

Project Abstract Summary

This Project Abstract Summary form must be submitted or the application will be considered incomplete. Ensure the Project Abstract field succinctly describes the project in plain language that the public can understand and use without the full proposal. Use 4,000 characters or less. Do not include personally identifiable, sensitive or proprietary information. Refer to Agency instructions for any additional Project Abstract field requirements. If the application is funded, your project abstract information (as submitted) will be made available to public websites and/or databases including USAspending.gov.

* Funding Opportunity Number

F-FWS-WSFR-23-003

CFDA(s)

15.628

* Applicant Name

DUCKS UNLIMITED, INC.

* Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project

Support for programming to increase shooting sports participation by adding boots-on-the-ground staff support in USFWS Region 3.

* Project Abstract

The recent growth and popularity of recreational/competitive shooting sports have created unprecedented R3 success and opportunities, particularly with robust emergence of high school/collegiate-level shooting teams. Youth shooting teams provide a fertile network for mentoring and effective R3 success including legitimate reach into underserved communities and increasing diversity within the shooting sports community. With this growth, however, come unprecedented problems and needs. The capacity and infrastructure for facilitating effective R3 for the shooting sports are lagging. Headwinds from the pandemic and associated economic stressors are threatening the sustainability of these programs. These factors clearly manifest as regional and national R3 threats. Without focused effort to address these headwinds, the gains in participation and diversity through these programs are at risk along with the very funding these programs generate for conservation through the purchase of firearms and ammunition that flows through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program.

Through the proposed program, DU will help sustain and grow youth shooting teams by offsetting program costs (equipment, ammunition, competition entry fees and travel) by deploying fundraising opportunities that can be readily adopted and delivered by youth shooting teams at the community level and can be readily scaled up across the nation.

Over the past two years, Ducks Unlimited deployed the Team Resources Assistance Program (TRAP) to support youth shooting sports teams to help them survive the financial challenges associated with the pandemic and broader economic headwinds. TRAP provides all the ingredients necessary for a team to conduct a successful fundraising raffle at no cost to the team. DU is passing along full access to highly discounted merchandise packages, professionally designed marketing/fundraising materials (posters, raffle tickets, shipping merchandise to winners), and guidance/support from professional fundraising staff. The team retains all funds raised above the cost of deeply discounted merchandise. DU receives no funding through this program from shooting teams.

With the success of this program over the past two years, DU is prepared to accelerate the program in the key states of WI, MI, MN, IL, IN by adding boots-on-the-ground support. Coordinators would engage coaches; attend 2 team competitions; promote the program through social media, DU magazine (2.6M readership), and the DU website; promote mentored hunts through DU's 57,000-member volunteer network and state-level R3 programs; connect participants to DU high school and college volunteer chapters; and build R3 mentoring networks that translate directly towards fulfilling state wildlife agency missions.

Funding from this grant will provide the seed money to hire five new "recruiters" for the program to supplement our on-the-ground staff of three. Without critical funding from the Multi-state Conservation Grant Program, DU would only be able to add one team member next year, if that.

The best proof and validation of the need for this program and potential to achieve outcomes under Strategic Priority 6E, R3 Capacity and Infrastructure, is the tremendous growth in participation after launching TRAP. Over the first two years, participation grew from 37 teams to 158 teams; 22 states to 33 states; and 1,400 to 5,200 youth participants.