

USDA Forest Service – Eastern Region State and Private Forestry Cohesive Fire Strategy Request for Applications – Fiscal Year 2020

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF THIS REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

[Moving Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes](#) is part of a conceptual framework for making strategic investments across landscapes to co-manage wildfire risk and achieve positive outcomes at the most appropriate scale. Within this framework, The Eastern Region State and Private Forestry **Cohesive Fire Strategy Competitive Request for Applications** is designed to support and carry out the goals of the [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#) (NCS) across the Midwestern and Northeastern States. These national goals are:

1. **Restore and Maintain Landscapes:** Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances, in accordance with management objectives.
2. **Create Fire Adapted Communities:** Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.
3. **Improve Wildfire Response:** All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.

Regional options have been identified in the [Northeast Regional Action Plan](#) that help to ensure funds from this competitive grant process are used to address the national goals. Applications will be accepted that clearly identify the reduction of wildfire risk and/or improve wildfire response in coordination with their respective State's Forest Action Plan and meet one or more of the nine Northeast Regional Action Plan options listed below:

Northeast Regional Action Plan Options

Goal 1: Restore & Maintain Landscapes	Goal 2: Fire Adapted Communities	Goal 3: Response to Wildfire
Regional Option 1A – Expand the use of prescribed fire as an integral tool to meet management objectives in the Northeast.	Regional Option 2A – Focus on promoting and supporting local adaptation activities to be taken by communities.	Regional Option 3A – Improve the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the wildland fire community.
Regional Option 1B – Maintain and increase, where possible, the extent of fire-dependent ecosystems and expand the use of fire as a disturbance process.	Regional Option 2B – Focus on directing hazardous fuel treatments to the wildland urban interfaces.	Regional Option 3B – Increase the local response capacity for initial attack of wildfires.
Regional Option 1C – Focus on mitigating “event” fuels to reduce potential fire hazard.	Regional Option 2C – Focus on promoting and supporting prevention programs and activities.	Regional Option 3C – Further develop shared response capacity for extended attack and managing wildfire incidents with long duration fire potential.

This RFA is comprised of two separate components, Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) and Wildfire Response (WR). Each component will use the same application and ranking criteria but will address different NCS goals and have different requirements. WRR Applications will address Goals 1 and 2. WR Applications will address Goal 3. Every application will contain a separate proposal for WRR and/or WR.

COMMON COMPONENT ATTRIBUTES

- Any one applicant may submit no more than three Applications per grant component (single or multistate).
- Multistate Applications must identify the lead agency and the amount of funds to be allocated against each State Cap in the Project Budget Explanation.
- Third party Applications must identify the lead organization, the State(s) involved, and the amount of funds to be allocated against one or more State Caps.
- Multi-compact Applications are encouraged that promote wildfire response initiatives and accomplishments across Compact boundaries.
- Forest Fire Compact Applications will not impact State Caps.
- Grant term is 4 years, with a 1-year extension possible, up to a total maximum of 5 years.
- An application review team consisting of U.S. Forest Service and State forestry agency staff will collaboratively review, evaluate, and prioritize project Applications. All Applications will undergo a preliminary review to dismiss incomplete or ineligible applications. The review team will complete the review of Applications and develop a recommended ranking list of projects. The recommended list of Applications will be submitted to the Regional Forester for approval. All applicants will be notified of the final selection or non-selection of their Applications.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Common Requirement Checklist

- ☐ Requested grant funds must be matched 100% (minimum) by eligible and allowable costs and is subject to match provisions in [grant regulations in the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations](#).
- ☐ Requested grant funds must be an appropriate and authorized use of Federal Funds as described in [The Principal Laws Relating to USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry Programs](#), SEC. 10. [16 U.S.C. 2106] RURAL FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL.
- ☐ A current National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) form must be submitted with the application that clearly shows planned deliverables and matches what is described in the Application narrative.
- ☐ For geographically-based Applications, submit electronic spatial data. At a minimum, provide a polygon data shapefile that shows where the work will be completed.

Individual Component Requirement Checklist

Requirement Type	Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) Component	Wildfire Response (WR) Component
Eligibility (Intended audience)	☐ State Forestry Agencies ☐ Forest Fire Compacts ☐ Groups of States ☐ Nonprofit organizations ☐ Academic Institutions ☐ Tribes	☐ Forest Fire Compacts ☐ Groups of States/ Tribes ☐ Wildfire Training Academies ☐ Fire Science Exchanges
Links	☐ Link to NCS Goals 1 and 2 and corresponding Regional Options ☐ Link to State Forest Action Plan	☐ Link to NCS Goal 3 and corresponding Regional Options ☐ Link to State Forest Action Plan
Spatial Data	☐ Provide electronic spatial information	☐ Provide electronic spatial information, if appropriate
Funding Limits	☐ Each application can range from \$25,000 to \$150,000 in Federal funds ☐ Equipment: No more than 10% of Federal funds requested ☐ Maximum amount of Federal funding awarded to any one State (State Cap) via this competitive process cannot exceed 15 percent of the total FY funds allocated for this RFA	☐ Each application can range from \$25,000 to \$50,000 in Federal funds ☐ No equipment purchase allowed (>\$5,000/unit)
Letter of Support	☐ A separate letter of support from the State Forester (except Director of Forest Protection in NY / State Firewarden in NJ) or appropriate designated authority for approving activities must be submitted with the application	☐ A separate letter of support from the State Forester (except Director of Forest Protection in NY / State Firewarden in NJ) or appropriate designated authority for approving activities must be submitted with the application

EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES

Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) Activity Examples

Type	Wildfire Risk Reduction Activities
Qualifying	✓ Use of prescribed fire ✓ Use of mechanical fuel reduction ✓ Vegetation management (pruning, mowing, chemical treatment, grazing) ✓ Use of small-diameter wood from wildfire risk reduction activities ✓ Defensible space around homes and communities ✓ Development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans or equivalent ✓ Development, creation, and/or maintenance of fuel breaks and fire breaks ✓ Slash removal/disposal ✓ Pamphlets, brochures, handouts, PSAs, DVDs ✓ Property inspections/assessments ✓ Training programs that support the use of prescribed fire or Fire Adapted Communities ✓ Exercises/drills that support local Fire Adapted Communities ✓ Information and Education, Awareness, Firewise, Ready Set Go, and Fire Prevention Programs ✓ Installation of dry hydrants that support a Fire Adapted Community ✓ Weather station network upgrades that support a Fire Adapted Community ✓ Fire management planning in fire adapted landscapes with Fire Adapted Communities
Non-qualifying	✓ Research and development projects ✓ Capital improvements ✓ Economic development projects

Wildfire Response (WR) Activity Examples

Type	Wildfire Response Activities
Qualifying	✓ Leadership development ✓ Higher level response-related training (300 level and above) ✓ Develop opportunities for firefighters to attain IMT qualifications ✓ Fire training academies ✓ Aviation and UAS training and support ✓ Wildfire Investigation and Law Enforcement ✓ Purchase of supplies, radios, and firefighting tools is limited to support a specific project ✓ Coordination and mobilization of State resources over a broad geographic area, and enhancing resource sharing for efficient and effective response ✓ Risk based wildfire response training and exercises
Non-qualifying	✓ Research and development projects ✓ Capital improvements ✓ Economic development projects ✓ Equipment purchases (items \$5,000 or over)

For further information, contact these State & Private Cooperative Fire Specialists:

States Covered	Name	Email and Phone No.
MA, VT, NH, CT, NY, RI, ME NJ, DE, MD	Bob "Fitz" Fitzhenry S&PF Cooperative Fire Specialist (detailee)	robert.fitzhenry@usda.gov (603) 953-3294
PA, WV, OH IN, IA, IL, MO MN, WI, MI	Dennis Fiore S&FP Cooperative Fire Specialist	dennis.fiore@usda.gov (414) 944-3932

Key Resources

- ✓ [State Forest Action Plans](#)
- ✓ [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#)
- ✓ [Northeast Regional Action Plan](#)
- ✓ [Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes](#)

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Please submit Applications at: [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) no later than **close of business December 20, 2019**.

Submitted Applications need to include the following:

- **Application Form**
- **NFPORS Form**
- **Project Application Supplement 1 – List of Additional Partners**
Use this form to identify the full list of project partners including State agencies, fiscal partner organizations, and project supporters as well as sub-grantees and contractors. The project applicant should be listed first, followed by fiscal partners and then the project supporters. Use additional forms as needed.

NOTE: Fuels management projects adjacent to National Forests may be eligible for separate, additional funding sources. Please consult with Brian Schaffler, Eastern Region, Fuels Program Manager, prior to WRR/WR submission to ensure all funding opportunities are explored. Reach him at brian.schaffler@usda.gov or (414) 297-3682.

Instructions for Submitting Applications through Grants.gov

Submit all applications for this funding opportunity through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Search for grant Opportunity Number **USDA-FS-2020-WRR-WR**. Partners and collaborators must submit an initial draft of their Grants.gov application to involved State Foresters (except Director of Forest Protection in NY; Chief Firewarden in NJ) by **November 21, 2019**. You can find contact information for each State Forester in the member roster available on the [National Association of State Foresters \(NASF\) Web site](https://www.nasf.org). The leading State Sponsor will submit their support letter to the applicant for upload to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) before COB **December 20, 2019**, which is the application deadline. The following section provides guidance on how to submit applications through Grants.gov.

Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures

This section provides the application submission and receipt instructions for U.S. Forest Service, Eastern Region State and Private Forestry (S&PF) program applications. Please read the following instructions carefully and completely. Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the number listed in the application package of the grant you are applying for.

1. Electronic Delivery

The U.S. Forest Service, Eastern Region S&PF is participating in the Grants.gov initiative to provide the grant community with a single site to find and apply for grant funding opportunities. Eastern Region S&PF encourages applicants to submit their applications online through Grants.gov.

2. How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

- a. *Instructions:* Read the instructions below about registering to apply for S&PF funds. Applicants should read the registration instructions carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

Organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number, active System for Award Management (SAM) registration, and Grants.gov account to apply for grants. If individual applicants are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity, then you may begin with step 3, Create a Grants.gov Account, listed below.

