



NATIONAL COHESIVE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FY 2023 COMBINED REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

Applications Due COB Sunday, April 30, 2023

Grant Application Instructions

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OVERVIEW

Applications are requested for two National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (also referred to as Cohesive Strategy or NCS) grant opportunities:

- Cross-Boundary Wildfire Hazard Mitigation on Non-Federal Lands (Cross-Boundary Mitigation) CFDA 10.697
- Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) CFDA 10.698

Some projects may meet eligibility criteria for both WRR and Cross-Boundary Mitigation grant opportunities. In such a case, the applicant may submit the same project for both opportunities. It will be U.S. Forest Service discretion on which funding source is used if the project is selected.

All grants support the goals of the [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#):

- **Restore and Maintain Landscapes:** Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances, in accordance with management objectives.
- **Create Fire Adapted Communities:** Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.

FOR ALL GRANTS

- On-the-ground activities must be on non-Federal lands and/or Tribal trust lands.
- Use of the [Northeast-Midwest Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal](#) (NMWRAP) is recommended to identify and document projects are focusing on reducing wildfire risk and protecting values at risk. It is acceptable to use other comparable wildfire risk assessments in lieu of the NMWRAP.
- The grant term is 5 years.
- The two grant opportunities will be evaluated independently of one another, by application review teams of U.S. Forest Service and State forestry agency staff.
- All applications will undergo a preliminary eligibility review prior to ranking. All applicants will be notified of the final selection or non-selection of their applications.
- “For Profit” organizations are not eligible for this funding opportunity.

COHESIVE STRATEGY GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Cross-Boundary Wildfire Hazard Mitigation on Non-Federal Lands

Cross-Boundary Mitigation grants should reduce hazardous fuel conditions on non-Federal land and benefit nearby National Forest System lands. Grants shall increase the probability a fire management response will meet the following land management and protection objectives:

- Protect communities (and associated lives, property, and public infrastructure) that are at the highest risk from damaging wildfire.
- Protect critical resource and economic values and restore and maintain landscapes to accommodate fire, within the context of fire regime parameters, while meeting land management plan objectives.

Cross-Boundary Mitigation investments must focus on treating the highest-priority projects in the highest-priority areas. Risk factors, such as wildfire hazard potential and proximity to values at risk,

will be used when allocating funds. Emphasis should be given to acres identified in Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) or equivalent plans. Projects must have the support of the State Forester and the local National Forest Supervisor to be considered. Projects by federally recognized Tribes need Forest Supervisor support only. National Forests may compete for Cross-Boundary Mitigation funding, provided the non-Federal landowner is prepared for the National Forest to complete the project through staff, contract, partnership, agreement, or other means. Funding not managed by a National Forest will be delivered through a grant to the partner through Eastern Region State, Private, and Tribal (SPTF) Forestry.

Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) Grants

WRR grants are broader than Cross-Boundary Mitigation grants and don't require benefit to a National Forest. Successful WRR applications will clearly identify the reduction of wildfire risk. They will align with the respective State's Forest Action Plan and meet one or more of the six [Northeast Regional Action Plan](#) options.

WRR applications shall address one or more options under Goals 1 and 2 of the Cohesive Strategy.

Goal 1: Restore & Maintain Landscapes

- **Regional Option 1A:** Expand the use of prescribed fire as an integral tool to meet management objectives in the Northeast.
- **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 1C:** Focus on mitigating "event" fuels to reduce potential fire hazard.

Goal 2: Fire Adapted Communities

- **Regional Option 2A:** Focus on promoting and supporting local adaptation activities to be taken by communities.
- **Regional Option 2B:** Focus on directing hazardous fuel treatments to the wildland urban interfaces.
- **Regional Option 2C:** Focus on promoting and supporting prevention programs and activities.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- WRR grant funds must be matched 100 percent or more by eligible and allowable costs and are subject to match provisions in [grant regulations in the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations](#).
- Cross-Boundary Mitigation funding applications do not require a match and must benefit National Forest lands. However, matching is encouraged and will be considered when ranking applications.
- WRR applications require a National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) form clearly showing planned deliverables and costs.
- 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.
- 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

Cross-Boundary Mitigation - CFDA 10.697

Eligible Parties

- National Forests (applying for projects involving non-Federal landowners)
- State forestry agencies
- Tribes
- Local governments
- Nonprofit organizations
- Private landowner associations such as a homeowner association
- Fire compacts
- Academic institutions

Linkages

- Protect communities
- Protect critical resources and economic values, per NCS Goals 1 and 2
- Community Wildfire Protection Plans or equivalent

Spatial Data

- Provide electronic spatial information, as required by FACTS (Forest Service Activity Tracking System).

