

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) – Office of Trust Services Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) - Habitat Restoration Bison Project Funding, Criteria, and Application Process

Bison Restoration Grant Program

Summary

The Inflation Reduction Act provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs funds for Habitat Restoration to support Tribal Nations and Native Villages with habitat and watershed restoration especially after fire, flood, drought, climate, and other at-risk landscapes such as forests and grasslands. A portion of the funding has been set aside for the purpose of Bison Restoration to enhance the health and resiliency of priority Tribal resources with high risks of drought, wildland fire, and other risks.

The Bison Restoration Grant Program is administered by the Bison Branch, Division of Natural Resources, Central Office of Trust Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Grant Program will serve a variety of purposes that are designed to uphold the best of Tribal bison herd management interests, with a focus on bison herd expansion and ecosystem restoration. Bison are a cornerstone of Tribal lifeways and culture and are viewed by Tribes as a relative, not a commodity. As a traditional food source, bison have been essential in upholding treaties and trust responsibilities by the United States government. The Bison Project will elevate the Tribal interests and priorities, which may include cultural and spiritual connection, subsistence and health benefits, economic empowerment, environmental stewardship, and youth engagement. Furthermore, the Bison project will elaborate the intent of the Department of the Interior Secretary's Order 3410, the purpose of which is to restore wild and healthy populations of American bison and the prairie grassland ecosystem through collaboration among the Department's Bureaus and partners such as other Federal agencies, states, Tribes, and landowners using the best available science and Indigenous Knowledge.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligibility is limited to Federally recognized Indian Tribal Governments and authorized Tribal organizations. Federally recognized Tribes are eligible as listed in the current Federal Register, Notice of Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is the official listing of all Federally recognized Tribes in the U.S. pursuant to Section 104 under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-454; 108 Stat. 4791-4792). The most recent Notice was published in the Federal Register, 89, FR 944 (January 8, 2024). Authorized Tribal organizations, as defined at 25 U.S.C. 5304(l) are also eligible to apply.


Proposal Eligibility

Proposals must provide the contact information for the project manager overseeing the proposed Bison Project.

- If the applicant is seeking for the award to be made via a self-determination contract the proposal budget cannot include Tribal indirect rate. Tribal indirect costs (contract support costs) are not eligible under this funding. Awarded projects will require biannual reporting to share and demonstrate success on project implementation. Demonstrations of success may include elaborations on the benefits provided to the community from the bison project (cultural reconnection, food subsistence, economics, etc.), ecosystem restoration progress, and youth engagement.
- Demonstrations of success may also include rangeland vegetation monitoring data with photo points to report level of utilization, rangeland health, condition/trend, and forage productivity.

Project Eligibility

Successful applications will focus on expanding existing herds or establishment of new bison herds, and landscapes to support management of bison as wildlife, implementing management practices that are informed by the best available science, including Indigenous Knowledge and prioritize Tribally led opportunities. They will also focus on ecological, and cultural restoration through expansion, establishment and improved management of herds on Tribal lands or herds managed by a Tribe or authorized Tribal organization. Successful projects may also focus on bison co-stewardship practices.

The grant program does not distinguish between what are often termed agricultural, conservation, economic, or cultural herds. Tribal owned bison herd management decisions are at the real property discretion of the tribes, with the program requirements that management of herds utilize field harvest techniques, and that no bison may be placed in feed lots or similar enclosures. Handling corrals and facilities are necessary and encouraged.  All projects should include ecosystem restoration enabled through bison herd expansion.

Funding is available for the implementation of bison specific management practices that would assist recipients that may include the following, or similar, areas:

- Establishment or the increase of bison habitat.
- Cultural revitalization.
- Food sovereignty.
- Stabilization or increase of infrastructure such as the purchase and installation of handling facilities, fencing, equipment, or other infrastructure.
- Transportation or purchase of bison.
- Bison management activities.
- Staffing support to provide for the administration and function of a Tribal bison program and project commitment.
- Implementing management techniques utilizing the best available science and Indigenous knowledge or adaptive management techniques.
- Bison herd health and disease prevention and control.
- Rangeland vegetation monitoring to assess level of grazing utilization and/or rangeland condition/trend/production to monitor ecosystem restoration.

- How the Bison project implementation will help meet environmental, social, and economic goals, increases scientific and indigenous knowledges, and recognizes the importance of natural variability in contributing to ecological restoration, resilience, and productivity.
- Participating in local/regional/national forums related to grasslands ecosystem restoration and/or bison restoration.
- Educational efforts related to ecosystem and/or bison management for project staff members implementing the Bison project.

Anticipated Award Amounts

To maximize impact, awards will be funded between \$100,000 to \$500,000 each.

Grant Criteria

All projects should include ecosystem restoration enabled through bison herd expansion on Tribal rangelands, pastures and grassland conservation management scales that address productive collective impacts on Tribal ecological, cultural, and historic use within Tribal natural resources.

