



Weston Family
Foundation

Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative Program Details



Important Dates

Program Launch:	Tuesday February 18, 2025
Informational Webinar(s):	<u>Webinar (1)</u> : Tuesday February 25, 2025, from 1-2pm ET <u>Webinar (2)</u> : Thursday March 13, 2025, from 1-2pm ET
NOTE: Both webinars will feature the same content, resources, and information. Prospective applicants are therefore encouraged to attend only one of the two sessions according to their availability. A recording of the first webinar will be uploaded to the Weston Family Foundation website approximately one week following the scheduled webinar date.	
Deadline to submit Letters of Intent (LOIs):	Tuesday April 1, 2025, at 3pm ET
Deadline to submit Proposal: (select applicants only)	Monday June 30, 2025, at 3pm ET * <i>*Tentative, date subject to change</i>
Awards Decision:	Fall 2025
Program End:	Winter 2030

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Program Overview

Spanning the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, Canada's Prairie Grasslands are among the world's most endangered ecosystems. To date, over 80% of Canada's native grasslands have been lost to conversion and land use change, leaving only remnants of this vast and complex landscape to support biodiversity, sequester carbon, and provide a wide range of ecosystem services throughout the region. The Prairies are home to diverse wildlife, including many at risk and endangered species of grassland birds. They constitute some of the highest carbon stocks in the world, storing an estimated 2 to 3 billion tons of carbon in their root systems and soil, which further capture and filter water, fix nitrogen, and minimize the occurrence of flooding and drought. Beyond their ecological value, the Prairie Grasslands are an integral part of the diverse communities who live and work on the land, and play a critical role in supporting the social and cultural well-being of people across the country.

Recognizing the importance of Canada's Prairie Grasslands, the *Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative* will **protect the biodiversity of one of Canada's most ecologically valuable and threatened ecosystems**. The Initiative launches its second phase on February 18, 2025, centered on **securing the long-term protection of biodiversity in Canada's Prairie Grasslands through (i) stewardship, (ii) economic viability and (iii) training**.

The 2025 *Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative* is a **five-year, \$30M open call funding opportunity** that aims to **protect grasslands biodiversity** by promoting the use and adoption of best stewardship practices, addressing the economic drivers affecting land conversion, and delivering practical and impactful knowledge, tools and resources to support grass-based stewards in the long-term. This Initiative builds upon the first phase of the program, originally launched in 2020, by applying learnings and new perspectives gained in the first five years to identify and foster projects with the capacity to extend beyond the current, five-year period (2025-2030). Projects demonstrating the ability to grow and scale at the end of the five-year program will be considered for additional and increased funding beyond 2030.

Strategic Approach

- The 2025 *Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative* prioritizes **scalable, systems-based, collaborative** projects that demonstrate capacity for **measurable (quantitative and qualitative) impact** on grassland biodiversity at a landscape level.
- Projects demonstrating the ability to deliver scalable, lasting impact toward protecting the biodiversity of grasslands will be considered for continued funding beyond 2030.

Successful projects will exhibit the following four principles:



Scalability

Projects have the capacity or potential to grow and expand toward delivering impact across additional jurisdictions, landscapes or end-user groups.



Systems-based approaches

Projects apply a broad, multi-faceted perspective that embraces the inherent complexity of the landscape, harnessing ecological, social and economic relationships to support long-term conservation.



Collaboration

Projects prioritize co-production, knowledge sharing, relationship building and partnership with the diverse practitioners living and working on the landscape.



Measurable impact

Projects contribute toward protecting landscape-scale biodiversity and demonstrate measurable (quantitative or qualitative) outputs and outcomes.

Program Objective

- The second phase of the *Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative* builds upon the learnings and impacts achieved through the first phase of the program and addresses emerging needs to support the effective conservation and protection of Canada's Prairie Grasslands.
- Spanning 2025 through 2030, the program will continue to support impactful conservation approaches, including **stewardship and training**, while applying additional focus toward enhancing the **economic viability** of grass-based systems.

To be eligible, projects must utilize one or more of the following three conservation approaches:



(1) Stewardship

Stewardship projects include those that promote the increased use and adoption of best stewardship practices to protect the biodiversity and ecological function of grasslands.

Examples: Rotational grazing, prescribed fire, wildlife friendly fencing and water development.



(2) Economic Viability

Economic Viability projects include those that address the economic drivers affecting land use change to reduce conversion and protect the ecological integrity of grass-based systems.