Funding Limits

- There is no individual project funding limit.
- There is no State or National Forest funding cap.
- The FY 2023 allocation for this grant opportunity is \$1.5 million.

Support

- Applications must be endorsed by the State Forester and the Forest Supervisor of the National Forest benefited.
- Tribal applications need only Forest Supervisor support.

Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) CFDA 10.698

Eligible Parties

- State forestry agencies
- Forest fire compacts
- Groups of States
- Nonprofit organizations
- Academic institutions
- Tribes
- Fire science exchanges

Linkages

- NCS Goals 1 and 2 and corresponding Regional Options
- State Forest Action Plan
- Tribal Forest Protection plans or similar land management document

Spatial Data

- Provide electronic spatial information, as required by NFPORS (National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System).

Funding Limits

- Each application can range from \$25,000 to \$300,000 in Federal funds.
- Any one applicant may submit no more than three applications per WRR grant opportunity (single or multistate).
- Equipment: No more than 25 percent of Federal funds requested.
- Maximum amount of WRR 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.
- Estimated FY 2023 cap for States is \$420,000. The estimated FY 2023 overall funding level is \$2.8 million.
- Scoring priority will determine which applications are funded from a State, this includes third party applications supported by a State. State/third party applications may be skipped, and a lower ranked application from that state/third party selected in order to stay within the 15% cap for the respective State.
- Forest Fire Compact awards and grants to Tribes will not impact State Caps.
- 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 will count against the State funding cap, but do not count against the State's limit of three applications.
- Third party applications (aka non-state) compete equally with state applications.

Support

- Third-party (non-State) applications must identify the lead organization, have State support, and specify the amount funding to be allocated against one or more State Caps. The exception is that Federally recognized Tribes do not require State support, and forest fire compacts require endorsement by their commission in lieu of specific State support.

Except for projects by Tribes, a letter of support from the State Forester (except Director of Forest Protection in NY; State Fire Warden in NJ) or appropriate designated authority for approving activities must be submitted with the application.

CROSS-BOUNDARY MITIGATION EXAMPLES

Qualifying

- Hazardous fuels reduction activities
- Development and implementation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) or equivalent
- Technical assistance

- Training or monitoring activities on non-Federal lands for activities that benefit resources on Federal land

Non-qualifying

- Research and development projects
- Capital improvements
- Economic development projects

WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION (WRR) ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

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

EASTERN REGION CONTACTS

For Cross-Boundary Mitigation and all Eastern Region States with National Forests/Prairie, contact:

Brian Schaffler, Fuels Program Manager

brian.schaffler@usda.gov

(414) 297-3682 (Desk)

(517) 285-9258 (Mobile)

For WRR in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, or West Virginia, contact:

Maris Gabliks, Cooperative Fire Specialist

maris.g.gabliks@usda.gov

(609) 235-7524

For WRR in Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, or Michigan, contact:

Maris Gabliks, Cooperative Fire Specialist

maris.g.gabliks@usda.gov

(609) 235-7524

For WRR in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, or Vermont, contact:

Ray Parrish, Cooperative Fire Specialist

raymond.j.parrish@usda.gov

(414) 297-3348

KEY RESOURCES

- [State Forest Action Plans](#)
- [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#)
- [Northeast Regional Action Plan](#)
- [Northeast-Midwest Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal \(NMWRAP\)](#)
- [CDC Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\)](#)
- [Wildfire Risk to Communities & Low-income Community Data](#)
- [Wildfire Risk in Eastern Region National Forests \[Report\]](#)
- [Risk Management Assistance Dashboard \[National Weather Service\]](#)

APPLICATION NARRATIVE AND SCORING CRITERIA

Applications must include a project narrative that contains the following **required** items:

- ◆ Project Title
- ◆ Funding request type, WRR or Cross-Boundary
- ◆ Applicant organization
- ◆ Project overview
- ◆ Project budget explanation
- ◆ Responses to the five scoring criteria

WRR and Cross-Boundary funding will be scored on the same five criteria with a total of 100 points possible. The **required** scoring criteria consist of:

- ◆ Address the National Cohesive Strategy and the Northeast Regional Action Plan's Identified Options (40 Points)
- ◆ Engage in Partnerships and Collaboration (20 Points)
- ◆ Assist Underserved Communities (5 Points)
- ◆ Explain the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Project (20 Points)
- ◆ Demonstrate a Wildfire Risk Focus (15 points)

Narrative responses should be succinct and **no more than one page each** for the project overview, project budget explanation, and the five scoring criteria. Applicants should review the optional [Project Narrative Form](#) for more details on the scoring criteria. Applicants may choose to use the provided form to ensure all required information is provided, or their own format if it contains the required information listed in this section.

