

**Department of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management
Headquarters Office
Wild Horse and Burro Resource Management**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES

Title: Wild Horse and Burro Research –BLM Request for Proposals FY 2024

Federal Program: 15.229 Wild Horse and Burro Resource Management

Authorizing Legislation:

43 U.S. Code Chapter 35 Section 1737 (a) Investigations, studies, and experiments. The Secretary may conduct investigations, studies, and experiments, on his own initiative or in cooperation with others, involving the management, protection, development, acquisition, and conveying of the public lands. (Federal Land Policy and Management Act)

16 U.S. Code Chapter 30 Section 1340 The Secretaries are authorized and directed to undertake those studies of the habits of wild free-roaming horses and burros that they may deem necessary in order to carry out the provisions of this chapter. (Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act)

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Bureau of Land Management is offering this funding opportunity to potential research partners *in federal agencies*, for research that is responsive to any of the following: 1) develop and/ or test fertility control methods that are safe, humane, and applicable to female wild horse (mares), and which are longer-lasting than currently available fertility control methods used by the BLM in wild mares; or 2) address ecological relationships between WHB and their environments, with studies that may also address the effects of climate change on WHB populations; or 3) studies that would further improve wild horse and burro aerial censuses; develop new insights into wild horse and burro genetics; improve health, handling, and welfare; identify factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or address human dimensions of wild horse and burro management.

Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages and protects wild horses and burros on 26.9 million acres of public lands across 10 Western states as part of its mission to administer public lands for a variety of uses. The Wild Horse and Burro (WHB) Program's goal is to manage healthy wild horses and burros on healthy public rangelands. The BLM created its WHB Program to implement the Wild-Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act, passed by Congress in 1971. Broadly, the law declares wild horses and burros to be “living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West” and stipulates that the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service have the responsibility to manage and protect herds in their respective jurisdictions within areas where wild horses and burros were found roaming in 1971. To maintain wild horses and burros in good condition and protect the health of our public lands, the BLM must manage the population growth of wild horse and burro herds. Without natural population controls, such as predation, herds can increase at a rate of up to 20 percent annually, doubling in size in just 4 to 5 years, if not appropriately managed. The BLM removes animals from some herd management areas to reduce the risk that large populations of wild horses and burros can cause negative ecological impacts. In addition to removals, though, management methods that reduce population growth rates must be implemented to protect scarce and fragile resources in the arid West and ensure sustainable populations of healthy WHBs in the long term.

The BLM wild horse and burro program recently released its ‘BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program 2021 Strategic Research Plan’ [hereafter, ‘Strategic Research Plan’], which can be accessed via: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/herd-management/science-and-research>. That document and associated appendices provide extensive background information on the agency’s motivations to support research, history of recently funded WHB-related research, and agency-identified research topics that may be of highest interest to the WHB program. The development and testing of long-lasting fertility control methods for wild mares is identified as the BLM’s highest current priority for WHB-related research. The second-highest priority is research into relationships between WHBs and their environment that could inform BLM’s management. A number of lower-priority research topics are listed in the Strategic Research Plan, including studies that would further improve wild horse and burro aerial censuses; develop new insights into WHB genetics; improve health, handling, and welfare; identify factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or address human dimensions of WHB management. Indigenous knowledge is also an important source of information that inform the BLM’s resource management, as clarified in DOI policy that came out after the 2021 Strategic Research Plan, in DOI Department Manual parts 522, 523, 526, and 604.

1. As part of its efforts to manage the population growth of wild horses on public rangelands, the BLM has supported the development and testing of various contraceptive agents for wild horses since 1978. Fertility control methods for wild burros have been tested and applied, but to a lesser degree. Development and testing of humane and effective fertility control methods for wild mares that are longer-lasting than currently available methods is vital to the BLM’s ability to manage herd population growth rates, and was identified as the BLM’s highest priority for research in the Strategic Research Plan. As explained in the Strategic Research Plan, research that addresses male horse neutering, male horse temporary fertility control, or burro fertility control is not currently a BLM priority, and such research will not be considered responsive to this funding opportunity.

2. To protect the quality of resources and values on the lands it manages, the BLM must ensure that ecosystems on the public lands system meet rangeland health standards (BLM 2001), including where WHB roam. In doing so, the BLM provides adequate resources and thriving natural rangelands where WHB live, so that widespread populations of these treasured animals exist into the future. The BLM needs to improve its understandings of the current and expected future state of natural resources in the lands where WHB live, and of the effects of WHB on rangeland ecosystem conservation and restoration. The BLM must have accurate scientific projections of future conditions, to plan climate adaptation actions that will ensure that WHB herds will continue to be self-sustaining and that the rangelands they depend on will be in a thriving natural condition. This general category of research was identified as the BLM’s second-highest priority for research in the Strategic Research Plan.

