria; or

- o (3) *Low* in Project Readiness.

(3) Senior-Level Review Team. The Senior-Level Review Team will advance as many *Highly Recommended* applications as possible to the FHWA Administrator for potential grant awards, consistent with the statutory requirement that 60% of available funds be awarded to projects in rural areas. The Senior-Level Review Team may also advance *Recommended* applications, or advance a *Recommended* project over a *Highly Recommended* project, based on (a) how the application meets one or more of the USDOT Administration priorities discussed in Section A.2 ([Notice](#) pp. 5-7), including Safety; Climate Change and Sustainability; Equity; and Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation; (b) rankings on individual Primary and Secondary Merit criterion; (c) Project Readiness; and (d) Geographic Diversity (consistent with the requirement that 60% of funds go to projects in rural areas). The Senior-Level Review Team may also offer guidance on options for reduced awards.

(4) FHWA Administrator Selections. The FHWA Administrator will make final project selections from the list of applications advanced by the Senior-Level Review Team, with the goal of identifying the applications that best address the goals of the pilot program, the Administration’s priorities, geographic diversity, and ensuring the effective use of Federal funding.

Federal-share payable: Absent a verified exception, the maximum amount of Federal share payable under the WCPP is 80% of total project costs; accordingly, Applicants must demonstrate their ability to provide matching funds to pay for the remaining 20% of total project costs. Verified exceptions discussed in the NOFO include: (1) safety-related projects identified under 23 U.S.C. §120(c)(1); and (2) projects in certain states that contain Federal and non-taxable Tribal lands, which are subject to a “sliding-scale” increase in the maximum Federal share payable (and an associated reduction in the required match) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. §120(a)-(b). In addition, all matching funds must come from non-Federal sources, unless otherwise authorized; authorized exceptions include use of funds from the *Tribal Transportation Program*, 23 U.S.C. § 202, and *Federal Lands Transportation Program*, 23 U.S.C. § 203, for a WCPP project that provides access to or within Tribal or Federal land, respectively, as set forth in 23 U.S.C. § 120(k) ([Notice](#) p. 13).

Additional details of potential interest:

- **Primary Program Goals** ([Notice](#) p. 4):
 - o “The primary goals of the WCPP are to save lives, prevent serious injuries, and protect motorists and wildlife by reducing WVCs, and improve habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species.”
 - o “Reduction of wildlife vehicle collisions and improvement of terrestrial and aquatic habitat connectivity are the primary merit criteria that will be used in reviewing applications, and *each of the primary merit criteria are of equal importance.*” (*emphasis added*)
- **Rural Set-Aside:** At least 60% of funding made available each year must go to projects in rural areas ([Notice](#) p. 6).
 - o A map of FHWA “Adjusted Urban Areas” can be found [HERE](#).
 - o All locations not designated as “urban” will be considered “rural” for purposes of calculating compliance with the statutory 60% requirement.
- **Data Collection and Monitoring:** FHWA intends to use the pilot program “to identify practices and projects that most effectively reduce WVC and improve wildlife connectivity. Data gleaned from monitoring activities will contribute to research and the development of a study of the practice of methods to reduce WVCs, as required by 23 U.S.C. 172(a), and associated activities” ([Notice](#) p. 10).

- ***State DOT Consultation:*** With the exception of FLMAs and State DOTs, all Applicants must provide documentation that they have consulted with the State DOT in which the project is located. In addition, although Tribes are *not* required to consult with the State for projects located on Tribal lands, they are required to document consultation with the State DOT for projects *not* located on Tribal lands ([Notice](#) p. 14).

Information provided in this At-A-Glance summary is based on FHWA's [FY22-23 Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\) for Wildlife Crossings Program](#).