

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

August 16, 2023

1. What is the purpose of this grant program?

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 that rural forests continue to provide important benefits including wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and forest products.

2. What are the reporting requirements for LSR grants?

- Annual grant progress and financial reports are submitted to SM.FS.R9SPFgrants@usda.gov, each year no later than March 31 each year.
- Annual accomplishments reporting is due in the [Landscape Scale Restoration database \(LaSR\)](#) no later than October 28 each year. This includes spatial data outlining the discrete area(s) where on-the-ground implementation activities occur. Reporting in LaSR requires both Forest Service grant monitors and LSR grant recipients to coordinate in entering project information and publishing the reports each year. If an LSR grant recipient is new to this reporting process, they will need to sign up for an account to access the LaSR module. At this time, non-State grantees must have a login affiliated with the State forestry agency where the work is done. The assigned Forest Service grant monitor can assist with this after the project is funded. The LaSR reports are publicly available at this [LSR interactive web map](#).

3. What is the process to apply?

All partners and collaborators, except Tribes, must submit an initial draft of their project narrative and budget spreadsheet to the relevant State Forester(s) by October 5, 2023, or specific deadline set by the State Forester. State Foresters are asked to provide their support letters to the applicants in time for upload to [Grants.gov](#) by 6 p.m. Eastern, November 30, 2023, 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 regarding how State Foresters accept applications 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](#).

Eastern Region, State and Private Forestry (S&PF) staff are available to assist with application questions. See the LSR RFA Instructions and Guidance document for contact information.

4. Is Tribal trust land eligible?

Yes: Tribal trust land held both by Tribes and individuals is eligible for LSR projects.

Note: There is a separate Request for Proposals federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations. Tribes are encouraged to apply to the national request for proposals but may also apply for this regional RFA. See the [national LSR web page](#) for more information.

5. 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:

- While there is no maximum Federal funding level for single-State applications, the maximum amount of Federal funding awarded to benefit any one State 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.
- Maximum Federal funding for a multistate or cross-regional application is \$600,000.

6. 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 unfunded 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.

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

The 2020 SFAPs (and the Vermont 2017 SFAP) are available on the National Association of State Foresters [State Forest Action Plan website](#).

8. What are the match requirements?

Matching funds of 1 to 1 (cash and/or in-kind contributions) is required. Match 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. For rate of volunteer time, refer to the [Independent Sector Value of Volunteer Time website](#). Their [report for 2022 \(released in 2023\)](#) provides the value of volunteer time by State, which for the Northeast and Midwest ranges from \$26.67 to \$39.19.

9. 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.

10. 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
- Acres treated to enhance wildlife habitat
- Miles of riparian forest treated to enhance wildlife habitat
- Acres of trees and seedlings planted to enhance water quality
- Miles of riparian forest treated to enhance water quality
- Number of trees, saplings, and/or seedlings planted to enhance water quality
- Acres treated for insects and disease
- Acres treated for invasive plants/weed management
- Acres under new forest stewardship or other forest management plans
- Number of forest landowners reached through technical assistance (in more than one interaction and know to have benefitted in some significant and lasting way)
- Tons of pulpwood or biomass produced
- Board feet of logs/sawlogs produced

See page 7 of the *R9 LSR Instructions and Guidance* document for a description of each measure.

11. 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.

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. What is required to purchase and track equipment?

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, 414-721-1346.

14. Can income be generated as part of the project?

Yes, but please reach out to the relevant regional Forest Service contact regarding how you should account for program income in your budget spreadsheet. Program income is the gross revenue generated by the grant during the life of the grant. Program income can be earned from fees charged for conference or workshop attendance, from rental fees earned from renting out real property or equipment acquired with grant funds, or from the sale of commodities or items developed under the grant. Program income is ordinarily deducted from total allowable costs to determine the net Federal funding, but with prior approval, may be used as match (i.e., instead of selling wood products, the products are used on site for the project) or may be added to the funds for the grant (must be used for purpose of the grant).

15. 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 28, 2023. Projects to fund are selected when the Federal Fiscal Year funds become available, however the grant may not be fully executed until later in 2024. Operating under a continuing resolution or delay in receiving the budget, appropriation, or allocation can significantly impact when funding is available.

Questions for Multistate Projects

16. How can groups from multiple States apply for one LSR grant?

Groups or organizations that would like to submit a multistate LSR application should coordinate to:

- Decide if all the funds would go to one organization or agency to implement the project (that grantee can then administer the project and can also subgrant funding to the other organizations/agencies).
- Decide which organization or agency will be the lead to submit the application in grants.gov.
- Reach out to each State forester for where the work will occur to ask for their sponsorship (required).

Also refer to the additional questions and answers for multistate projects below.

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

Applications for multistate projects should be prepared, written, and submitted as a single application. For calculating the 15 percent Federal funding cap to benefit each State, multistate project applications should provide the percent or amount of Federal funds benefiting each 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.

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: The amount benefitting each State for the State cap numbers does not need to match the 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 amount benefitting the State that would count towards the State cap. 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.

18. 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.

19. Are multistate projects favored over single-State sponsored projects?

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.

20. 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 three regional processes (Northeast and Midwest, West, or South). The State Forester regional organizations and Forest Service Regions will coordinate during the evaluation process.