Creating a Grants.gov account can be completed online in minutes, but **please NOTE: DUNS and SAM registrations may take several weeks or more to complete.**

Therefore, an organization's registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact the entity's ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Complete organization instructions can be found on Grants.gov here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

- 1) *Obtain a DUNS Number:* All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a DUNS Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS Number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form. For more detailed instructions for obtaining a DUNS Number, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

- 2) *Register with SAM:* All organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the System for Award Management (SAM). Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

Updated Alert from SAM.gov (July 25, 2019): For your SAM.gov registration, you must submit a [notarized letter](#) appointing the authorized Entity Administrator. The review process changed for the Federal Assistance community on June 11, 2019. Read the [updated FAQs](#) to learn more.

- 3) *Create a Grants.gov Account:* The next step is to register an account with Grants.gov. Follow the on- screen instructions or refer to the detailed instructions here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>
- 4) *Add a Profile to a Grants.gov Account:* A profile in Grants.gov corresponds to a single applicant organization the user represents (i.e., an applicant) or an individual applicant. If you work for or consult with multiple organizations and have a profile for each, you may log in to one Grants.gov account to access all of your grant applications. To add an organizational profile to your Grants.gov account, enter the DUNS Number for the organization in the DUNS field while adding a profile. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html>
- 5) *EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles:* After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, the organization applicant's request for Grants.gov roles and access is sent to the EBiz POC. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been assigned the AOR role. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>
- 6) *Track Role Status:* To track your role request, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>

b. *Electronic Signature:* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize people who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role; **this step is often missed and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

3. How to Submit an Application to Eastern Region S&PF via Grants.gov

Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, you can create individual instances of a workspace. **NOTE: Grants.gov applicants are required to use Workspace to apply online. Forms must be completed in Workspace.**

Below is an overview of applying on Grants.gov. For access to complete instructions on how to apply for opportunities, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

- a. *Create a Workspace:* Creating a workspace allows you to complete it online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- b. *Complete a Workspace:* Add participants to the workspace to work on the application together, complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the state of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.

- 1) *Adobe Reader:* If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>

- 2) *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.
 - 3) *Complete SF-424 Fields First:* The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS Number. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.
- c. *Submit a Workspace:* An application may be submitted through workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.
- d. *Track a Workspace Submission:* After successfully submitting a workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted workspace.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html>

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the number listed in the application package of the grant you are applying for. If you are experiencing difficulties with your submission, it is best to call the Grants.gov Support Center and get a ticket number. The Support Center ticket number will assist S&PF with tracking your issue and understanding background information on the issue.

4. Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

Online Submission. All applications must be received by S&PF Eastern time on the due date established for each program. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANT#####) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. This applicant with the AOR role will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When NA S&PF successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by S&PF.

Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that transmission can take some time before Grants.gov receives your application. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission in the form of an email sent to the applicant with the AOR role attempting to submit the application. The Grants.gov Support Center reports that some applicants end the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application.

Preparing and Submitting an Application for this Funding Opportunity

Applicants should also be familiar with their State's Forest Action Plan(s). Each State Forester may sponsor up to five submissions from his or her State. Proposals with 11 or more State Forester sponsors are exempt from the limit of five proposals per State. If State financial involvement is negligible, a State Forester may submit a letter of endorsement for a proposal sponsored by another State(s).

Procedures and policies regarding how State Foresters work with partners vary from State to State, so be sure to consult your State Forester before preparing an application. State Foresters may choose to submit either a standard form letter or a custom letter of support. A single letter documenting support for all proposals supported by that State is also acceptable.

Only authorized Grants.gov Workspace representatives for the applying entity are eligible to submit applications to Grants.gov for consideration. Partners and collaborators must submit draft applications to all cooperating State Foresters for evaluation **no later than close of business on November 21, 2019** (some States may have additional requirements and deadlines). You can find contact information for each State Forester in the member roster

available on the [National Association of State Foresters \(NASF\) website](#). The final submission deadline to [Grants.gov](#) is by **COB December 20, 2019**.

*Complete application packages will include the following (**complete all forms in your Workspace at Grants.gov**):*

Required forms available through the Grants.gov application package:

- SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B Assurances for Non-Construction Programs
- AD-1047 (Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension)
- [National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System \(NFPORS\) Form](#)
- Attachments Form (must be included in the application package in order to attach additional required and optional forms below)

Optional forms available through the Grants.gov application package (fill out only if applicable):

- AD-1049 (Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace for all non-State entities) **OR...**
- AD-1052 (Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace for “State and State Agencies”)
- SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (for entities that lobby)
- AD-3030 (Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants) if applicable (recipient will determine if form applies to them)

Optional forms to be submitted through the Attachments Form in Grants.gov:

- [FS-1500-35](#) for entities that do not lobby (only if applicable)
- [Cooperative Lands Form 3400-2](#) (only if applicable)

Required agency-specific forms to be submitted through the Attachments Form in Grants.gov:

- Project Narrative Form
- Supplement 1 – Partner Budget
- Letters of Support (template available for each type of support)