Renewable Natural Resources Foundation (RNRF)
2026 Request for Proposal (RFP)
Released April 1, 2026

Key Dates

Letter of Inquiry (LOI) due: May 15, 2026, 5:00 PM CST
Invitations for Full Proposal: Week of June 15, 2026
Full Proposals due (Invitation Only): July 24, 2026
Announcement Date: mid-October 2026 (Estimated)
Types of Grants:

- **Planning and Small Grants:** up to $50,000
- **Implementation/Collaboration Grants:** $50,000 to $200,000

Overview

The Renewable Natural Resources Foundation (RNRF) invites proposals for a grant opportunity aimed at fostering multidisciplinary, multisector collaborations supporting renewable natural resources. This grant is designed to support projects that incorporate evidence-based research into real-life applications, align with the mission of RNRF, and create meaningful impact in the field and in communities.

About

The Renewable Natural Resources Foundation (RNRF) is a nonprofit, public policy research organization founded in 1972. The Foundation is a consortium of scientific, professional, educational, design, and engineering organizations whose primary purpose is to advance science, the application of science, and public education in managing and conserving renewable natural resources.

RNRF is governed by a board of directors comprised of one representative from each of its member organizations.

RNRF Member Organizations

American Geophysical Union (AGU) – AGU's mission is to support and inspire a global community of individuals and organizations interested in advancing discovery in Earth and space sciences and its benefit for humanity and the environment.
American Meteorological Society (AMS) – The American Meteorological Society advances the atmospheric and related sciences, technologies, applications, and services for the benefit of society.
American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) – ASCE's mission is to lead the civil engineering profession to sustainably advance and protect the health, safety, and welfare of all.

American Society of Landscape Architects Fund (ASLA Fund) – The Fund's mission is to invest in global, social, and environmental change through the art and science of landscape architecture.
American Water Resources Association (AWRA) – AWRA is the primary multidisciplinary association for information exchange, professional development, and education about water resources and related issues. Our mission is to advance multidisciplinary water resources education, management, and research.
Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (**SETAC**) – SETAC's mission is to advance environmental science and management.

Guiding Principles and Focus Areas – The grants will support projects that align with the following guiding principles and focus areas.

Guiding Principles	Focus Areas
• Overall impact in supporting renewable natural resources • Stakeholder/community engagement • Community stewardship/benefits • Scientific rigor/evidence-based and ethics • Interconnectedness/systems approach • Advances understanding of renewable natural resources • Broader potential or future use	• Air Quality and Atmospheric Sciences • Ecosystem and Biodiversity Conservation • Ecosystem, Soil, and Land Remediation and Restoration • Circular materials, Recycling, and Waste Systems • Regenerative Agriculture and Soil Health • Renewable Energy and Sustainable Infrastructure • Water Quantity and Quality

See Appendix for details and examples

Types of Grants

RNRF provides two types of grants to support collaborations, planning, and implementation.

1. **Planning and Small Grants** – Planning and small grants are available to support potential collaborators to carry out the initial discussion and investigation to conceptualize a collaborative project and the methods needed to implement the project. Small grants support targeted projects that are limited in scope and budget.
    a. **Amount**: Up to $50,000
    b. **Grant Period:** 12 months

2. **Implementation and Collaboration Grants** – These grants are to support collaborative, multidisciplinary projects in applying current research to implementation. Examples of projects may include, but are not limited to, applying new research to everyday use within a community, pilot studies for real-world study, evaluation on current collaborative projects to improve project activities, or to replicate previous projects on a larger scale or new area of focus.
    a. **Amount**: $50,000 to $200,000 per award
    b. **Grant Period**: 12-36 months

Eligibility:

- **Organizational Status:** The primary applicant must be one of the following:
    a. A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization incorporated in the United States or its territories
    b. A tax-exempt institution of higher education in the United States or its territories

c. A federally recognized tribal government or tribal college
d. Fiscal Agents / Fiscal Sponsors: RNRF does not permit the use of fiscal agents or fiscal sponsors. The prime applicant organization must meet all eligibility requirements and serve as the direct recipient and administrator of grant funds.

- **Collaborative Structure:** Projects must demonstrate multidisciplinary collaboration, bringing together expertise from different fields to address challenges in renewable natural resources.

  For this grant program, the **primary applicant** is the organization submitting the proposal and serving as the primary point of contact. **Collaboration partners** are the other organizations or key contributors supporting the project (including any **partner leads/key contacts**).

