

Frequently Asked Questions
Eastern Region State and Private Forestry
Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR), Request for Applications (RFA)

July 23, 2021

1. What does State and Private Forestry want to accomplish with these grants on these landscapes?

The purpose of the LSR Program, as cited in Section 13A of the [Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act](#) (as amended by the 2018 “Farm Bill”), is: “To encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes.” This competitive grant program supports high impact projects that lead to measurable outcomes on the landscape, leverage public and private resources, and further priorities identified in each [State Forest Action Plan](#) or equivalent restoration strategy. The program helps ensure rural forests continue to provide important benefits including wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and forest products.

2. What is the process for a non-State entity to submit an application?

All partners and collaborators, except tribes, must submit an initial draft of their Application Project Narrative Form and Budget Spreadsheet to the relevant State Forester(s) by September 24, 2021, or specific deadline set by the State Forester. The State Forester sponsor(s) must provide their support letter to the applicant in time for upload to [Grants.gov](#) by 6 p.m. Eastern, November 5, 2021, which is the application deadline. At least one State Forester sponsor is required for each application, except for applications submitted by Federally recognized Tribes.

Procedures and policies regarding how State Foresters work with partners vary from State to State, so be sure to consult with the relevant State Forester(s) before preparing an application. Contact information for each State Forester is available on the [National Association of State Foresters website](#).

For Tribes: Federally recognized Tribes may submit applications directly to [Grants.gov](#). Tribes are encouraged to coordinate with the State. State and Private Forestry (S&PF) is also available to facilitate and assist with this coordination, can provide liaison support for Tribes, and can assist with application submission if needed. See list of contacts on page 11 of the LSR Guidance and Instructions document. Projects must achieve on-the-ground outcomes on nonindustrial private forest land, Tribal, State, and/or local government forest land. Projects on Federally-owned land are not eligible, therefore work on Tribal land held in trust by the United States is not eligible.

3. How does this RFA support Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government?

In the RFA instructions, we encourage applications that show a clear benefit to underserved/historically marginalized people and the communities where they reside or the forest areas that they value. Where this is the case, this should be described in the “Request for Applications Project Narrative Form.”

This [Executive Order](#) established the policy of the Federal Government to, “pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.” Equity is defined as, “the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.” The [Centers for Disease Control Social Vulnerability Index](#) and [Opportunity Zones](#) identified by governors are two resources you may consult to help identify underserved communities.

4. Is there a minimum and maximum amount of Federal funding we can request?

Minimum: The minimum project LSR application amount is \$25,000 in Federal funding.

Maximum:

- Funding for a single-State application is limited only by the State and Tribal cap. The maximum amount of Federal funding awarded to any one State (State cap) or Tribe via this competitive process is 15% of the total available. Each year, funds available to the Eastern Region are based on the final fiscal year appropriation from Congress for the LSR program and the funding allocation to the Region from the Agency's Washington Office. While the funding level may fluctuate from year to year, for planning purposes, the Eastern Region Federal funding for LSR projects has been approximately \$4 million annually.
- Maximum Federal funding for a multistate or cross-regional application is \$600,000.

5. Why limit submissions to five applications sponsored by each State Forester?

After considerable discussion by the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, the State Foresters agreed to limit the number of applications sponsored by each State Forester to five for the following reasons:

- To help ensure that applications are best addressing State Forest Action Plans (in the past, some applications submitted by partners, with little time for collaboration, were poorly matched to State priorities as laid out in State Forest Action Plans).
- Having unlimited numbers of applications with limited funding leads to high levels of unsuccessful applications. State Foresters previously had little incentive to hold back any application regardless of quality.

Note: Applications with 11 or more State Forester Sponsors and applications submitted by Tribes do not count against this 5-per State limit.

6. Where can I find the 2020 State Forest Action Plans?

Many of the 2020 SFAPs (and the Vermont 2017 SFAP) are available on the National Association of State Foresters [State Forest Action Plan website](#). If the 2020 SFAP you need to review is not posted at that site, reach out to the relevant State Forester or Sherri Wormstead (sherri.j.wormstead@usda.gov).

