



National Wildlife Federation

National Advocacy Center

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Request for Proposals: Evaluation of Impacts of Farmer-Centered Outreach Networks on Conservation Behaviors

National Wildlife Federation is seeking proposals to evaluate the impacts of farmer-centered networks on conservation behaviors in the Mississippi River Basin. Recent research has indicated the importance of social factors in supporting farmer adoption of conservation practices, especially the central role of trusted advisors and peer farmers in providing technical information and social support. However, there is still a need to identify the best approaches and methods for promoting conservation behaviors through network-based approaches. We are seeking proposals to conduct research on farmer-centered conservation networks and their impacts on conservation behaviors and to develop metrics and indicators that can be implemented in similar network-based outreach programs. This research will inform and support NWF's outreach capacity-building programs, including the Conservation Champions and Grow More trainings.

Proposals should address multiple aspects of farmer-centered conservation networks, including:

- a. Strategies and approaches used by networks to facilitate and sustain participation and conservation promotion efforts;
- b. Impacts on farmer participant:
 - i. Knowledge and awareness of practices and their on- and off-farm benefits;
 - ii. Perceived self-efficacy to adopt practices;
 - iii. Attitudes toward practices;
 - iv. Perceived social norms about practices;
- c. Impacts on farmer participant perceptions of social connection and support, including measures of trust and social capital;
- d. Impacts on farmer participant conservation behaviors, including:
 - i. Adoption of new practices;
 - ii. Increase in acreage or intensity of practices;

Projects may address a wide range of conservation behaviors, but should focus on soil health practices (such as cover crops and conservation tillage). Proposals may utilize qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches, and should clearly identify the research/evaluation goals of the project, along with detailed description of data collection and analysis methods. Proposals should include a description of the network(s) that are the focus of the study, including geographic location, organizational history, and conservation goals (*note: proposals do not need to focus on NWF-related programs or efforts*). Please include details on measurement strategy, including draft observation guides, interview questions, formats, etc. Total proposal length not to exceed 8 pages.

Project Deliverables: The successful applicant will provide a comprehensive research report at the conclusion of the project, including a review of relevant literature on network-based conservation approaches, research methods, research findings, and implications of the research for conservation programs and outreach efforts. The successful applicant will collaborate with NWF's Sustainable Agriculture team throughout the project to refine research methods and develop network evaluation metrics.

Budget: Proposals shall not exceed \$20,000. Please include a full project budget with the proposal.

Timeline: All research must be completed by November 30, 2022, with a final report delivered by January 31, 2023.

All proposals and questions should be submitted to Adam Reimer by October 22, 2021:
reimera@nwf.org, (765) 418-0041.