

Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application



Instructions

After completing the form, applications and supporting documentation may be submitted by e-mail to ndicgrants@nd.gov. It is preferred that only electronic copies are submitted.

You are not limited to the spacing provided, except in those instances where there is a limit on the number of words. If you need additional space, please indicate that on the application form, answer the question on a separate page, and include with your submission.

The application and all attachments must be received by the application deadline. You may submit your application at any time prior to the application deadline. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications prior to the deadline for staff review in order ensure that proposals will be complete when submitted on deadline date.** Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Please review the back of this form to determine project eligibility, definitions, budget criteria, and statutory requirements.

Project Name: [Planting for the Future](#)

Name of Organization: [North Dakota Petroleum Foundation](#)

Federal Tax ID#: [83-1389235](#)

Contact Person/Title: [Eric Delzer, Grants Administrator](#)

Address: [100 W Broadway Avenue, Suite 200](#)

City: [Bismarck](#)

State: [ND](#)

Zip Code: [58501](#)

E-mail Address: edelzer@ndoil.org

Web Site Address (If applicable): www.ndpetroleumfoundation.org

Phone: [701-204-7348](#)

List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal

MAJOR Directive:

Choose only one response

- Directive A.** Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;
- Directive B.** Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;
- Directive C.** Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and
- Directive D.** Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

Additional Directive:

Choose all that apply

- Directive A.**
- Directive B.**
- Directive C.**
- Directive D.**

Type of organization:

- State Agency
- Political Subdivision
- Tribal Entity
- Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

Abstract/Executive Summary.

Summarize the project, including its objectives, expected results, duration, total project costs and participants. (no more than 500 words)

North Dakota's forests cover only 1.8% of the state's land area—approximately 815,000 acres—yet they provide critical watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and soil conservation benefits. With 70% of this forested land in private ownership and facing threats from inclement weather, invasive species, and over-maturity, engaging private landowners is essential to preserving and expanding North Dakota's natural heritage. The Planting for the Future program addresses this challenge by partnering with landowners to establish large-scale conservation plantings that create lasting wildlife habitat across the state.

The North Dakota Petroleum Foundation (NDPF) requests \$510,000 in Outdoor Heritage Fund support for a \$1,471,210 project to plant 200,000 trees on private lands during 2026-2027. This request includes \$961,210 in matching funds (65% of total project costs), comprising cash contributions from landowners and industry partners, in-kind labor from volunteers and property owners, and administrative support from North Dakota Petroleum Council staff.

Since its establishment in 2018, Planting for the Future has planted approximately 671,656 trees across North Dakota, consistently exceeding the NRCS standard of 50% survival rates through comprehensive two-year monitoring and replanting protocols. **The program anticipates serving 30+ landowner participants annually and is on track to reach its goal of planting one million trees by 2030.**

This grant will fund tree and shrub plantings across multiple North Dakota counties in 2026 and 2027, with projects designed by qualified habitat consultants in accordance with USDA-NRCS specifications. Species selection will be tailored to each site's unique conditions, but typically includes ponderosa pine, Scotch pine, cedar, buffaloberry, and other native species proven to provide excellent wildlife cover and habitat value. Projects will utilize either the knifing and fabric method or the scalping method, depending on site conditions and landowner preferences, with all installations including appropriate weed control measures.

Planting for the Future also leverages the North Dakota Public Service Commission's Tree and Shrub Mitigation Program, creating partnerships between oil and gas companies seeking to fulfill vegetation replacement requirements and landowners committed to habitat improvement. Plantings that are required under the mitigation requirements are 100% company-funded, and OHF funds are not applied to those projects. The program removes financial barriers by providing trees to landowners at no cost, requiring only their commitment to proper site preparation and maintenance.

All projects will be monitored for up to two years following installation. Projects that fail to achieve 50% survival will receive replacement trees to ensure success. This commitment to follow-through has resulted in consistently high survival rates, with recent projects averaging 73-84% survival despite challenging weather conditions.

The program will be managed by experienced NDPC staff with proven track records in grant administration and conservation project delivery, supported by qualified contractors, including David Shockman, Nathan Jensen, and other habitat specialists with extensive tree planting experience.