3. A number of other wild horse and burro management considerations could be informed by new scientific research. The third category of research proposals that could be funded by agreements following this announcement were listed in the Strategic Research Plan as lower priority research topics that would be important to fund or facilitate research addressing these questions when possible. These topics include studies that would further improve wild horse and burro aerial censuses; develop new insights into wild horse and burro genetics; improve health, handling, and welfare; identify factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or address indigenous knowledge of, or human dimensions of WHB management.

For each of the research priorities listed above, Appendix A of the Strategic Research Plan also describes a subset of example research questions. These examples are not exhaustive: BLM also encourages the preparation of research proposals that would address other research relate to any of the topics identified above.

Information Specific to this Request for Proposals

This opportunity is a Request for Proposals (RFP) from federal researchers to the BLM. With this RFP, the BLM is requesting research proposals **from federal agencies** that are responsive to the funding description detailed in this opportunity and associated documents. Note: A separate notice of funding opportunity (NOFO; L24AS00091) has been prepared for non-federal applicants, and can be accessed via [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). The funding opportunity represented by this RFP (for federal researchers) and by NOFO L24AS00091 (for non-federal researchers) is meant to foster studies that will address the three highest priorities for research identified by the BLM's WHB program. Proposed research must be responsive to either of the following research topics.

1. Development and/ or testing of new or improved long-lasting fertility control methods for mares, and/ or testing the application of existing methods in a way that provides essential information for successful application of long-lasting fertility control methods for mares, and/ or testing and documentation of the effects of new or existing long-lasting fertility control methods for mares.
2. Examination of the relationships between wild horses or wild burros and their environment, with potential special attention paid to effects of climate change, or effects of wild horses or burros on ecosystem resilience to climate change.
3. Research studies that would further improve wild horse and burro aerial censuses; develop new insights into wild horse and burro genetics; improve health, handling, and welfare; identify factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or address indigenous knowledge of, or human dimensions of wild horse and burro management.

For each of the research priorities listed above, Appendix A of the Strategic Research Plan also describes a subset of example research questions. These examples are not exhaustive: BLM also encourages the preparation of research proposals that would address other research relate to any of the topics identified above.

As explained in the 'Strategic Research Plan,' research that addresses male horse neutering, male horse temporary fertility control, or burro fertility control is not currently a BLM priority, and such research will not be considered responsive to this funding opportunity.

Proposals from Federal agencies should contain the information found in Attachment A and Attachment B of this RFP. Note: Attachment A for fiscal year 2024 is a slightly different (shorter) format than was used in fiscal year 2022. All Research proposals from federal agencies must be submitted by email to BLM_HQ_WHBResearch@blm.gov. All research proposals for Interagency Agreements must be received by the BLM no later than 5 pm ET on February 1, 2024.

Program Expected Outcomes

Proposals should support at least one of the goals of this program listed below:

- Development and/ or testing of new or improved long-lasting fertility control methods for mares, and/ or testing the application of existing methods in a way that provides essential information for successful application of long-lasting fertility control methods for mares, and/ or testing and documentation of the effects of new or existing long-lasting fertility control methods for mares.
- Examination of the relationships between wild horses or wild burros and their environment, with potential special attention paid to effects of climate change, or effects of wild horses or burros on ecosystem resilience to climate change.
- Research studies that would further improve wild horse and burro aerial censuses; develop new insights into wild horse and burro genetics; improve health, handling, and welfare; identify factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or address indigenous knowledge of, or human dimensions of wild horse and burro management.

All proposed projects submitted under this funding opportunity must state an anticipated benefit to the public, in addition to the provision of research results that are informative to the BLM. For example, fertility control methods that would be useful in wild mares may be of value for domestic horses, and research studies that inform BLM about environmental relations on public lands may also be of value on private lands, or other federal, state, or tribal lands that the public uses.