7. What are the match requirements?

Matching of funds at 1:1 is required. Matching funds must meet requirements to be eligible and allowable and are subject to match provisions in grant regulations. See the [Code of Federal Regulations Title 2 Part 200.306](#) and [Subpart E for Cost Principles](#). Match must meet all the same requirements as the Federal share and be documented sufficiently to support financial tracking and accountability. Refer to the [Matching Funds document](#) for more guidance on match and allowable costs.

8. Can we only waive indirect if we have the approved indirect rate?

Yes. Foregone indirect is only an acceptable source of match if there is an approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) or a decision has been made to charge the set de minimis rate of 10%. Similarly, an approved NICRA is required for reimbursement of indirect expenses. In addition, a NICRA or the election of a de minimis rate must be documented even if the partner chooses to not charge indirect.

9. What activities meet the “on-the-ground” outcome requirement?

Each LSR project must accomplish at least one of the on-the-ground national quantitative measures:

- Acres treated to reduce hazardous fuels
- Miles of riparian forest treated to enhance wildlife
- Acres of habitat treated to enhance wildlife
- Acres of trees and seedlings planted to enhance water quality
- Miles of riparian forest treated to enhance water quality
- Acres treated for insects and disease

- Infested acres treated for invasive plants
- Acres of silvicultural practice exclusive of other reported treatments
- Acres under new forest management plans
- Private forest landowners reached through technical assistance
- Tons of forest products produced (biomass)
- Board feet of forest products produced (timber)

See page 6 of the instructions document for a description of each measure.

10. Are urban and community forestry projects or any project in urban areas still allowed?

Urban and Community Forestry authorities are still applicable for this RFA, however all projects, regardless of program or authorities used, are required to focus on rural forest lands. The national direction for LSR defines rural as any area other than an urbanized area such as a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants according to the latest census. You may use the [LSR Project Planning Tool \(Project Eligibility Tab\)](#) to confirm if a city or town is rural according to this definition.

11. Are hazard mitigation projects included in the five applications per State limit, or kept separate?

Hazard mitigation projects are acceptable under the current RFA; however, any application submitted to the LSR RFA, regardless of subject, counts toward the maximum of five per State. Note: There is a separate [Cohesive Fire Strategy, Request for Applications](#) for wildfire risk reduction and wildfire response projects.

12. Is there a separate grant opportunity for forest health treatment and methods development?

Additional opportunities for forest health project funding include:

- **National Forest Health Protection (FHP) Special Projects Request for Proposals:** The call letter for the nationally-managed [FHP Special Projects program](#) can vary from year to year, but is generally issued in late summer with a reply due in October. Program areas include:
 - Forest Health Monitoring Program, Evaluation Monitoring (EM)
 - Special Technology Development Program (STDP)
 - Biological Control of Invasive Plants (BCIP)
 - Forest Service-Pesticide Impact Assessment Program (FSPIAP)
 - Emerging Pest
- **Eastern Region Pest Suppression and Eradication Project Funding Requests:** The call letter for this regionally-managed program is generally sent to State forest health partners in late summer, with a reply due in October or November. Treatment requests may include invasive plant management and forest insect and disease prevention, eradication, suppression, or restoration of damage on non-federal public and private lands. Forest insect and pathogen priorities include *Lymantria dispar* (previously known by the common name gypsy moth), oak wilt, hemlock woolly adelgid, and emerald ash borer.

For more information about the Forest Health Call Letter(s), contact Susan Ellsworth, Eastern Region S&PF, Director for Forest Health and Forest Markets: susan.ellsworth@usda.gov, 414-232-9591.

13. Can you give me the Cliff notes version of equipment purchasing and tracking?

Equipment, such as a mobile outreach trailer and forestry equipment, is eligible for funding under this RFA. Note: Purchase of fire department equipment, including fire weather stations and dry fire hydrants is not allowed. Any equipment over \$5,000 purchased with any level of Federal funds is subject to significant tracking and reporting requirements that may extend well beyond the life of the grant. If the project is funded all entities must complete a Grant Equipment Justification and Certification Statement which is approved by the Forest Service program monitor. This not required as part of the application package, but would be required if funded.