The following information sources are recommended when responding to the Underserved Communities and Wildfire Risk Focus scoring criteria:

- ◆ [Underserved Communities with CDC value of 0.5 or Higher](#)
- ◆ [Low Income Communities](#) – Data from the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program has been used. Select “Download Scoring Prioritization Data” and use Tab 1 for low-income designation.
- ◆ [Wildfire Risk Assessment](#) – This data may be used, however, other wildfire risk assessment products may be used to demonstrate the project's focus on risk reduction.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

For **Cross-Boundary Mitigation** funding that will be managed or used by the local National Forest, send a project narrative, shapefiles, a State Forester letter of support, and Forest Supervisor letter of support directly to Brian Schaffler (see [Eastern Region Contacts](#)).

- ◆ **Example:** A National Forest will use its staff and a local agreement with a county to complete work on nearby county and private land. The Forest does not use grants.gov to apply for this funding, though it does compete for the funding with the non-Federal grant applicants.

For **Cross-Boundary Mitigation** grants going to a non-Federal applicant and not managed by the local National Forest, the applicant applies through [Grants.gov](#) and must include letters of support from the State Forester and Forest Supervisor (see [Instructions for Submitting Grant Applications through Grants.gov](#)).

- ♦ **Example:** The local National Forest supports the work but doesn't have the staff or agreements in place to complete the work. The non-Federal landowner or party applies through Grants.gov.

For **all WRR** applications, apply through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

All applications are due **close of business (COB) Sunday, April 30, 2023**.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING GRANT APPLICATIONS THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

Submit all grant applications through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Search for grant Opportunity Number **USDA-FS-2023-COHESIVE-STRATEGY**.

Tribal applications should be submitted directly through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Submission to State Foresters is not required. Cross-Boundary applications must contain support documentation for the National Forest(s) that will benefit from the project.

Partners and collaborators must submit an initial draft of their application to involved State Foresters (in NY, to the Director of Forest Protection; in NJ, to the State Fire Warden) by **Friday, March 31, 2023**. You can find contact information for each State Forester in the member roster available on the [National Association of State Foresters \(NASF\) website](https://www.nasf.org). The State sponsor will submit their support letter to the applicant for upload to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) before **COB Sunday, April 30, 2023**, which is the application deadline. The following section provides guidance on how to submit applications through Grants.gov.

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.

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

Organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number, active in the System for Award Management (SAM) registration, and a Grants.gov account to apply for grants. Creating a Grants.gov account can be completed online in minutes, but **UEI and SAM registrations may take several weeks or more to complete**. Therefore, ensure you apply for your UEI and SAM registration promptly.

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

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

1. [Register with SAM](#): All organizations must register with the System for Award Management (SAM), and SAM registration must be renewed annually.
2. [Register with Grants.gov](#).
3. [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 UEI Number for the organization in the UEI field while adding a profile.
4. [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 E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC). The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the Authorized

Organization Representative (AOR) role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization.

5. [Track Role Status.](#)

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.

How to Submit an Application to Eastern Region SPTF 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>.

1. **Create a Workspace:** Creating a Workspace allows you to complete it online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
2. **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 status 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.
 - a. **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 drive(s), 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>.
 - b. **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.
 - c. **Complete SF-424 Fields First:** The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant's name, address, and UEI Number. Once completed, information will transfer to the other forms.
3. **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.

4. **Track a Workspace Submission:** After successfully submitting a Workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXX) 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.

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

All applications must be received by COB on the due date. 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 Eastern Region SPTF 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 Eastern Region SPTF.

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). Procedures and policies regarding how State Foresters work with partners vary from State to State, so be sure to consult your State Forester (Director of Forest Protection in NY; State Fire Warden in NJ) before preparing an application. 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 on March 31, 2023** (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 Sunday, April 30, 2023**.

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 to attach additional required and optional forms below)

Required Agency-specific information to be submitted through the Attachments Form in Grants.gov:

- ▶ Project narrative
- ▶ Shapefiles or maps
- ▶ Letter(s) of support

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:

- ▶ [Project Narrative Form](#)
- ▶ FS-1500-35 for entities that do not lobby (only if applicable)