Examples: Market based incentives and insurance, and preferred lending programs.



(3) Training

Training projects include those that deliver evidence-based knowledge, tools, and resources to support ecologically based land management.

Examples: Peer-to-peer training, practical workshops, and on-the-ground demonstrations.

Geographic Scope

- All projects must be implemented in grassland dominated habitats within the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and/or Manitoba, as outlined in Figure 1. **Projects operating outside this region will not be considered for funding at this time.**

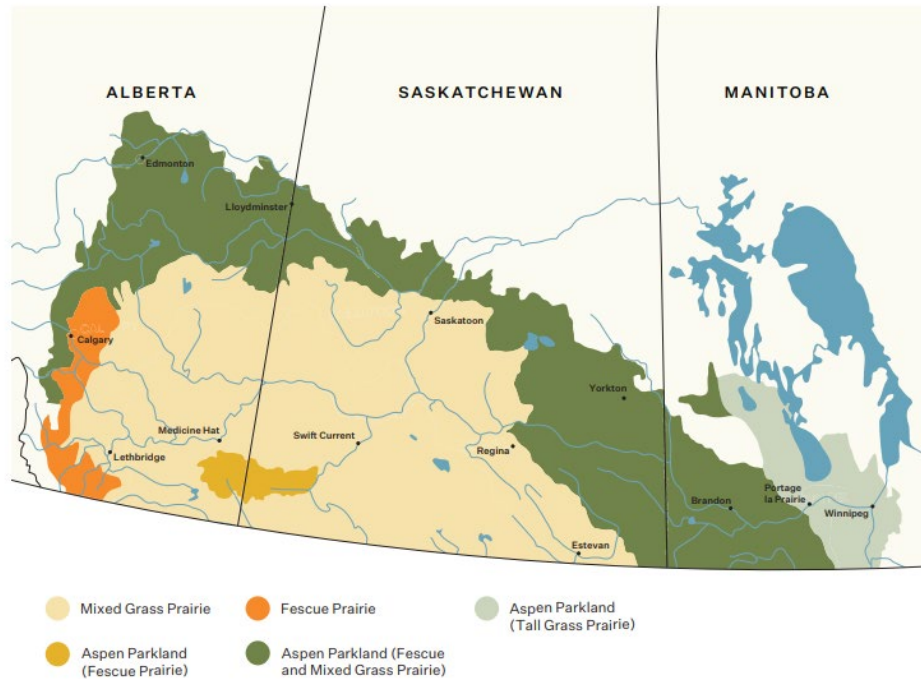


Figure 1. Geographic region designated as ‘Prairie Grasslands’ for the purposes of the Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative. Note that projects operating outside this region will not be considered for funding at this time.

Targeted Outcomes

- Projects must deliver **practical and measurable outputs** (quantitative and qualitative) that have meaningful and long-lasting impact on biodiversity.
- Impact should **clearly contribute towards enhancing and protecting biodiversity** in the region designated as Prairie Grasslands.
- Project **outcomes must align with the identified program principles and conservation approaches** (see [Program Objective](#)).

Application Process

The Foundation will utilize a two-phased approach to build programming in the grasslands:

Step (1): Letters of Intent

Deadline: Tuesday April 1, 2025, at 3pm ET

- The Foundation will accept Letters of Intent (LOIs) between **Tuesday February 18 and Tuesday April 1, 2025.**

- LOIs must use the template provided on the Weston Family Foundation website and should be submitted as a single PDF document via email to the [Conservation Program Team \(conservation@westonfoundation.ca\)](mailto:conservation@westonfoundation.ca) no later than **Tuesday April 1 at 3pm ET**.

NOTE: All applicants will receive an email from conservation@westonfoundation.ca, confirming receipt of their LOI. **If you do not receive confirmation within 2-3 business days**, please [contact the program team](#) to ensure that your application has been received.

- The lead applicant may submit up to one LOI on behalf of their organization, but may be listed as a collaborator on other LOIs.
- All applicants are strongly encouraged to seek collaboration within and outside their organizations to ensure projects are inherently systems-based and relevant to the range of practitioners operating in the Prairies.

Step (2): Proposals

Tentative deadline: Monday June 30, 2025, at 3pm ET *

- All LOIs will be reviewed and evaluated, after which select applicants will be invited to submit full proposals (Spring 2025) for adjudication by the Foundation's independent panel of external expert reviewers (Summer 2025).