  - **Planning and Small Grants –** Must involve at least three multidisciplinary collaborators (including the prime applicant organization). The collaboration partners do not need to be identified at the time of application, but the applicant must be able to describe the ideal partner.

  - **Implementation/Collaboration Grants** – Must involve at least three multidisciplinary collaborators (including the prime applicant organization). At the time of the LOI submission, at least one of the collaboration partners must be identified.

- **RNRF Member Affiliation:** At least one project lead or partner lead/key personnel must be a current member of an RNRF Member Organization. Proof of active membership must be included with the Letter of Inquiry. Letters of Inquiry that do not include proof of membership will not be considered.

Requirements and Application Process:

Step 1: Letter of Inquiry (LOI):

- **Completed Letter of Inquiry:** Incomplete or late Letters of Inquiry will not be considered.

- **Proof of RNRF Member Affiliation:** Proof of membership is required at the time the Letter of Inquiry is submitted. (e.g., A copy of your membership receipt, a screenshot of membership profile, etc.). If the member is not the primary applicant, a Letter of Commitment must be included in the LOI submission. Membership will be verified prior to inviting an applicant to submit a full proposal.

- **Alignment with Guiding Principles and Focus Areas:** The proposed project must align with one or more of the Guiding Principles and Focus Areas and be indicated in the grant application.

- **Duration:** The proposed project should be completed within the grant period indicated for each type of grant.

- The LOI must be submitted by the deadline through the online grant portal found on the RNRF website https://rnrf.org/grants/

Step 2: Full Proposal Application:

- **Unsolicited proposals will not be accepted.** Only those applicants who have been invited to apply for a full proposal will be considered.

- **Completed Application** (Invitation Only): A full application must be submitted by the stated deadline. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. The link to the online application will be provided with the invitation to apply.

- **Letter(s) of Commitment (LOC)**
    - **Planning & Small Grants –** Letters of Commitment are not required at the time of application, but the applicant must demonstrate their plans for collaboration.

    - **Implementation/Collaboration Grants –** At least one LOC must be included with the application. LOCs are required for all identified collaboration partner organizations, specifying their role and resource contributions. LOCs must be on the organization's letterhead and signed by someone in a leadership position.

- **Attachments for Full Proposal Application**

	Planning & Small Grants	**Implementation / Collaboration Grants**
IRS Determination Letter (Proof of 501(c)(3) Status)	Required	Required
Most recent audit report or alternative financial review. If your organization does not have a recent audit, please upload a brief statement explaining why (e.g., not required based on size or type, etc.).	Required	Required
Most recent IRS Form 990	Required	Required
Letters of Commitment (LOC): LOCs are required for all identified collaboration partner organizations, specifying their role and resource contributions. LOCs must be on the organization's letterhead and signed by someone in a leadership position.	Optional at time of application	Required At least one is required at time of application
Biosketches, CVs, or Resumes:	Required	Required

Attach biosketches or CVs for key personnel from all collaborators, including the prime applicant and collaboration partners.		
Project Timeline (up to 2 pages)	Required	Required
Budget and Budget Justification RNRF does not provide a budget template; please use a format that includes itemized details about total project costs.	Required	Required
Supplemental Materials (5 pages max): Work plans, diagrams, or tables supporting the proposal.	Optional	Optional
References/Citations	Optional	Required

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs for the prime applicant and all collaboration partners may not exceed 15% of their respective total budgets.

Collaboration partner costs: The prime applicant is responsible for managing indirect costs and any applicable conditions with collaboration partners. Indirect costs requested by the collaboration partners should be included within the total collaboration partner budget as approved by the prime applicant. The prime applicant must ensure that collaboration partner indirect costs comply with the 15% cap.

Example:

- Total project budget: $50,000
- Maximum allowable indirect costs for the prime applicant: $7,500 (15% of $50,000)
- Collaboration partner award: $10,000
    - Maximum indirect costs for collaboration partner: $1,500 (15% of $10,000)
    - Remaining $8,500 counts toward program costs
- The prime applicant may use the collaboration partner/contractor for costs in their indirect cost calculations. There are no restrictions or modified costs related to calculating indirect cost rates.

Submission Instructions

All applications and supporting materials must be submitted in the grant portal. The link can be found on the RNRF website.

Excluded Activities:

- Lobbying and political activities
- Scholarships
- Operational support
- Fundraising

RNRF Grant Program Contact Information – grants@rnrf.org

Technical Support for Common Grant Application (CGA) contact: CGA technical support

Appendices

Appendix A - Definition and Examples of Guiding Principles

1. **Supports/Advances/Enhances Renewable Natural Resources:** Build collaborations across researchers and communities to extend the life of renewable resources, increase their use, enhance capacity for resource management, or implement monitoring and corrective actions as needed.