Tree planting will occur in spring 2026 and 2027, with the majority of OHF funds drawn down in May-June of each year. Monitoring and potential replanting will continue through December 2028.

Project Duration: January 2026-December 2028

Indicate the intended schedule for drawing down OHF funds.

This grant request is for projects that will be planted in 2026 and 2027. A majority of the funding will be drawn down in May and/or June of each year when planting takes place. Additional requests for funds may be made in 2028 for replacement trees.

Amount of Grant request: \$510,000.00

Total Project Costs: \$1,471,210.00

Note: in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds.

Amount of Matching Funds: \$961,210.00

A minimum of 25% Match Funding is required. Indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash. Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project. Note that effective as of July 1, 2015 no State General Fund dollars can be used for a match unless funding was legislatively appropriated for that purpose.

Amount of Match	Funding Source	Type of Match (Cash, In-kind or Indirect)
\$ 650,500.00	NDPF	Cash
\$ 153,460.00	Landowners	Cash
\$ 17,000.00	ND Petroleum Council	In-Kind
\$ 140,250.00	Landowners	In-Kind

Certifications

I certify that this application has been made with the support of the governing body and chief executive of my organization.

I certify that if awarded grant funding none of the funding will be used for any of the exemptions noted in the back of this application.

Narrative

Organization Information – Briefly summarize your organization’s history, mission, current programs and activities.

Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement. (no more than 300 words)

The North Dakota Petroleum Foundation (NDPF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was founded by the North Dakota Petroleum Council in 2018 to support our state and the communities in which we operate. Its mission is to provide and support education and outreach opportunities related to

the petroleum industry, to develop and advance quality-of-life initiatives, to promote and enhance North Dakota's conservation heritage, and to advocate for the industry and its communities to ensure their voices are heard and respected. The NDPF works to achieve this mission through outreach programs, scholarships and education opportunities, and environmental stewardship programs.

The NDPF is governed by a seven-member board of directors and is managed by an executive director and CEO. Volunteers from NDPC member companies, partner organizations, and area communities also help support the NDPF's various programs and initiatives throughout the year.

The NDPF is supported by revenues from the Williston Basin Petroleum Conference, as well as donations from the North Dakota Petroleum Council, the Foundation's Board of Directors, industry companies and employees, and grants from the Oil and Gas Research Council and Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Purpose of Grant – Describe the proposed project identifying how the project will meet the specific directive(s) of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program

Identify project goals, strategies and benefits and your timetable for implementation. Include information about the need for the project and whether there is urgency for funding. Indicate if this is a new project or if it is replacing funding that is no longer available to your organization. Identify any innovative features or processes of your project. Note: if your proposal provides funding to an individual, the names of the recipients must be reported to the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund. These names will be disclosed upon request.

For tree/shrub/grass plantings: provide a planting plan describing the site design, planting methods, number of trees/shrubs by species and stock size, grass species and future maintenance. A statement certifying that the applicant will adhere to USDA-NRCS tree/shrub/grass planting specifications along with the name of the governmental entity designing the planting may be substituted for a planting plan.

For projects including Section 319 funding: provide in detail the specific best management practices that will be implemented and the specific projects for which you are seeking funding.

For projects including fencing: A minimum cost share of 40% by the recipient is preferred. Include detailed information on the type of fencing to be installed, whether funding is requested for boundary fencing, new or replacement of existing fencing, and/or cross fencing.

Alignment with Outdoor Heritage Fund Directives and State Conservation Priorities

This project directly advances OHF Directive C by developing, enhancing, and restoring wildlife habitat on private lands through large-scale conservation tree plantings. It simultaneously supports Directive B by improving water quality, soil conditions, and plant diversity while promoting conservation stewardship practices that enhance farming and ranching operations. Each project site will be designed to maximize habitat value for both upland and wetland wildlife species while providing tangible benefits to agricultural operations through windbreaks, erosion control, and watershed protection.