Eligible projects will be ranked according to the following criteria but are not required to meet all criteria to be eligible (100 Points Total):

1. Adding or establishing new bison habitat. **(20 points)**
2. How the project will help increase herd size. **(20 points)**
3. Demonstrating the stabilization or increase of infrastructure or capacity of the bison program. **(10 points)**
4. The demonstration of ecosystem restoration benefits from the presence of bison on the landscape, including native species and other Tribal natural resources. **(10 points)**
5. How the project demonstrates both cultural and community enhancement or reengagement. Examples can include the enhancement of the spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices of the Tribal community, food sovereignty, or youth engagement. **(10 points)**
6. The integration of Indigenous Knowledge, also known as Traditional Ecological Knowledge, into project implementation. **(10 points)**
7. The extent to which the herd management is treating bison as wildlife, not livestock, including minimal handling. **(10 points)**
8. Project implementation demonstrates elements of field or cultural harvest. **(5 points)**
9. The extent to which the applicant is leveraging funding through volunteers, matched funds, Tribal contributions, in-kind contributions, non-government organizations (NGOs), consortiums, Tribal policies, climate adaption plans, economic development plans, agricultural plans, land management plans, etc. **(5 points)**

Funded projects must demonstrate an awareness and ability to achieve compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including Tribal and federal permitting requirements (e.g., Tribal environmental code, NEPA, ESA).

This funding source is non-recurring 1 year funding. Thus, the goals of any proposed project should not rely on future funding. Awarded projects will require biannual reporting to share and demonstrate success on project implementation.

How to apply

Email proposals to your regional office, and the Bison Branch Chief (contact info below) within 30 calendar days of the announcement date.

BIA Region	Point of Contact	Email Address and Phone Number	Mailing Address
Great Plains	Diane Mann-Klager, Natural Resource Officer	diane.mann-klager@bia.gov (605) 252-6763	BIA Great Plains Region Division of Natural Resources, MC 301 115 4th Ave. SE, Suite 400 Aberdeen, SD 57401
Southern Plains	David Anderson, Environmental Scientist	david.anderson@bia.gov (405) 247-1532	BIA Southern Plains Region P.O. Box 368 Anadarko, OK 73005
Eastern	Jerry Page, Natural Resource Officer	jerry.page@bia.gov (615) 917-0969	BIA Eastern Region 545 Marriott Dr. Suite 700 Nashville TN 37214
Midwest	Patricia Olby, Deputy Regional Director Trust Services	patricia.olby@bia.gov (612) 725-4503	BIA Midwest Region 5600 W. American Blvd, Suite 500 Bloomington, MN 55437
Eastern Oklahoma	Justin Morgan, Soil Conservationist	justin.morgan@bia.gov (918) 781-4653	BIA Eastern Oklahoma Region 3100 W. Peak Blvd. Muskogee, OK 74401
Rocky Mountain	David Hopkins, Rangeland Management Specialist	david.hopkins@bia.gov (406) 247-7926	BIA Rocky Mountain Region Division of Natural Resources 2021 4th Ave. North Billings, MT 59101
Navajo	Peter Lefebvre, Rangeland Management Specialist	peter.lefebvre@bia.gov (406) 231-5879	BIA Navajo Region 301 W. Hill St., PO Box 1060 Gallup, NM 87305
Southwest	Novik Begay, Rangeland Management Specialist	novik.begay@bia.gov (505) 563-3552	BIA Southwest Region 1001 Indian School Road, NW Albuquerque, NM 87104

Western	Kenneth Gishi, Rangeland Management Specialist	kenneth.gishi@bia.gov (480) 744-5568	BIA Western Region 2600 N. Central Ave, 4th Floor Mailroom, Phoenix, AZ 85004
Pacific	Douglas Garcia, Water Right Specialist	douglas.garcia@bia.gov (916) 978-6052	BIA Pacific Region 2800 Cottage Way Sacramento, CA 95825
Northwest	Robert Compton, Rangeland Management Specialist	robert.compton@bia.gov (602) 379-6789	BIA Northwest Region 911 NE 11th Avenue Portland, OR 97232
Alaska	Joshua Neuffer, Natural Resources Manager	joshua.neuffer@bia.gov (907) 419-1295	BIA Alaska Region P.O. Box 21647 Juneau, AK 99802

The proposal should clearly address the ranking criteria listed above and be limited to six pages maximum (not including letters of support/contributions, as applicable). Applicant's projects do not need to meet all the grant criteria to be considered.

Please submit a proposal in the following format:

I. Introduction/Background – Name of applicant, project name, project location, Tribal project manager contact information, and a background and description of the issue to be addressed with the proposal. This section should conclude with a statement summarizing your request. Email proposals to your BIA Regional Office (contact information below) by the submission deadline of the announcement date.

II. Criteria – Detailed description of how your proposal meets one or more of the grant criteria.

III. Budget – Provide a detailed line-item expenditure budget, with narrative breakdown. **Do** not include contract support cost (indirect cost). Awards will be funded between \$100,000 to \$500,000 each and should be written to add up to or near the specified amount (excluding any matching, NGO, or other funding).