   Examples:
   - Extends the life or protects the integrity of a renewable resource
   - Increases the use of renewable resources
   - Enhances the capacity for resource management
   - Implements monitoring or corrective actions

2. **Community Engagement:** Eligible applicants will describe their methodology for engaging communities. The approach will ensure that sustainable natural resource management aligns with community input and is adaptable based on feedback.

   We can use the following definitions to clarify what we mean by community for the purpose of this statement:
   - **Community** – A group of people connected by geography, identity, profession, interest, or shared experience. Applicants must define the relevant community for their project.
   - **Community Partner** – An organization or entity composed of members from the defined community that is formally involved in the planning, implementation, or oversight of the project.
   - **Community Input** – Engagement strategies that involve gathering feedback or ideas from the defined community to shape how the project is conducted.

   Examples:
   - A community organization is the primary applicant.
   - A community organization is named as a collaborator in the grant.
   - The proposal describes a method for engaging community or community input.

3. **Community Stewardship/Benefits:** Projects must demonstrate how they will provide meaningful, lasting benefits to the impacted community, either directly or indirectly impacted. Unlike community engagement, which refers to participatory processes and relationship-building, community stewardship and benefits focus on outcomes.

   A Community Beneficiary is defined as any group, population, or geographic community that experiences direct or indirect improvements as a result of the project, such as enhanced environmental conditions, access to knowledge, capacity-building, resource equity, improved health and safety, or improved quality of life indicators.

Examples:

- Tangible improvements in environmental quality or local infrastructure
- Increased access to useful, usable data or decision-making tools
- Empowerment through knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, or technical training
- Structural improvements that improve quality of life indicators and/or equity and environmental justice
- Risk reduction/resilience to environmental shocks or stressors

4. **Scientific Rigor/Evidence-based and Ethics:** Eligible projects must be grounded in current scientific knowledge or established best practices, with a strong emphasis on translating research into meaningful action. Projects should demonstrate the ability to conduct thorough impact assessments, engage in community consultation, or implement effective mitigation strategies, all while integrating ethical standards throughout every phase of the project.

   Examples:

   - Enhances or improves current evidence-based practices.
   - Supplements or complements existing applied research projects (i.e., ongoing federally funded projects).
   - Translates or applies emerging research into implementation

5. **Interconnectedness/Systems Approach:** Eligible applicants should be able to demonstrate or acknowledge how their project fits into the larger, complex, and interconnected system, recognizing the environmental, social, and economic relationships that exist within it.
   Examples:

   - Fits into a larger complex and interconnected system
   - Relates to interconnected environmental, social, or economic systems
   - Informs policies, regulations, or advocacy
   - Aligns with national or international policies

6. **Advances the Understanding of Renewable Natural Resources:** Projects funded through the RNRF Grant Program should contribute to deepening knowledge, awareness, or practical understanding of renewable natural resources.
   Examples:

   - New datasets or applied research outcomes that inform future natural resource management
   - Practical models or tools that improve understanding of system dynamics (e.g., watershed models)
   - Increased community or stakeholder understanding through participatory science.

- Contributes to better-informed policies or practices based on improved evidence or communication

Broader Potential or Future use - Projects will be recognized for their broader potential such as their ability to scale, adapt, be replicated or potential for future usability.

Examples:
- Toolkits or guides that can be shared or adapted
- Assessment models or protocols that use local data but can be applied in other regions
- Training modules or curriculum
- Pilot projects with pathways for growth, iteration, or replication
- Pilot projects that build on or improve on results from earlier pilot studies
- Planning templates

Appendix B - Definition and Examples of Focus Areas

The focus areas describe the environmental/scientific priority areas that represent areas of interest of the member organizations. The main focus areas include:

- Air Quality & Atmospheric Sciences
- Ecosystem and Biodiversity Conservation
- Ecosystem, Soil, and Land Remediation and Restoration
- Circular Materials, Recycling, and Waste Systems
- Regenerative Agriculture and Soil Health
- Renewable Energy and Sustainable Infrastructure
- Water Quantity and Quality

1. **Air Quality and Atmospheric Sciences**
   Examples:
   - Carbon sequestration
   - Pollution control
   - Research on sustainable alternatives to harmful chemicals
   - Air pollution reduction
   - Urban heat reduction