Planting for the Future also directly supports the strategic priorities identified in North Dakota's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)¹. The SWAP emphasizes that "the key to ensuring long-term survival of these resources in North Dakota is to maintain diverse grasslands, wetlands, woodlands, rivers and streams." The plan explicitly recognizes that "nearly 90 percent of North Dakota is held in private ownership" and that "working with landowners to conserve fish and wildlife resources is a top priority." This project addresses multiple SWAP priorities:

The SWAP identifies 115 Species of Conservation Priority, including 47 bird species, 21 mammals, and numerous other taxa that depend on woody cover. Tree and shrub plantings directly benefit many Level I and Level II priority species by providing:

- Nesting habitat for sharp-tailed grouse, ring-necked pheasant, and various songbirds
- Winter thermal cover for white-tailed deer and mule deer
- Food sources (fruits, seeds, insects) for birds and small mammals
- Migration stopovers and breeding habitat for neotropical migrants
- Escape cover and movement corridors connecting habitat patches across agricultural landscapes

The SWAP identifies habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation as primary threats to North Dakota's wildlife. By establishing permanent woody plantings on private agricultural lands, this project directly counteracts these threats while creating habitat heterogeneity beneficial to multiple species.

The SWAP recognizes that conservation success in North Dakota depends on private landowner engagement. This project exemplifies the collaborative private lands approach that the SWAP advocates, providing technical assistance and resources that enable landowners to create habitat while maintaining productive agricultural operations.

Rather than focusing on isolated projects, Planting for the Future creates habitat across multiple counties and landscapes, supporting the SWAP's emphasis on maintaining connected, functional ecosystems that sustain diverse fish and wildlife populations. Planting for the Future directly advances the SWAP's vision of preserving North Dakota's wildlife diversity by strategically creating habitat on the private lands that constitute the vast majority of the state's wildlife habitat base.

North Dakota's conservation landscape differs fundamentally from most western states. While states like Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado have vast expanses of federal lands managed by agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, North Dakota's public land base is comparatively limited. Approximately 70% of North Dakota's forested land and the overwhelming majority of the state's wildlife habitat exist on private property². This means that North Dakota's wildlife populations—from pheasants and deer to waterfowl and songbirds—depend almost entirely on the stewardship decisions of private landowners.

This dependence on private lands makes programs like Planting for the Future essential to conservation success in North Dakota. Unlike states where public land management drives wildlife populations, North Dakota must engage private landowners as active conservation partners. When private landowners succeed in creating and maintaining quality habitat, North Dakota's wildlife thrives. When economic or practical barriers prevent private land conservation, wildlife populations suffer accordingly.

¹ North Dakota Game and Fish Department. (2025). *State Wildlife Action Plan*. <https://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/swap>

² According to the North Dakota Forest Services's "North Dakota Forest Action Plan", which is the most recent data available: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/ndfs/documents/2020-north-dakota-forest-action-plan-final.pdf>

Only 1.8% of North Dakota's land area is currently forested (approximately 815,000 acres), and existing forests face mounting pressures from invasive species, severe weather events, drought, and over-maturity. Annual mortality is rising while natural regeneration remains limited across much of the state's agricultural landscape. Reversing this trend requires sustained, large-scale habitat creation on private lands—exactly what Planting for the Future delivers.

North Dakota's Outdoor Heritage Fund represents an innovative conservation funding model. Established in 2013, the OHF provides grants to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with priority given to projects that enhance conservation practices through statutorily identified directives. The Fund may receive up to \$40 million per biennium from oil and gas production tax revenue³, providing a direct link between energy development and conservation investment.

The Planting for the Future program allows the same industry generating these conservation dollars to partner directly with OHF to amplify conservation outcomes on the ground. The North Dakota Petroleum Foundation has a successful track record of collaboratively utilizing OHF funding to leverage additional industry contributions, creating conservation impact far exceeding what either funding source could achieve independently.

This partnership is both practical and symbolic. Oil and gas development occurs across North Dakota's landscape, and the industry recognizes its responsibility to support the communities and ecosystems where it operates. Through programs like the PSC Tree and Shrub Mitigation requirements and direct corporate contributions to conservation initiatives, industry partners demonstrate environmental stewardship while helping landowners establish lasting habitat improvements.

The result is truly multiplicative. OHF dollars from oil and gas tax revenue, combined with direct industry contributions and substantial landowner investments (both cash and in-kind labor), create conservation projects with total values often exceeding 200-300% of the OHF grant amount. This model ensures maximum return on conservation investment while engaging diverse stakeholders in shared stewardship goals.