**Tentative, date subject to change.*

Applicant Eligibility

- Organizations operating in the Prairie Grasslands (see Figure 1 on [Geographical Scope](#)), with the knowledge, experience and capacity to support the identified program goals and objectives are eligible to apply.
- Recognizing that Indigenous peoples are important stewards of Canada's diverse ecosystems, the Foundation also welcomes projects that are Indigenous-led or Indigenous-partnered.
- A [qualified donee](#), in accordance with the **Canada Revenue Agency and Income Tax Act**. Other non-eligible organizations required for the project may be listed as collaborators on the project.
- Organizations that meet all program criteria but are not a qualified donees are asked to [contact the Foundation](#) prior to submitting an application.

Applicant Support

- The Foundation will be offering two, one-hour, online information sessions during which prospective applicants can learn more about the program. Both webinars will feature the same content, resources and information and are designed to provide multiple opportunities for prospective applicants to engage with the program team prior to the LOI deadline.
- Prospective applicants are encouraged to attend only one of the sessions. Full event details are available on the Weston Family Foundation website and social media channels.

Webinars



Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative Informational Webinar (1)
Tuesday February 25, 2025
between 1 and 2 pm ET



Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative Informational Webinar (2)
Thursday March 13, 2025
between 1 and 2 pm ET

- To facilitate equal access to the application process, the Foundation will offer optional administrative and writing support to organizations invited to participate in the Proposal stage. For more information, please contact [Charlene Williams, Program Manager for Conservation](mailto:Charlene.Williams@westonfoundation.ca) (conservation@westonfoundation.ca).

Funding Specifications

- The 2025 *Weston Family Prairie Grasslands Initiative* delivers **an additional \$30M over five years** to support grasslands conservation. The total number of grants awarded will be determined according to the quality and scope of applications received.
- **Funding will support projects ranging from three to five years in length**, allowing sufficient time for project teams to deliver core activities, evaluate outcomes, identify emerging needs and outline opportunities to grow and scale.
- LOIs must include a **total funding request** that is reasonable, appropriate and inclusive of the proposed project activities and associated outcomes. In the interest of supporting projects that most effectively and comprehensively address conservation needs, **funding requests are not required to adhere to a minimum, maximum or average value**. The Foundation will contribute a total of \$30M over five years (~\$6M per year) to support a range of projects consistent with the program strategy and goals.
- The Foundation may contribute **partial or full funding to support project implementation**. Applicants seeking partial funding must demonstrate that remaining funds have been secured prior to the start of the project.
- A comprehensive overview of all project costs must be included in the proposal budget (Proposal stage applicants only). Funding may be used to support relevant costs that are reasonably associated with project activities as outlined in the proposal. **Note that up to ten percent (10%) of the total project budget may be allocated toward overhead and/or administrative costs up to a maximum of \$250,000 per project.**
- The proposal budget should account for anticipated changes in material, labour and inflation costs over the course of the five-year program.

Funding specifications for program grantees:

- Any grant provided by the Foundation shall be directed to the relevant organization and not to the individual affiliated with and/or applying on behalf of the organization. Responsibility for the planning, direction, and execution of the proposed project will rest solely with the applicant.
- All grants provided by the Foundation are conditional upon grantees meeting the pre-defined project milestones and reporting requirements, including but not limited to the submission of progress, financial and/or annual reports.
- Grantees are strongly encouraged to seek external funding, beyond that provided by the Foundation, to support the long-term implementation of project activities following the end of the granting period. The Foundation does not guarantee renewal or continuation of grant funding.
- The Foundation will consider providing continued support to successful projects with a demonstrated ability to scale and deliver increased impact.

- Grantees are eligible to apply for funding through other Foundation programs.

Review Criteria

LOIs:

LOIs submitted for funding consideration will be reviewed by Foundation staff using a range of criteria including:

- Is the principal applicant eligible to receive funding as per the identified [applicant eligibility requirements](#)?
- Does the proposed project fall within the specified [geographic scope](#)?
- Is the project consistent with the [program strategy](#)?
- Does the proposed project focus on one or more of the three identified [conservation approaches](#)?
- Will the proposed project meaningfully contribute toward improving and protecting biodiversity in the Prairie Grasslands?