Tracking requirements depend on whether the partner is a State or non-profit entity:

- States may follow State tracking and disposal procedures.

- Non-profit equipment purchases encounter a complex set of procedures, including tracking requirements, reporting, and maintenance plans.

For more information see [Code of Federal Regulations Title 2 Part 200.313 Equipment](#) or contact Midori Raymore, Eastern Region S&PF, Grants Management Specialist: midori.raymore@usda.gov, 414-297-1894.

14. When will funding be available for Landscape Scale Restoration funded projects?

A ranked list of LSR projects will be submitted to the USDA Forest Service Washington Office by February 1, 2022. Selected projects are funded as quickly as possible when the Federal Fiscal Year funds become available (ranging from April to July in past years). Operating under a continuing resolution or delay in receiving the budget, appropriation, or allocation can significantly impact the date funding becomes available for LSR.

Note: Beginning in Fiscal Year 2020, the [fire funding fix](#) eliminated the need for the transfer of funds for fighting wildfires (so Fire Transfer is no longer a concern for funding LSR projects).

Questions for Multistate Projects

15. For a multistate project, should one application be submitted?

Applications for multistate projects should be prepared, written, and submitted as a single application. Multistate project applications should show the percent of Federal funds to be allocated against each partner State in the “Project Description” section of the Project Narrative Form. This is important for considering the 15 percent of Federal funding cap for each State (for when projects are funded).

If the percent of Federal funds to be allocated against each State’s funding cap is not provided in the Project Narrative, the Federal funding request will be equally distributed for each sponsoring State, e.g., if there are four sponsoring States, 25 percent of Federal request will be applied to each of the four States.

Note: State caps can be exceeded in a multistate project if at least one partner State would not exceed its individual cap. This provision removes a previous disincentive to pursue multistate projects.

Note: State cap numbers do not need to match actual financial distributions in the budget table, e.g., all of the funding can go directly to one State (lead for the project), who could distribute corresponding funding among all sponsoring States. If funds are to go directly from the Forest Service to multiple agencies (not passed through by the lead), for this Request for Applications (RFA), the lead agency must submit a preliminary SF-424 and SF-424A that includes all Federal funds requested and matching contributions (for the whole project) and list each partner in a separate column in the Budget Spreadsheet. If the project is selected for funding, at that time each direct recipient will submit a new SF-424, SF-424A, and narrative for their portion of the project.

Multistate projects also require sponsor letters from the State Forester in each collaborating State. Ideally, these letters should confirm the potential allocation against State caps. It is understandable that sponsorship letters may be solicited before applications are completed, but we consider a State Forester sponsor letter an endorsement of all application content.

16. How do we specify the budget for multistate applications?

In the budget spreadsheet, complete the information in separate columns for each State/partner receiving Federal funds directly and/or contributing match. In some cases, the funds are passed from the lead applicant to other States or partner organizations. Explain details like that in the “description” section (column B) of the budget spreadsheet. Information provided in the Budget Spreadsheet is intended to inform reviewers about which partner is doing what type of work and how much it will cost. There may be cases where work is initially undertaken by one partner and contracted to another partner. It is acceptable to either break this down into separate columns in the Budget Spreadsheet (if sufficient detail is known) or present it at a more consolidated level. Note: Reviewers prefer to see strong budget details because that indicates a well-thought-out project and transparency in transactions.

17. Are multistate projects favored over projects that effect change locally or on a single-State basis?

Reviewers do not give an explicit point advantage to multistate projects over single-State projects. You are asked to, “address the project’s suitability as the most appropriate scale of response” in the Project Description section of the Project Application Narrative and provide measurable outcomes. Reviewers will focus on whether the outcomes are commensurate with the budget.

18. Would a multistate project be accepted with a partner State from a different region?

Cross-regional applications should be submitted to and evaluated by the region with the largest fiscal stake in the project. Cross-regional projects are scored and ranked through one of the regional processes (Northeast and Midwest, West, or South). The State Forester regional organizations and Forest Service Regions will collaborate during the evaluation process.