Project Need and Urgency

As previously stated, the demand for habitat establishment on private lands continues to grow. More than 30 landowners are already committed to 2026 plantings, and applications continue to arrive from both returning participants and new landowners across the state. This demand reflects several factors:

- Growing awareness among landowners about declining habitat and wildlife populations
- Increasing recognition of trees' multiple benefits: wildlife cover, windbreaks, soil protection, watershed improvement, livestock shelter, and aesthetic value
- Removal of financial barriers through the program's no-cost tree provision
- Proven success of previous plantings, with survival rates consistently exceeding 70%
- Technical assistance from qualified habitat consultants ensuring proper design and implementation

North Dakota's brief planting windows amplify the urgency of OHF funding assurances. Spring planting must occur within a narrow 4–6-week window when soil conditions, moisture, and temperatures align for seedling establishment. Delays in securing funding could result in missed planting opportunities,

³ North Dakota Game and Fish Department. (2012). *North Dakota Outdoors Magazine: August–September 2012* (Vol. LXXV, No. 2). <https://gf.nd.gov/sites/default/files/2025-09/ndo-aug-sep-2025.pdf>

disappointed landowners ready to contribute matching resources, and lost momentum in building this critical conservation program.

This project represents continuation funding for an established, successful program (since 2018) rather than a new initiative. Previous OHF grants enabled the planting of over 671,000 trees with survival rates consistently exceeding NRCS standards. However, without continued OHF support, the program's capacity to meet growing landowner demand would be severely constrained, potentially reducing annual plantings by 60-70% and limiting the program's ability to serve North Dakota landowners eager to improve wildlife habitat on their properties.

Project Goals and Measurable Outcomes

Primary Goal: Plant 200,000 trees and shrubs on 30+ private properties across North Dakota during 2026-2027, creating permanent wildlife habitat covering approximately 300-400 acres of conservation plantings. We're committed to the ongoing success of this program, and our Foundation board has set a goal of planting more than one million trees by 2030.

Specific Objectives:

- Establish diverse, multi-species plantings designed for long-term wildlife habitat value
- Achieve minimum 50% survival rate across all projects (with historical performance averaging 73-84%)
- Provide habitat corridors and connectivity across agricultural landscapes
- Engage private landowners as active conservation partners
- Demonstrate successful public-private-industry conservation collaboration
- Create replicable models for large-scale habitat restoration on working lands
- Support State Wildlife Action Plan priorities through habitat creation for Species of Conservation Priority

Conservation Benefits:

- Enhanced nesting and cover habitat for upland game birds, waterfowl, and songbirds, including SWAP Species of Conservation Priority
- Expanded winter thermal cover and escape cover for deer, pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse, and other wildlife
- Improved watershed protection and reduced soil erosion
- Increased plant diversity and pollinator habitat
- Protection for crops and livestock from wind and weather
- Carbon sequestration and air quality improvements
- Educational opportunities demonstrating conservation practices to neighboring landowners
- Contribution to statewide habitat connectivity and landscape-scale conservation

Innovative Program Features

Planting for the Future distinguishes itself through several innovative approaches:

PSC Mitigation Program Integration: The program uniquely leverages North Dakota Public Service Commission Tree and Shrub Mitigation requirements, creating a sustainable funding mechanism where oil and gas companies fulfilling vegetation replacement obligations partner with conservation-minded landowners. This model aligns corporate environmental compliance with private land stewardship, creating win-win outcomes that extend far beyond regulatory requirements.

Landowner Engagement Model: Unlike traditional cost-share programs requiring significant upfront landowner investment, this program removes financial barriers by providing trees at no cost while

requiring landowner commitment through site preparation, planting labor, and long-term maintenance. This approach has proven highly successful in engaging landowners who want to improve habitat but face economic constraints. By contributing mostly sweat equity rather than cash, landowners develop a personal investment in the project's success while learning conservation practices they can apply to future efforts. However, landowners do provide a 25% cash match for the fabric costs of the planting. They also contribute out-of-pocket indirect costs for site preparation and maintenance activities.

