The Vital Ground Foundation
Conservation Partners Grant Guidelines

Applications accepted from February 3 – March 15, 2026
Awards will be announced in late May 2026

The Vital Ground Foundation works to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations by conserving wildlife habitat for future generations and supporting projects that prevent conflicts between bears and people.

Vital Ground offers Conservation Partners Grants to address priority conflict prevention needs and encourage new partnerships. Proposals should include specific and tangible activities or actions that will benefit grizzlies and other wildlife by preventing future conflicts with people.

To be eligible, both the entity requesting assistance and the project or program proposed for funding must meet the following criteria:

1. The proposal must be submitted by a qualified non-profit based in either the United States or Canada, or be a state, federal, or tribal entity focused on science-based wildlife management.
2. The project or program proposed must prevent conflicts between bears and humans and benefit grizzly bear habitat that is currently occupied, documented in an approved federal, state or tribal wildlife management plan, or expected to promote connectivity between occupied or potential grizzly bear habitats. Habitat conservation projects, too, should have a conflict prevention component. Projects on private land will be prioritized for funding.
3. Absent special circumstances, organizations will be funded for no more than two consecutive calendar years.
4. Proposals are generally funded for less than $10,000 and applications may not exceed $15,000.
5. The proposal including budget, photos, and maps should be limited to 2 pages.
6. Matching funding is required at a minimum ratio of 1:1.
7. If the proposal is not submitted by a 501(c)(3) organization, the organization needs to obtain a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor for the funds to be passed through to. The application must identify the fiscal sponsor, its address, mission statement and EIN number.
8. The proposal should clearly state or address **the project or program evaluation criteria provided below.**
9. All proposals will be reviewed for completeness by Vital Ground staff and if qualified, will be forwarded to the Lands Committee for its review and recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
10. Vital Ground will not provide "unrestricted" funds. All successful applicants must sign a contract or grant agreement with Vital Ground that describes the proposal and responsibilities of the parties before funds will be dispersed.
11. Vital Ground prefers that all funds awarded are directly applied to the proposed project costs, and under no circumstances may administrative or indirect costs exceed 5% of the grant request.

12. All grantees are required to provide a final report on **October 1, 2025. This report should be limited to one page and include photos, as well as a break down of how funds were spent.**
13. Send proposals via email as an attached pdf document to: bjohnson@vitalground.org with the email subject line stating: (**Your Organization) Partners Proposal (month/year).**

For more information, contact:
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Conservation Partners Proposal Evaluation Criteria

1. Conciseness and clarity of written proposal.
2. Consistency with Vital Ground's stated Goals and Mission (for more information on Vital Ground's mission and goals, go to www.vitalground.org).
3. Location/Proximity of the project within, adjacent to, or between designated Grizzly Bear Ecosystem(s) or other documented grizzly bear habitat (e.g. Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet-Yaak, etc.) with priority given to proposals in Vital Ground's identified Conflict Prevention Priority Areas and additions (see attached map and priority summary).
4. Names and expected contribution amounts of other funding/participating partners.
5. Confirmation of matching funding at 1:1 or greater.
6. Proposed monitoring or measurement methods to be used by applicant to evaluate success or need for future modifications.

Conflict Prevention Projects or Programs:

1. Demonstrated need for the program/project.
2. Specific and meaningful proposal outcomes.
3. Quality and message of outreach/conflict prevention materials.
4. Quality or consistency of proposal with current Best Management Practices (e.g. proper use of materials for electric fencing, bear-proof dumpsters, etc.).

Habitat Conservation Projects or Proposals:

5. Project size and quality/types of wildlife habitat.
6. Type and level of risk to habitat if no-action is taken.
7. Condition/ownership/protection status of adjacent lands.
8. Type of protection (fee, conservation easement & relevant CE terms, other).
9. Demonstrated prevention of conflicts between bears and humans.