

**“Competitive grants”**

Competitive grants are an opportunity for states and islands to think big and secure additional funding for their top Forest Action Plan (SWARS) strategies. A key to success is to “Cooperate in order to compete.” If island foresters cooperate with local government and/or non-government agencies to develop proposals, the proposals are more likely to compete against mainland states and get funding, because:

- Partners can share ideas
- Partners may have complementary skills, possibly including grantwriting
- Partners’ staff are like expansions of small island forestry agency staff
- Partners can provide match

Even if a partner has the lead in project implementation, both the state forester and the partner look good, because the funding was secured through the state forester.

Competitive grants are managed by the Western Forest Leadership Coalition, and the requirements and process are posted every year at [www.wflccenter.org](http://www.wflccenter.org) (click “State & Private Forestry” then “S&PF Competitive Grant Program”). For FY13 grants, key documents are at [http://www.wflccenter.org/spf\\_grants\\_13/](http://www.wflccenter.org/spf_grants_13/) and the deadline is **September 14, 2012.**

<b>Key document</b>	<b>Comments/explanations</b>
2013 Western S&PF Competitive Resource Allocation Single-State Grant Application Form	Application form for a single state (island) to secure funding under regional competitive process
Criteria and instructions for 2013 Western S&PF Competitive Resource Allocation	Instructions for application
2013 Western S&PF Competitive Resource Allocation Multi-State Grant Application Form	Application form for multi-state proposals
S&PF FY2013 Competitive Resource Allocation National Guidance	Explanation of national & regional process

The competitive grant application form (above) has a generalized budget and the narrative is quite short. It is written to attract funding, not to serve as a workplan. So, it is a good idea when working with partners to first develop some good working plans before writing the competitive application form.

1. Establish a transparent process well in advance to reach out to internal staff and potential partners and let them know how and when they may submit ideas for competitive grants. For external partners, clarify that projects must implement priority Forest Action Plan (SWARS) strategies and be compatible with S&PF grant authorities.
2. With the ideas that the state forester receives, he/she should decide which ones to pursue. Good ideas and good partners may be merged into one excellent application instead of competing with each other.

3. Write up the project in the format that you would usually use for workplanning: the LOGIC model, or the format usually used by Forest Service grants, or a format used by your government. Clarify who will do what.
4. Write up the budget in as much detail as you can, to make sure the numbers are realistic. Use the format usually used by Forest Service grants, because eventually you will need to submit the budget in this format anyways.
5. Decide how you would prefer to route the funding: will it all be spent by the island forester? Will the island forester subgrant to partners? Would it be better for all or part of the funding to go directly from the Forest Service to the partners? Making this decision ahead of time might affect indirect costs or administrative costs, which affects the total budget. It may also affect the willingness of partners to participate. Please note that it is only possible for the Forest Service to send the grant directly to partners if the partners have the ability to manage the grant following all federal regulations. Usually the grants are on a reimbursable basis so in most cases the grantee needs sufficient cash reserves to expend funds and then be reimbursed.
6. Finally, put the proposal into the competitive application format. Good luck!

I prefer to call competitive grant proposals “application forms” or even “pre-proposals” because if they are scored highly enough for probable funding (scores announced around December), then the real grants process starts at the beginning:

1. US Congress passes budget (one hopes)
2. Letter of funding advice from the Forest Service to the island forester
3. Island forester MAY write a letter to the Forest Service requesting that the funds be granted directly to partner(s)
4. Grantee submits a complete grant application, which might require a revised narrative, and definitely requires SF-424 and associated forms
5. Forest Service actually awards grant (often in July of the following year)
6. The grantee is responsible for grant progress and financial reporting to the Forest Service
7. Accomplishments and “success stories” from the project, no matter who receives the grant, may be submitted by the state forester in NIC Annual Performance Reporting (PMAS, CARS, etc.), State Fact Sheets, and Redesign reporting.