Private Lands Focus: By concentrating exclusively on private land habitat, this program addresses North Dakota's most critical conservation need. Every tree planted creates habitat where it matters most—on the working agricultural lands that comprise the vast majority of North Dakota's landscape and support the overwhelming majority of the state's wildlife populations. This approach directly supports the State Wildlife Action Plan's emphasis on private lands conservation.

Adaptive Site-Specific Design: Each project is custom-designed by qualified habitat consultants based on site-specific soils, topography, moisture regimes, and landowner objectives. This ensures plantings are optimized for success rather than following one-size-fits-all prescriptions. Designs incorporate landowner operational needs, ensuring habitat improvements enhance rather than conflict with agricultural operations.

Comprehensive Quality Assurance: Two-year monitoring with guaranteed replanting for projects below 50% survival ensures long-term success and demonstrates accountability to both funders and landowners. This commitment differentiates the program from initiatives that plant trees without follow-through, ensuring OHF investments create lasting conservation value.

Planting Plan Specifications

Site Selection and Design: All projects will be designed by qualified habitat consultants (David Shockman, Nathan Jensen, Bill Lytle, or Jody Sommer) in accordance with USDA-NRCS Field Office Technical Guide specifications for wildlife habitat plantings. Each design will consider:

- Existing vegetation and land use patterns
- Soil types, drainage, and moisture availability
- Prevailing wind patterns and microclimates
- Wildlife species management objectives, including SWAP Species of Conservation Priority
- Landowner operational needs and preferences
- Proximity to existing habitat features
- Landscape-scale connectivity opportunities

Species Selection and Stock: Plantings will utilize native and adapted species proven successful in North Dakota conditions. Typical species mix includes:

- **Conifers:** Ponderosa pine, Scotch pine, Eastern red cedar (2-3 year seedlings, 8-18" height)
- **Deciduous Trees:** Green ash, silver buffaloberry, American plum (1-2 year whips or seedlings)
- **Shrubs:** Lilac, juniper, caragana, silverberry, willow, chokecherry (1-2 year bare-root or containerized stock)

Species proportions will be tailored to each site but generally emphasize conifers (60-70%) for year-round cover with deciduous species (30-40%) for food sources and structural diversity. Row configurations typically feature dense conifer blocks for thermal cover surrounded by mixed shrub borders for edge habitat and food production.

Planting Method:

Knifing & Fabric Method: Weed barrier fabric installed with ground staples provides weed suppression and moisture retention. Preferred for drier western sites where competition from established prairie vegetation is intense. Seedlings planted through fabric slits with proper root-soil contact.

Planting preparation usually includes pre-emergent herbicide applications in Year 1 with spot treatments in subsequent years as needed.

Planting Density and Layout: Standard specifications call for 6-8 foot spacing between rows and 4-6 foot in-row spacing, creating approximately 1,200-1,800 trees per acre. Multi-row blocks will be designed to provide optimal habitat value while accommodating landowner access and management needs. Typical projects range from 3,000 to 15,000 trees, depending on site size and landowner objectives.

Maintenance and Long-term Management: Landowners commit to:

- Livestock exclusion for minimum 5 years
- Weed control through chemical or mechanical means for 3 years
- Fire protection and pest monitoring
- Replanting cooperation if survival rates fall below standards
- Long-term stewardship of established plantings
- Planting reports specifying site preparation notes, including in-kind costs, labor, and equipment supplied for planting, and photos.
- Two annual monitoring reports specifying survival rates, maintenance activities, site conditions, and photos.

The NDPF will provide technical support, monitoring visits, and replacement trees as needed to ensure project success.

Project Management and Partnerships

The NDPF will provide overall project coordination and funding management. Habitat contractors will conduct project assessments, design plantings, plant trees, and install fabric. Landowners will contribute site preparation, planting labor (through personal effort or volunteers), and long-term stewardship. The North Dakota Petroleum Council will provide administrative support on an in-kind basis.

This collaborative approach ensures professional design and oversight while engaging landowners as active conservation partners. By combining OHF funding, industry contributions, technical expertise, and landowner commitment, the program creates lasting habitat improvements that benefit wildlife, landowners, and all North Dakotans who value the state's outdoor heritage.