2. **Ecosystem and Biodiversity Conservation**
   Examples:
   - Reforestation and urban forestry
   - Controlled burns as a forest management strategy
   - Living shorelines and coastal resilience projects
   - Wildlife corridors and habitat conservation
   - Pollinator protection and nurturing

3. **Ecosystem, Soil, and Land Remediation and Restoration**
   Examples:
   - Sustainable remediation, phytoremediation, and bioremediation
   - Biodegradable plastics.
   - Erosion control using natural landscapes
   - Research and reef rehabilitation techniques to enhance biodiversity and protect coastlines from erosion
   - Enhance reef ecosystems as natural carbon sinks and coastal barriers to mitigate erosion and storm surge impacts.

4. **Circular Materials, Recycling, and Waste Systems**
   Examples:
   - Community-based Recycling Programs
   - Develop a neighborhood-level circular economy pilot program that includes composting, plastics sorting, and local reuse hubs.
   - Establish a materials recovery facility.
   - Redesign of local recycling systems for greater accessibility, equity, and environmental impact

5. **Regenerative Agriculture and Soil Health**
   Examples:
   - Precision irrigation systems that maximize water efficiency and reduce runoff.
   - Agroforestry and urban agriculture for sustainability
   - Green agriculture and biopesticides

6. **Renewable Energy and Sustainable Infrastructure**
   Examples:
   - Wind, solar, and geothermal energy infrastructure
   - Green roadways, transit, and building design
   - Eco-friendly urban and landscape planning
   - Smart cities (use of data, digital technologies, and interconnected systems)
   - Integrating renewable materials
   - Hydropower and tidal energy development
   - Renewable energy integration into infrastructure

7. **Water Quantity and Quality**
   Examples:
   - Sustainable watershed and groundwater management
   - Integrated water resources management
   - Water supply sustainability
   - Wetland and riparian buffer restoration
   - Stormwater management using green infrastructure
   - Pollutant removal from water, especially emerging contaminants
   - Wastewater treatment and disposal practices
   - Desalination innovation

Appendix C – Glossary

Applied Research – Research conducted to solve real-world problems or inform decision-making in specific contexts.

Capacity Building – Activities that enhance the skills, infrastructure, or resources of individuals, communities, or organizations to address challenges effectively.

Community – A group of people connected by geography, identity, profession, interest, or shared experience. Applicants must define the relevant community for their project.

Community Beneficiary - any group, population, or geographic community that experiences direct or indirect improvements as a result of the project, such as enhanced environmental conditions, access to knowledge, capacity-building, resource equity, health and safety, or improved quality of life.

Community Partner – An organization or entity composed of members from the defined community that is formally involved in the planning, implementation, or oversight of the project.

Community Input – Engagement strategies that involve gathering feedback or ideas from the defined community to shape how the project is conducted.

Evidence-Based Practices – Strategies or approaches that are supported by systematically collected data or validated research findings.

Multisector Collaboration – A project that involves partners from more than one sector—such as academic, government, nonprofit, private industry, or community-based organizations.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration – A project that involves participants from two or more scientific or professional disciplines working together toward a shared goal.

Interconnected Systems – The environmental, social, and economic systems that interact with and influence each other; projects that acknowledge and work within these complexities.

Renewable Natural Resources – RNRF defines renewable natural resources as resources that occur naturally, which are regenerated when used or consumed in a sustainable manner. They include abiotic materials such as soil/sediment, water, and air as well as biota including forests, plants, fisheries, and wildlife and could encompass a whole ecosystem.

Readiness Factors – (Planning Grants) Readiness factors are the conditions that must be met before a project can move from idea to implementation. The planning grant is a chance to get ready — to gather input, reduce uncertainty, align partners, and figure out how to deliver a project that is realistic and impactful.

Replicability – The ability of a project, program, or approach to be repeated or duplicated in a different context with similar results.

Resilience (Environmental/Climate Systems Definition) – In the context of climate change, environmental management, and community planning, resilience refers to the capacity of a community, ecosystem, or infrastructure system to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from environmental shocks or stresses—such as extreme weather, wildfire, drought, sea level rise, or pollution—while maintaining or improving core functions and equity.

Scalability – The ability of a project, program, or intervention to grow or expand in size, scope, or reach while maintaining its effectiveness.

Stakeholder – Any individual, group, or organization that may be affected by or have an interest in the project, including but not limited to the identified community.

Translation (of Research) – The process of converting research findings into practical applications, programs, or policies.