

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

June 23, 2020

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.” In addition, the program is intended to further priorities identified in [State Forest Action Plans](#) and leverage public and private resources. The program helps ensure rural forests continue to provide important benefits, including fish and wildlife habitat and watershed health improvement.

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 August 20, 2020. The State Forester sponsor(s) must submit their [support letter](#) to the applicant for upload to [Grants.gov](#) by 6 p.m. Eastern, September 17, 2020, which is the application deadline. At least one State Forester sponsor is required for each application, except for applications submitted by 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: 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 9 of the [LSR Guidance and Instructions document](#).

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

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

A multistate or cross-regional application shall not exceed \$600,000 of Federal share.

Funding for a single-State project is limited only by the State 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.

4. Why limit submissions to five applications per State?

After considerable discussion by the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, the State Foresters agreed to limit the number of applications per State 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 limit of 5 per State.

5. Can we address priorities in the 2020 State Forest Action Plan if it has not been approved yet?

Yes, but check with the relevant State Forester(s) to verify which version of the State Forest Action Plan to reference. Considering that State Forest Action Plans are being revised in 2020 (for all States except Vermont, which completed a full revision in 2017), either the last final plan as posted on the [State Forest Action Plan website](#) (2010 for most States) or the new plan (e.g., in final draft form) can be referenced. If the 2020 plan is close to final or has been submitted to the Forest Service for approval, reference to the 2020 plan is encouraged (as long as a draft of that plan is available to reference).

6. 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 on our website](#) for more guidance on match and allowable costs.

7. 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.

8. 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 lands and demonstrate a positive impact on rural forested landscapes. Based on 2018 Farm Bill amendments to the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act and as stated in the [national guidance for LSR](#), "Projects focus on nonindustrial private forest land or state forest land that is also rural. Rural means 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."

9. 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.

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

Additional opportunities for forest health project funding include these:

- **Forest Health Project (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
 - Special Technology Development Program
 - Biological Control of Invasive Plants
 - Forest Service-Pesticide Impact Assessment Program
- **Eastern Region Pest Suppression and Eradication Project Funding Requests:** The call letter for this regionally managed program is generally sent in late summer, with a reply due in October or November. It includes funding requests for direct intervention of forest pest outbreaks including emerald ash borer, gypsy moth (excluding Slow the Spread), hemlock woolly adelgid, invasive plants, oak wilt, southern pine beetle, and other forest insects and pathogens.

For more information about the Forest Health Call Letter(s), contact Susan Ellsworth, Eastern Region S&PF, Director for Forest Health and Economics: susan.ellsworth@usda.gov, 414-297-3021.

11. 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 is 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 entity purchases of equipment 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.

12. 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 in December. 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).

Question for Multistate Projects

13. For a multistate project, how much of the application should be the same from State to State?

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% 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% 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 would 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.

14. Regarding the Budget Spreadsheet for multistate grants: Do we include only budget information for our State's portion and partners?

In some cases States may be full partners; in others, the funds are passed to other partner organizations. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.