Proposals (select applicants only):

Proposals submitted for funding consideration will be **reviewed and adjudicated by a panel of independent, external, expert advisors**, representing the range of expertise, interests and perspectives found throughout Canada's Prairie Grasslands using criteria including:

- Does the project align with the [program objective](#)?
- Does the project incorporate the [program principals](#) and one or more of the [three identified conservation approaches](#)?
- Is the proposed timeline feasible and appropriate?
- Do the proposed project milestones reflect capacity to deliver practical and measurable outputs that have significant, meaningful and lasting impact?
- Is the proposed budget sufficiently comprehensive, reasonable and appropriate?
- Does the proposed project deliver practical and measurable outputs (quantitative or qualitative) that have meaningful and lasting impact on biodiversity?
- Does the project team have the knowledge, capacity and expertise to deliver the project?
- Have the appropriate partnerships and/or collaborations been established to facilitate long-term impact following the end of the granting period?

Project Reporting and Evaluation

Awarded grantees are responsible for meeting all reporting requirements as outlined in the grant agreement, established at the time of award. Grantee responsibilities may include:

- Delivery of bi-annual progress reports
- Delivery of formal budget reports
- Financial reconciliation
- Delivery of the project milestones as outlined in the grant agreement
- Delivery of project outputs and outcomes as outlined in the final project proposal and grant agreement

About the Weston Family Foundation

At the Weston Family Foundation, more than 60 years of philanthropy has taught us that there is a relationship between healthy landscapes and healthy people. That is why we champion world-class health research and innovation with the same passion that we support initiatives to protect and restore biodiversity on our unique landscapes. We take a collaborative approach to philanthropy, working alongside forward-thinking partners to advance Canada and create lasting impact. We aspire to do more than provide funding, by enabling others to find transformational ways to improve the well-being of people in Canada.

Terms and Conditions

Confidentiality

The Foundation treats all LOIs, proposals, projects, and associated information (collectively, the “**Confidential Information**”) in confidence using reasonable care in protecting such Confidential Information from disclosure to third parties who do not participate in the grant review process and Foundation assessments. All Confidential Information will be used by the Foundation and its review committee for the purposes of reviews and assessments and will be shared only in accordance with the sharing policy as set out herein. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Confidential Information shall not include any information that: a. was generally known to the public prior to the effective date of this Program announcement; b. becomes generally known to the public through no unlawful or unauthorized act by any recipient of Confidential Information; or c. was independently developed by the Foundation or its review committee without reference to the Confidential Information. 10 If the Foundation or any of its review committee members is requested to disclose Confidential Information pursuant to a legal or governmental proceeding, the Foundation shall give the Applicant or other owner(s) of such Confidential Information notice of such disclosure request as soon as is reasonably practicable. Participating reviewers will be subject to the Foundation’s standard disclosure agreements for such engagements

Liability and Indemnity

Each applicant pursuant to this program acknowledges and agrees in responding to the program announcement that the applicant shall have no claim against the Foundation, and its respective representatives or affiliates, should such Program response be unsuccessful for any reason. Each applicant hereby releases the Foundation, its representatives, and affiliates, from any cause of action, complaint, or claim in connection with the application process and its outcome. The Foundation’s role in grants awarded pursuant to this program is that of a funder. It is not the sponsor of funded projects. The Foundation will not assume any liability associated with funded projects and each Applicant who is ultimately awarded a grant pursuant to this Program releases the Foundation from any and all liability with respect thereto and further indemnifies the Foundation, and its respective representatives and affiliates, from any claim or loss whatsoever associated with the applicable grant.

Intellectual Property Policy and Intellectual Property Agreements among Collaborators

The Foundation acknowledges that any intellectual property (“IP”) that arises from research funded through this program is not the property of the Foundation. The Foundation does require that applicants and collaborators agree on any material IP issues prior to submission of a proposal.

Applicant Commitment

Organizations and individuals affiliated with and applying through or on behalf of an organization should discuss the program announcement and the terms of this document with their organization prior to submitting an

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application (LOI or proposal). The submission of an LOI or a proposal does not bind either the Foundation or the applicants to any commitment to provide or receive funding, respectively. Successful applicants will be required to agree to terms substantially similar to those contained in this document and the Foundation reserves the right to alter, delete or add additional terms within the Grant Agreement between the successful applicants and the Foundation. The Foundation will not negotiate the terms of the specific Grant Agreement with applicants outside of those that are statutory in nature. The Foundation, at its sole discretion, may change the timeline of the application process and will communicate any such changes