As in previous grant rounds, all projects will be monitored for up to two years after the planting year to ensure the survival and success of plantings. The Program will strive to meet (but preferably exceed) an overall 50 percent survival rate, which, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide, is considered a successful outcome for tree planting in wetland and upland wildlife habitat. The Foundation will provide replacement trees to any landowner who is below the 50 percent survival rate, or who requests more to achieve an even higher success rate.

The Foundation will provide funds to support habitat contractors, the NDPC will contribute in-kind support from its staff to manage the program, and landowners interested in participating in the project are expected to contribute both in-kind support and monetary funds for supplies, including, but not limited to, 25 percent of the cost of the weed barrier.

The partnership between OHF and the North Dakota Petroleum Foundation through this program demonstrates how energy development revenue can directly support conservation outcomes on private lands, creating a lasting positive legacy that will benefit North Dakota's wildlife, advance State conservation priorities, and sustain outdoor traditions for generations to come.

Is this project part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan? Yes No

If yes, provide a copy with the application.

Note: Projects involving buildings and infrastructure will only be considered if part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Please refer to the "Definitions" section at the back of the form for more details.

Management of Project – Provide a description of how you will manage and oversee the project to ensure it is carried out on schedule and in a manner that best ensures its objectives will be met.

Include a brief background and work experience for those managing the project.

Because the NDPF does not have any paid staff, the Program will be overseen and managed by NDPC staff, including Ron Ness, President of the NDPC and CEO of the Foundation, and Eric Delzer, the NDPF's grant administrator. This support will be provided in-kind to the Foundation and the Program.⁴

Both Ness and Delzer have a long history of responsibly managing and executing other grant proposals through the Oil and Gas Research Council and the Outdoor Heritage Fund. As the program has grown, the NDPF has also retained Ron Day to assist in the administration of the Program, including the collection of applications, project approvals, ordering of trees and materials, scheduling of projects, and project monitoring, among other tasks. Ron Day spent more than 30 years in the oil industry, with the last 20 years at the Mandan Refinery. His career was focused mainly in the area for environmental, health and safety, so he brings relevant experience and expertise to the program.

The Program will again retain outside contractors to provide consultation and planting services, including:

David Shockman will serve as a lead habitat consultant for projects. David is a farmer from Burleigh County and has served as an advisor and leader for several conservation groups. An avid conservationist, he began planting trees more than 25 years ago for habitat and has planted more than 40,000 trees per year for the NDPF since 2018.

Nathan Jensen is the owner and operator of All American Tree Movers & Nursery, LLC, which was established in 2015 in Bismarck, ND. In addition to his commitment to educating people about proper planting, care, and maintenance of every tree he offers, he is also an avid

⁴ In-kind support from NDPC staff will be calculated at a rate of \$50 per hour salary equivalent.

outdoorsman and conservationist who has dedicated much time and resources to planting trees for habitat prior to joining the NDPF's program.

The NDPF will also retain the assistance of **Bill Lytle** and **Jody Sommer** as needed. Lytle is experienced in tree planting and has previously planted for NDPF with good results. Sommer is an active conservationist who has volunteered for and served on the board of the Dakota Chapter of Pheasants Forever, which has completed several tree planting projects, and he also serves on the North Dakota Game and Fish Advisory Board.

Evaluation – Describe your plan to document progress and results.

Please be specific on the methods you will utilize to measure success. Note that regular reporting, final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

Planting for the Future employs a rigorous, multi-year evaluation system designed to document project success, ensure accountability to funders and landowners, and generate data that continuously improves program effectiveness. This evaluation framework encompasses survival rate monitoring, habitat quality assessment, maintenance activities, and comprehensive reporting to all stakeholders.

Primary Success Metrics

Tree Survival Rates: The fundamental measure of project success is achieving a minimum of 50% survival rates as established by the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide for successful wildlife habitat plantings. However, the program consistently exceeds this standard, with recent projects averaging 73-84% survival rates. Each project will be assessed individually against this benchmark, with replanting provided to any project falling below the 50% threshold.