The following program legislation authority, BLM handbook, and Policy Manuals may be applicable to this program:

1. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971
2. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
3. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
4. The Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978
5. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – BLM Handbook 1790-1
6. [MS-4710, Management Considerations Relating to Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros](#)
7. [MS-4700, Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Management](#)
8. [MS-4720, Removal of Excess Wild Horses and Burros](#)
9. H-4180-1, Rangeland Health Standards
10. H-4700-1, Wild Horses and Burros Management
11. H-4740-1, Wild Horse and Burro Program Aviation Management
12. H-4750-2, Adoption of Wild Horses and Burros
13. H-4760-1, Conducting Compliance Checks for BLM's Wild Horses and Burro Adoption Program

II. FEDERAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT INFORMATION

The Headquarters Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) anticipates making multiple awards / agreements under this RFP. The type of financial instruments for projects responsive to this RFP and which are led by a federal agency will be *interagency agreements* in accordance with the legislative authority stated at the beginning of this RFP. In parallel to this RFP, the BLM is publishing a Notice of Funding Opportunity for non-federal research applicants to submit research proposals that would be responsive to either of the same two general research topics as are addressed in this RFP (long-term mare fertility control, or relationships between WHB and the environment, or other topics listed above). The instrument to award research conducted by non-federal applicants would be *cooperative agreements*, the administration of which is explained for the separate notice of funding opportunity that is currently available on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). In this RFP, the term “award/ agreement” is a generic term to indicate a financial instrument to a non-federal research applicant (via the award of a cooperative agreement) or federal research applicant (via formation of an interagency agreement).

The BLM intends to conduct expert peer reviews of *all* qualified proposals responsive to this RFP, and any proposals from non-federal applicants that are responsive to the same research topics. Peer review would evaluate the scientific merits of each proposed study, regardless of applicant organization.

The recipient should expect Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to have substantial involvement in the project. Substantial involvement may include, but not be limited to, such things as:

- BLM will be closely engaged in the care of any wild horses that may be involved in the recipient's programs
- BLM will coordinate and assist the recipient in carrying out development of public outreach as well as joint events between the BLM and the partner to maximize public education about the research efforts.
- Collaboration between the BLM and recipient in carrying out management, development, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed work.
- Training of recipient personnel, especially with respect to work elements that overlap BLM management actions.
- Review and approval by the BLM of one stage of work prior to the start of the next stage.
- Review and approval by the BLM of modifications or sub-awards prior to their award.
- Participation in selecting recipient project staff.
- Ability to immediately halt work because of failure to meet agreement objectives; and
- Close monitoring and/or operational involvement in the proposed work.

A. Anticipated Federal Program Funding

This RFP and the associated NOFO for non-federal researchers are being released prior to the passage of an Appropriations Act for the Department of the Interior for FY 2024, by Congress. Enactment of additional Continuing Resolutions or an Appropriations Act may affect the availability and/or level of funding for this program.

Based on available funding, BLM anticipates forming interagency agreements and cooperative agreements of between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 in total funding for research projects that are responsive to this opportunity, but exact amounts are unknown at present and will be influenced by, among other factors, Congressional funding levels for the BLM and any specific directions for allocation of funds from Congress. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated as they are received and may be submitted at any time up until the closing date of this RFP. Individual award / agreement amounts will depend on the results of the merit review process for application packages received, on proposed budgets, and on available funding. Funding for this program is not guaranteed and is subject to the availability of funds. BLM is not obligated to make any award / agreement as a result of this RFP.

B. Estimated Number of Awards / Agreements to be Made

Based on the size of proposals received under previous and similar requests for fertility control research proposals, BLM anticipates approximately eight (8) agreements under this RFP and associated NOFO for non-federal researchers. The actual number of awards / agreement will depend on the number of meritorious applications and the availability of appropriated funds. The awards / agreements will be administered by the BLM Headquarters office, with coordination from state, district or field offices where the project occur.

C. Estimated Amount of Funding Available Per Award / Agreement

The maximum award amount per award under this RFP is \$500,000, and the minimum award amount per award is \$25,000. The BLM anticipates awarding between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 in total funding for up to approximately eight (8) total research projects that are responsive to this RFP and associated NOFO funding opportunity. Included in this estimate is the following:

- \$100,000 to \$1,500,000 for up to approximately three (3) agreements related to long-lasting mare fertility control;
- \$100,000 to \$500,000 for up to approximately two (2) agreements related to relationships between wild horses or wild burros, and their environment; and
- \$25,000 to \$250,000 for up to approximately two (2) agreements related to new insights into WHB genetics; improved health, handling, and welfare; factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or indigenous knowledge of or human dimensions of WHB management.

Exact amounts are unknown at the issuance of this RFP and associated NOFO, and will be influenced by, among other factors, Congressional funding levels for the BLM and any specific directions for allocation of funds from Congress. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated as they are received and may be submitted at any time up until the closing date of this RFP and associated NOFO.

D. Anticipated Start Date:

Projects funded through this RFP will start once funding is secured an interagency agreement issued. Interagency agreements are not effective until fully executed with signature from the BLM Contracting Officer (CO).

E. Anticipated Term of the Agreement (period of performance):

Agreement terms for funded projects are estimated to range between one and five years and are determined based on the period of performance as stated on the project proposal.

Projects cannot be funded for more than a five-year period.

The BLM may obligate the entirety of the requested funding at the time of agreement formation, or for only the first year of the requested budget. If only partial funding is obligated at the time of agreement formation, then the BLM will consider continued support of the project(s) in subsequent fiscal years based upon: (a) the recipient showing progress and meeting identified milestones, satisfactorily to the BLM, toward program goals and the determination, by the BLM, that continuation of the program would be in the best interests of the Government; (b) an evaluation by the BLM that the project is still in line with management's top priorities; (c) compliance with the terms and conditions of the agreement and/or; (d) the availability of funds appropriated by Congress.

F. Additional Funding Information

Funding for projects is not guaranteed and is subject to the availability of funds. Evaluation of proposals is based on the criteria in this RFP. In appropriate circumstances, BLM reserves the right to partially fund proposals in discrete portions or phases of proposed projects. If BLM chooses to partially fund a proposal, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award / agreement; and therefore maintains the integrity of the competition and selection process. The BLM funding proposals through this competitive RFP is not a guarantee of future funding. When or if additional funding becomes available, BLM reserves the right to enter into additional interagency agreements under this RFP through subsequent fiscal years, to proposals received during the initial application period; interagency agreements for proposals so identified will not require further competition. Any additional selections will be made in accordance with the terms of this RFP and BLM policy. Only Contract Officers can enter the BLM into an interagency agreement.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants:

Only Federal Agencies are eligible to apply for award via interagency agreement under this RFP. Failure to meet eligibility requirements will result in precluding the BLM from making an award via interagency agreement.

2. Ineligible Applicants:

The following types of entities are ineligible to apply under this RFP, but should instead consider submitting research proposals via the parallel Notice of Funding Opportunity for WHB research currently listed on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) (search for L24AS00091):

- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- State, county, city, township, or special district governments
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Public housing authorities /
- Public- and State-Controlled Institution of Higher Education (IHE)
- Private and state-controlled Institutions of Higher Education
- Independent school districts
- Nonprofit Organizations with 501C3 IRS Status* (Other than IHE) – must submit proof
- Nonprofit Organizations without 501C3 IRS Status* (Other than IHE)

Individuals and For-Profit Organizations are ineligible to apply for awards under this RFP, or under the associated Notice of Funding Opportunity L24AS00091.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching is not required for this program; however, a voluntary cost share is strongly encouraged. Applicants may attribute some or all their allowable indirect costs as voluntary committed cost-share/match.

C. Foreign Entities or Projects

This program does not provide funding to foreign entities or for projects conducted outside the United States.

IV. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Project Proposal Narrative – Attachment A

Suggested format, Attachment A Project Proposal template may be used when submitting your proposal.

Application narrative requirements are indicated on the template, titled “Wild Horse and Burro (WHB) Research Proposal to the BLM.” A copy of this template is included with this RFP, and is included as a Word file **Attachment A** to the RFP. A cover letter and any letters of support are optional, but encouraged. Content requirements for sections of the proposal template are described within **Attachment A**.

Sections A, B, and C of the completed project proposal must total 15 pages or less in all, with a typeface no smaller than 12-point font, and have at least one-half (1/2) inch margins on all sides. The 15-page limit does not include the list of scientific references cited (section D), biographical sketches (section E), institutional facilities statement (section F), or statement on humane care and use of animals (section G), or the Budget Detail (**Attachment B**). The essential proposal sections include:

- A. Proposal cover page with specified information (*1 page*)
- B. Abstract of proposed project and list of key personnel (*Section B may not exceed 2 pages in total*)
 - Abstract of proposed project and list of all study personnel (*350 word maximum*)
 - Key Personnel (*1 page maximum*)
- C. Project proposal body, including all of the following (*Section C may not exceed 12 pages in total*):
 - Goals / objectives / hypotheses (*1/3 page maximum*)
 - Specific aims (*1/3 page maximum*)
 - Background and significance / preliminary studies (*2 page maximum*)
 - Scientific approach / study design (*2 page maximum*)
 - Statistical methods (*1 page maximum*)
 - Anticipated effects (*1 page maximum*)
 - Pitfalls and limitations (*1/3 page maximum*)
 - Project monitoring and evaluation plan (*1/2 page maximum*)
 - Timetable or milestones to complete expected outcomes (*1 page maximum*)
 - Expected public benefit and program interest of the BLM (*1/2 page maximum*)
 - Qualifications / past performance (*1 page maximum*)
 - Leveraging of resources (*1/2 page maximum*)
 - Overlap of duplication of effort statement
 - Affirmation of reporting requirements
 - Appendices (*included toward the 12 page limit for Section C*)
- D. References Cited (*no page limit*)
- E. Biographical Sketches (*1 page limit per key personnel*)
- F. Facilities Statement (*1/2 page maximum*)
- G. Affirmation of requirements for humane care and use of animals

All proposals are confidential.

2. Budget Detail and Narrative (Attachment B)

Describe and justify requested budget items and costs, for each year of the proposed project. Applications that use the **Attachment B** format for budget detail will be the most transparent and understandable to reviewers in the merit review process; this format is highly recommended for use.

Detail how the Object Class Category totals were determined. For personnel salary costs, include the baseline salary figures and the estimates of time. Describe any item of cost that requires prior approval under the Federal cost principles. If Federal equipment is already available for the project, provide a list of that equipment. Include detailed descriptions of all cost justifications (see **Attachment B** for more detail). Additionally, provide any cost sharing and matching funds in the same level of detail as the federal funds. The budget narrative submitted with the application must match the dollar amounts on all required forms.

Budget items must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary to the supported activity.

Federal agency applicants are not required to submit any forms of the SF424 family; those budget forms are only necessary for non-federal applicants that are applying via [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

If your proposal period of performance is for multi-year or multiple year funding, you must provide a budget and budget justification for each year of the project and for the full amount of the project.

NOTE: Budget Detail and Narrative form (Attachment B) is the format to present the breakdown of your estimated costs, by category, needed to accomplish project activities. If you elect to use a different format, all information requested on Attachment B must be included. Estimated costs must be documented in sufficient detail to determine reasonableness. Include a description of any cost share (cash, in-kind, etc.) listed. Additionally, for multi-year budgets, please describe in your budget detail justification any items to be purchased or expended that may be specific to a particular year of the proposed project.

Lump sum costs are not acceptable in any category. A detailed breakdown of how the costs in were derived is required for each category, in each year of the project. Profit or fees are not allowable.

Indirect Costs: Organizations

Indirect costs must be consistent with established rates for indirect costs between the applicant agency and the BLM. That rate should be clearly identifiable and justified.

3. Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

Applicants must provide a statement indicating if there is any overlap between this Federal application and any other Federal application, or funded project, in regards to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel. If no such overlap or duplication exists, state, “*There are no overlaps or duplication between this application and any of our other Federal applications or funded projects, including in regards to activities, costs, or time commitment of key personnel*”. If any such overlap exists, provide a complete description of overlaps or duplications between this proposal and any other federally funded project or application in regards to activities, costs, and time commitment of key personnel, as applicable. Provide a copy of any overlapping or duplicative proposal submitted to any other potential funding entity and identify when that proposal was submitted, to whom (entity name and program), and when you anticipate being notified of their funding decision.

When overlap exists, your statement must end with “*We understand that if at any time we receive funding from another source that is duplicative of the funding we are requesting from the Bureau of Land Management in this application, we will immediately notify the Bureau of Land Management point of contact identified in this Funding Opportunity in writing.*”

4. Applicants must submit the following forms to BLM_HQ_WHBRESEARCH@blm.gov:

Form Name and Number	✓
Project Proposal (Attachment A to this document)	
Budget Detail (Attachment B to this document)	
Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement	
<i>Letters of Support – Up to 5 Letters (optional)</i>	

NOTE: Failure to provide complete information may cause delays, postponement, or rejection of the application.

V. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be submitted by 5:00 Eastern Time on February 1, 2024.

Applications must be submitted in English. The preferred electronic format is as a separate .pdf file for each of the following four documents: the Project Proposal; the Budget Detail; Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement; and any Letters of Support.

Late applications will not be accepted and reviewed. Extensions to RFP close dates will be unallowed, except in extenuating circumstances.

B. Funding Restrictions

BLM will not support the costs of any international travel under this RFP.

C. Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted in English.

BLM requires applicants to submit their applications online to BLM_HQ_WHBRESEARCH@blm.gov, with copies sent to the WHB Program Research Coordinator, Paul Griffin (pgriffin@blm.gov), and to the WHB Program On-Range Branch Chief, Scott Fluer (sfluer@blm.gov). A confirmatory email in response from the BLM_HQ_WHBRESEARCH@blm.gov address will serve as your proof of timely submission.

VI. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Prior to agreement formation, the BLM will review any applicant statement regarding potential overlap or duplication between the project to be funded and any other funded or proposed project in terms of activities, funding, or time commitment of key personnel. Depending on the circumstances, the BLM may request modification to the application, other pending applications, or another agreement, as needed to eliminate any duplication of effort, or the BLM may choose not to fund the selected project.

A. Review and Section Process:

Applications that pass the basic screening requirements for completeness and are eligible for merit review will be evaluated by an external (non-BLM) panel of scientific peer reviewers, then scored by a BLM-led merit evaluation team assembled to review, rate, rank, and recommend applications for award using the below evaluation criteria. Merit evaluation teams are made up of five or more qualified personnel familiar with the WHB program and recognized as having no conflict of interest with respect to any of the applications received. As noted below (see section VI.D), the score for each proposal's 'Technical Approach' criterion, which comprises the majority of the overall proposal score, is made based on review received by an external panel of peer reviewers.

Reviews are handled as confidential documents. Once award / agreement decisions are made, applicants may request in writing a written summary of the evaluation of their application/proposal.

The Government reserves the right to reject any and all applications/proposals which do not meet the requirements of this RFP and which are determined to be outside the scope of the authority or research topics under which this RFP is posted.

B. Project must assist BLM in meeting one of the following Department of Interior priorities

- Working to conserve at least 30% each of our lands and waters by the year 2030.
- Centering equity and environmental justice
- Strengthening the government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations
- Advancing President Biden's Investing in America agenda to strengthen our country's infrastructure and create good-paying union jobs
- Accelerating responsible development of clean energy on public lands and waters.

The proximal purpose of the proposed project(s) must include: 1) Development and/ or testing of new or improved long-lasting fertility control methods for mares, and/ or testing the application of existing methods in a way that provides essential information for successful application of long-lasting fertility control methods for mares, and/ or testing and documentation of the effects of new or existing long-lasting fertility control methods for mares; 2) Examination of the relationships between wild horses or wild burros and their environment, with potential special attention paid to effects of climate change, or effects of wild horses or burros on ecosystem resilience to climate change; or 3) Research studies that would further improve wild horse and burro aerial censuses; develop new insights into wild horse and burro genetics; improve health, handling, and welfare; identify factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or address indigenous knowledge of, or human dimensions of wild horse and burro management.

It is the BLM's expectation that proposals that are immediately responsive to either of the two topics noted above would help the agency to meet the DOI priority to conserve at least 30% of public lands. This expectation is due to the BLM's understanding that taking steps to mitigate wild horse population growth rates will assist in conservation and restoration of fragile public lands where those animals live, and that projects which improve our knowledge about relationships between wild horses and burros and their environment will inform the BLM about how to improve management of the public lands, including with attention to expected effects of climate change; and that projects addressing other wild

horse and burro program research priorities will be beneficial for improving wild horse and burro herd management and public lands management, with an ultimate benefit to realized public lands conservation.

Proposals that are specifically designed with the primary purpose being to address male horse neutering, male horse temporary fertility control, or burro fertility control will not be considered.

Interagency agreement(s) with federal agencies will be made to responsive, responsible applicants submitting proposals, which conform to the funding opportunity RFP and are most advantageous to the Government considering the evaluation factors listed below.

C. First Level Screening --Basic Eligibility

Applications will be screened by the WHB Program Research Coordinator to ensure that applications meet basic eligibility requirements for proposals received from federal agencies. Depending on the specifics of the funding opportunity, screening may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submission is timely;
- Program and/or legislative authority requirements are met; and
- Complete and properly executed required application package documents are included.

Applications must satisfy basic eligibility screening requirements to be considered for further review.

D. Second Level Evaluation -- Merit Review Evaluation

Maximum Points: 100

The evaluation criteria portion should be addressed in the technical proposal section of the application (following the template in **Attachment A**). Applications should thoroughly address each criterion and any sub-criterion, as noted below. It is suggested that applicants copy and paste the below criteria and sub criteria into their applications to ensure that all necessary information is adequately addressed. Applications will be evaluated against the criteria listed below, based on information provided in the project proposal (following the template in Attachment A).

A BLM-led merit evaluation team will develop the score for each qualified proposal. Eligible applications will be evaluated in an objective and unbiased manner using the following merit review criteria using numerical scoring based on a 100-point maximum score. Merit review scoring will be evaluated within the four numerically scored criteria listed below, drawing on information that is included within the project proposal.

The BLM-led merit evaluation team will base the score for each proposal's 'Applicant Technical Approach' criterion directly on the results of a review conducted by an external (non-BLM) panel of scientific peer reviewers. The numerical score (from 0 to 60) from external scientific review panels will reflect the scientific merit of proposals received, in terms of the potential for success of the proposed study, validity of scientific approach, study design and inference strength. One panel of external peer reviewers will review proposals related to fertility control methods. A separate panel of external peer reviewers will review proposals related to ecological relationships between WHB and their environment. A third panel of external peer reviewers will review all other eligible proposals. External peer reviewers will not be permitted to provide review for any proposals for which there is an identified or perceived conflict of interest. The BLM-led merit evaluation team will quantify scores for the 'Applicant Statement of Need,' 'Public Benefit and Program Interest of the BLM,' and 'Applicant Qualifications / Past Performance' criteria without reliance on the external peer reviews.

APPLICANT STATEMENT OF NEED**Maximum Points: 15**

- Mission and objectives, including achievable project goals and how they relate to the BLM's request for research that will: 1) develop and/ or test fertility control methods that are safe, humane, and applicable to female wild horse (mares), and which are longer-lasting than currently available fertility control methods used by the BLM in wild mares; or 2) address ecological relationships between WHB and their environments, with studies that may also address the effects of climate change on WHB populations; or 3) conduct studies that would further improve wild horse and burro aerial censuses; develop new insights into WHB genetics; improve health, handling, and welfare; identify factors that improve horse and burro adoption rates; or address indigenous knowledge of, or human dimensions of WHB management.
- Objectives of the project
- Expected value to improvement of BLM's WHB management
- DOI priorities met: <https://www.doi.gov/ourpriorities>

APPLICANT TECHNICAL APPROACH**Maximum Points: 60**

- Goals directly address the topic of research interest identified by BLM / objectives clearly follow from the goals / hypotheses are well formulated and testable
- Specific aims are clearly stated, and well formulated
- Proposed method is justified by background, references, and supporting information
- Study design is appropriate to address objectives / hypotheses
- Techniques, processes, and methodologies are well explained and have a reasonable probability of success
- Data collection, sample size, analysis, and means of interpretation are appropriate to allow for strong inference at the conclusion of the study
- Any proposed use of live animals is humane, justified, warranted, and appropriate
- Significant anticipated accomplishments would result from successful project
- There is a clear and reasonable plan to assess project performance; there are clear proposed milestones / measurement criteria
- The project team appears to be well qualified to carry out the proposed research

PUBLIC BENEFIT AND PROGRAM INTEREST OF THE BLM Maximum Points: 15

- Direct public benefit
- Expected direct and indirect benefits of project activities for the BLM's WHB program

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS/PAST PERFORMANCE**Maximum Points: 10**

- Key project personnel experience and qualifications
- Qualifications of any contractors, subrecipients and/or consultants
- Experience with federally funded assistance agreements within the last three to five years
- Similar successfully completed projects
- Unique qualifications
- Academic and/ or professional degree(s), licenses and/or certifications held

LEVERAGING OF RESOURCES

Maximum Points: 0

(This will be considered in the review process as a tiebreaker among applications with equivalent scores after evaluation against all other factors)

- A proposal that demonstrates effective partnerships to share resources and expertise

LETTERS OF SUPPORT (optional).

Maximum Points: 0

You may submit up to five (5) letters of support as part of your application package. These attachments should address specific information that will supplement the project proposal and/or document support for the project description as provided in the application. Letters of support may also document financial commitments from any third party or from entities that will contribute substantive funds to the completion of project activities. You may also include letters from partners or other organizations who will work closely with you on the project and/or provide technical expertise. Furthermore, letters of support may be from experts, community members, and/or stakeholders that support the project. Letters of support do not count toward the page limit of the proposal.

E. Third Level Review Pre-Award Clearance and Budget Approval

Maximum Points: 0

If the results of all pre-award reviews and clearances are satisfactory, an award of funding will be made via interagency agreement. If the BLM determines that an interagency agreement will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of project risk assessed may be applied.

Budget review is based on the following:

- Budget line items must be allowable, allocable, reasonable in price, and appropriate for the level of effort needed to accomplish the project.
- Budget details and narrative must provide adequate explanation of, and justification for, each estimated cost.
- Requested equipment must be justified and necessary for completion of the project.

F. Final Review of Selected Applicants:

Final review will be made by management to determine if the selected proposed project(s) are in line with DOI and BLM current priorities.

The process overall may take a few months to finalize, after the closing date for proposal submission. Proposed project timelines should be planned accordingly.

VII. INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Formation

Formation of the interagency agreement shall be in a manner that is typical and acceptable to the administration of the BLM and of the recipient agency.

B. Payments

Billing shall be through the Intra-governmental Payment and Collection (IPAC) system or the Intra-governmental Transaction Portal or G-Invoicing – whichever is applicable. The bill will reference the BLM's Dun & Bradstreet Number, the Requesting Agency Location Code (ALC), the Treasury Account Symbol, the Accounting Classification Reference Code(s), the Obligating Document Number, a brief description of the service performed, the Accounts Payable POC name and phone number, and identify the amount of money being billed for each project on every invoice. Payments will be made monthly or quarterly, subject to mutual agreement between the BLM and recipient agency.

The BLM shall not be obligated to pay for, nor will the recipient agency be obligated to perform, any effort that will require the expenditure of Federal funds above the amount obligated.

C. Reporting Requirements

Performance Reports

Annual performance reports must contain a comparison of actual accomplishments with the established goals and objectives of the interagency agreement; a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and any other pertinent information relevant to the project results. All recipients must submit a final performance report within 90 calendar days after the agreement period of performance end date or termination date. For agreements with periods of performance longer than 12 months, recipients are required to submit annual performance reports.

D. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Recipients must notify the BLM immediately in writing of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that arise during the life of their interagency agreement. Recipients must notify the Contract Officer immediately in writing of any conflict of interest that arise during the life of their Federal award, including those reported to them by any subrecipient under the award. Recipients must notify the program in writing if any employees, including subrecipient and contractor personnel, are related to, married to, or have a close personal relationship with any Federal employee in the Federal funding program or who otherwise may have been involved in the review and selection of the award. The term employee means any individual engaged in the performance of work pursuant to the Federal award. See the [U.S. Office of Government Ethics website](#) for more information on these restrictions. BLM will examine each conflict of interest disclosure based on its particular facts and the nature of the project and will determine if a significant potential conflict exists. If it does, BLM will work with the recipient to determine an appropriate resolution. Failure to disclose and resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the BLM may result in remedies for noncompliance, including termination of the award.

Applicability

- This section intends to ensure that Federal entities and their employees take appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest in their responsibilities under or with respect to interagency agreements. The Contracting Officer will examine each conflict of interest disclosure on the basis of its particular facts and the nature of the proposed grant or cooperative agreement, and will determine whether a significant potential conflict exists and, if it does, develop an appropriate means for resolving it.

E. Data Availability

Applicability.

The Department of the Interior is committed to basing its decisions on the best available science and providing the American people with enough information to thoughtfully, and substantively, evaluate the data, methodology, and analysis used by the Department to inform its decisions.

Use of Data.

Data collected under this agreement will be the immediate property of the recipient agency, but it is the intent of this agreement that the recipient shall author publications from the work in peer-reviewed outlets. BLM expects the recipient to publish study results funded

through this agreement within 3 years after the completion of data collection of any given project. BLM will communicate publication priorities to guide the publishing process, and the recipient and BLM will convene and communicate about legitimate delays. BLM reserves the right to request in writing that the recipient share data, metadata, and other documentation from a delayed publication with BLM. BLM will collaborate with the recipient to hasten publication of those specific results, but 3 years or later after completion of data collection BLM reserves the option to seek a copy of the data, and to seek other assistance to assure timely publication of results.

Availability of Data.

In a manner and timeliness that does not preclude the recipient's publication of the data in peer-reviewed publications, the recipient shall make the data produced under this agreement and any sub award(s) available to the Government for public release, consistent with applicable law, to allow meaningful third party evaluation and reproduction of the following:

- The scientific data relied upon;
- The analysis relied upon; and
- The methodology, including models, used to gather and analyze data.

F. Special Agreement Terms and Conditions

1. Scientific integrity is vital to Department of the Interior (DOI) activities under which scientific research, data, summaries, syntheses, interpretations, presentations, and/or publications are developed and used. Failure to uphold the highest degree of scientific integrity will result in not only potentially flawed scientific results, interpretations, and applications but will damage DOI's reputation and ability to uphold the public's trust. All work performed must comply with the DOI Scientific Integrity Policy posted to <http://www.doi.gov>, or its equivalent as provided by their organization or State law. For more information go to URL: <https://www.doi.gov/scientificintegrity>.

VIII. INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT CONTACTS

David Slade
Contract Specialist
BLM National Operations Center
Bureau of Land Management
Email: dslade@blm.gov
Phone: (720) 376-3455 mobile / telework (303) 236-6702 office

Paul Griffin
Technical Representative / WHB Program Research Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management
Email: pgriffin@blm.gov
Phone: (970) 631-4808 mobile / telework

IX. OTHER INFORMATION

See Attachment A, Proposal template (MS word file) and Attachment B, Budget Narrative (MS excel file)

END
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES