

J. E. WEAVER COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS 2026 – Deadline February 8, 2026

The Nebraska Chapter of The Nature Conservancy will award up to five \$1,500 grants in support of graduate student research that enhances our understanding of Great Plains ecosystems and their conservation.

Grant funds may be used to cover expenses related directly to the research project – including travel associated with data collection or to present results at a professional conference. Proposals funded will be technically sound and directly applicable to our conservation priorities in the Great Plains. Grants are offered to regularly enrolled graduate students, and they are based on scientific merit rather than need. Grant funds cannot be awarded to any institutions (money goes directly to the student for use on their project).

Eligible project categories:

- Grassland, wetland, and/or woodland ecology, management, and restoration
- Pollinator and invertebrate ecology and management
- Invasive species management
- Social science related to grassland conservation

Projects that meet the following objectives/questions for 2026 will be given particular priority:

- What factors influence ecological resilience and/or resistance to invasive species in grasslands?
- How is habitat loss and prairie fragmentation impacting plant and insect species?
- Does prairie restoration serve to effectively defragment ecological landscapes?
- Suppression tactics or management strategies related to encroachment of deciduous woody plants in grasslands, particularly clonal shrubs.
- What management and restoration techniques benefit pollinator communities?
- How does grassland plant diversity affect livestock production, invasive species resistance, and/or ecological resilience?
- How does habitat heterogeneity in grasslands affect invertebrate and other ecological communities other than birds?

Proposals should have a cover page, no more than three pages of narrative (not including lit cited), and a one-page budget. Proposals will be judged on clarity of writing, quality of project design and applicability of the project to priorities of the Weaver program. See the attached blank scoring sheet for more guidance. ***Please note that reviewers will consist of a mix of scientists and non-scientists, so please keep your language and writing readable for a wide audience.***

Cover Page: Title, Author, Institution, Address, Date Submitted, Graduate Advisor, Non-Technical Abstract (one paragraph)

Narrative (3 pages maximum): Significance of Proposed Work, Objectives, Methods, Design & Analysis, Expected Products

Literature Cited Section (1 page maximum): A sampling of the literature most pertinent to your subject.

Budget (1 page): The expected use(s) of the \$1,500 award and how it supplements other sources of support.

Successful applicants will agree to include the following acknowledgement in all publications and presentations resulting from research supported under this program. "The Nature Conservancy provided partial support for this work through the Nebraska Chapter's J.E. Weaver Competitive Grants Program." The Conservancy should also be provided with copies of any report or publication that results from the project.

Send a digital copy of the proposal to Kate Samuelson (kate.samuelson@tnc.org).

All pages must be in either MS Word or as a PDF and combined into a single file.

Application Deadline: February 8, 2026

Recipients notified in late March or early April, 2026

Note to applicants: A team of reviewers will use this form to score your application. Some of those reviewers will not be scientists.

Scoring Sheet – J.E. Weaver Competitive Grants Program
2026

Proposal Name: _____

Total Points: _____

ELIGIBILITY

_____ Does the proposed research fit within the eligible categories of the J.E. Weaver Grants Program? (yes/no)

If yes, continue to scoring below:

SCORING

(100 Total Points Possible)

_____ Total Points

- _____ 1. How much will the results of this research improve conservation effectiveness in the Great Plains? (0-25 points)
- _____ 2. How strongly does the proposed research relate to one or more of this year's top priorities? (0-15 points)
- _____ 3. How much is the applicant coordinating/collaborating with staff from The Nature Conservancy on the proposed project? (encouraged but not required) (0-15 points)
- _____ 4. How well/clearly is the proposal written? Could a non-scientist understand the project description? Does the writer avoid or explain technical jargon? (0-25 points)
- _____ 5. How well-designed is the research project? Does the project stand a good chance of publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal? (0-20 points)

(Note to reviewers – if you feel unable to judge the research design of projects, just skip that category for all proposals and do your final ranking of proposals based on the a possible total of 80 points rather than 100.)