Quantifiable Outputs:

- Total number of trees and shrubs planted by species
- Total acres of habitat created
- Number of landowners participating
- Linear feet of tree rows established
- Geographic distribution across counties and landscapes
- Match funding ratios achieved (cash and in-kind)

Monitoring Protocol and Schedule

Year 0 (Planting Year):

- **Pre-Planting Documentation:** Contractors conduct project assessments and planting reports documenting baseline conditions, including photographs from established photo points, GPS coordinates, site descriptions, soil conditions, existing vegetation, and planting plan details. All documentation is filed in individual project folders.
- **Planting Documentation:** Record date of planting, species planted (quantities and stock sizes), planting method employed (scalping or fabric), weed control measures applied, contractor(s) involved, and landowner participation. Photographs documenting site preparation, planting process, and completed installation.

Year 1 (First Growing Season):

- **Fall Assessment (September-October):** Year 1 survival assessment with detailed species-by-species analysis with photos and notes on maintenance activities and conditions contributing to survival rates. Replants may be ordered at this time.

Year 2 (Second Growing Season):

- **Fall Assessment (September-October):** Year 2 evaluation documenting final survival rates, habitat quality, and overall project success. Determination will be made regarding need for further supplemental planting. Final photographic documentation from established photo points showing 2-year development progression.

Replanting Protocol: Any project with survival rates below 50% after Year 1 or Year 2 assessments will receive replacement trees at no cost to the landowner. Replanting occurs the following spring with analysis of failure causes to inform improved techniques. Projects between 50-70% survival may receive optional supplemental planting to enhance habitat quality and reach optimal density targets.

Data Collection and Documentation Methods

Survival Rate Methodology:

- Total trees planted (by species)
- Trees surviving (by species)
- Mortality factors (categorical: drought stress, insect/disease, animal damage, competition, planting failure, unknown)
- Representative photographs

Photographic Documentation: Each project maintains a minimum of 4 permanent photo points established at planting, photographed from identical positions during each monitoring visit. Before/after comparisons provide powerful visual documentation of habitat establishment. Photographs are encouraged to be geo-tagged and dated.

Data Management: All monitoring data entered into standardized electronic database enabling:

- Project-level tracking and reporting
- Aggregate statistical analysis across all projects
- Trend analysis by region, species, planting method, and site characteristics
- Long-term program impact assessment

Quality Assurance and Adaptive Management

Species Performance Analysis: Survival data analyzed by species to identify which trees and shrubs perform best under various conditions (soil types, moisture regimes, geographic regions, planting methods). Poor-performing species phased out; successful species emphasized in future designs.

Continuous Improvement Process: Annual program review examines aggregate data to identify:

- Factors correlating with high survival (site selection, species mix, planting timing, contractor techniques, landowner engagement)
- Common failure modes and preventive strategies

- Opportunities to improve cost-effectiveness
- Emerging best practices for dissemination

Findings incorporated into updated guidance for contractors, revised landowner materials, and refined project design protocols.

Reporting Requirements and Schedule

OHF Reporting: Status reports submitted to the Outdoor Heritage Fund according to contract schedule (semi-annual or as required) including:

- Project-by-project summary table showing trees planted, survival rates, and monitoring status
- Aggregate program statistics (total trees, acres, survival rates, match funding)
- Photographic documentation
- Budget expenditure documentation
- Narrative describing accomplishments, challenges, and adaptive management responses
- Final report providing comprehensive program evaluation including long-term outcomes, lessons learned, and program impact on state conservation goals

PSC Reporting: For projects utilizing Tree and Shrub Mitigation funding, annual reports submitted to North Dakota Public Service Commission documenting compliance with mitigation requirements, vegetation establishment success, and photographic evidence.

Public Reporting: Program results shared through:

- NDPF website updates featuring project highlights and success stories
- Social media posts showcasing individual projects (with landowner permission)
- Annual summary reports available to stakeholders and the public
- Presentations to conservation organizations, legislative committees, and industry partners as necessary
- Case studies demonstrating successful private lands conservation partnerships

Long-term Impact Assessment

While formal monitoring concludes after Year 2, the program maintains relationships with landowners and encourages voluntary long-term reporting of project outcomes. This long-term perspective provides invaluable data about the lasting conservation value of OHF investments and informs strategic planning for future habitat initiatives.

Financial Information

Project Budget – Use the table below to provide an itemized list of project expenses and describe the matching funds being utilized for this project.

Indicate if the matching funds are in the form of cash, indirect costs or in-kind services. The budget should identify all other committed funding sources and the amount of funding from each source. **A minimum of 25% match funding is required.** An application will be scored higher the greater the amount of match funding provided. (See Scoring Form.)

Certain values have been identified for in-kind services as detailed under “Budget Information” at the back of this form. Refer to that section and utilize these values in identifying your matching funds.

NOTE: No indirect costs will be funded. Supporting documentation for project expenses, including bids, must be included or application will be considered incomplete.

Project Expense	OHF Request	Applicant's Match Share (Cash)	Applicant's Match Share In-Kind	Applicant's Match Share (Indirect)	Other Project Sponsor's Share	Total Each Project Expense
Trees (1)	\$ 331,500.00					\$ 331,500.00
Fabric (2)	\$ 178,500.00				\$ 72,280.00	\$ 250,780.00
Operating Costs (3)		\$ 578,500.00			\$ 221,430.00	\$ 799,930.00
Admin Costs (4)		\$ 72,000.00	\$ 17,000.00			\$ 89,000.00
Total Costs	\$ 510,000.00	\$ 650,500.00	\$ 17,000.00		\$ 293,710.00	\$ 1,471,210.00

Note: Costs for seeding, fencing, pipelines, wells, and cover crops cannot exceed NRCS Field Office Tech Guide without justification. Projects involving perimeter fencing must follow NRCS eligibility standards.

Budget Narrative – Use the space below to provide additional detail regarding project expenses.

- 1) \$331,500 is requested in OHF funds for the purchase of trees over two years.
- 2) \$178,500 is requested for the purchase of weed barrier and staples. Participating landowners will provide 25% of the cost of fabric and pins.
- 3) The NDPF will hire contractors to design and implement each project, including site preparation for the planting of trees and monitoring throughout the duration of this grant period. Other Project Sponsor's Share accounts for expenses incurred by the landowner in land preparation and planting, including, but not limited to, use of personal equipment, gasoline, spray, flags, spray paint or other materials. It also includes the in-kind volunteer labor on behalf of the landowner to prepare land, plant trees and install weed barrier.
- 4) Since the NDPF does not have staff, the NDPC has provide staff to operate the program at an estimated wage equivalent of \$50 per hour as well as hire a contractor to assist with the administration of the project. This support will include the collection, filing and approval process of applications for trees; ordering of trees and materials; correspondence with contractors and applicants; and management of budget and grant, among other duties.

Sustainability – Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years.

Include information on the sustainability of this project after OHF funds have been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

This Program has continued to grow both in size and popularity with industry and landowners. Even without advertising or major publicity, the Program receives more applications for trees each year from both returning and new landowners than it can usually accommodate. Oil and gas companies have also been extremely supportive of the program because it aligns with their own stewardship goals and sustainability policies and procedures. Because of this success, Planting for the Future has become one of the NDPF's hallmark programs, and it is expected to remain an important component of the NDPF's goals and priorities for many years to come.

In terms of funding, the Program continues to see participation from industry companies seeking projects to meet PSC Tree and Shrub Mitigation requirements. In addition, the NDPF raises funds to support the program from its fishing derby and Birds & Birdies events. Furthermore, NDPC member companies have foundations or budgets for philanthropy and are often looking for environmental projects that they can support. The Planting for the Future initiative meets many of their requirements, enabling the continued implementation of the program.

Partial Funding – Indicate how the project will be affected if less funding is available than that requested.

The NDPF is prepared to continue building this program even if it does not secure grant funds, albeit at a smaller scale, and our ability to grow into an impactful, long-lasting program may be hindered without the OHF funding.

Partnership Recognition - If you are a successful recipient of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars, how would you recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund partnership? * *There must be signage at the location of the project acknowledging OHF funding when appropriate.*

The NDPF has recognized the Outdoor Heritage Fund through photos and videos shared on the Foundation’s website and social media channels, and will continue to do so. Currently, the Outdoor Heritage Fund logo is displayed on the NDPF website, Planting for the Future brochures and in any other promotional or educational materials distributed and shared. Because these projects are on private land, the Program does not require signage. However, going forward we plan to provide signs to be placed if approved by the landowner.

Awarding of Grants - Review the appropriate sample contract for your organization on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm>.

Can you meet all the provisions of the sample contract? Yes No

If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be: