

Call for proposals: National Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Program

A request for proposals for the National Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Grant Program is now open. The National LSR Program is accepting project proposals for consideration for the Federal Fiscal Year 2021.

Who Can Apply: State and territorial forestry agencies or an equivalent state agency, units of local government, Tribes, non-profit organizations (defined as a 501c3), and universities are eligible to submit applications. For-profit entities are not eligible to apply under this competition.

Submission Instructions: Only electronic project proposals will be accepted and considered. All project proposals must be sent electronically directly to the Nebraska Forest Service email, trees@unl.edu. Electronic project proposals must be sent as both a Microsoft Word document (i.e. .doc or .docx) and Adobe Portable Document Format (i.e. .PDF).

Each organization must also include a statement of qualifications identifying experience implementing similar types of grants, statement of financial stability, and a statement of performance of past grants.

Submission Deadline: Project Proposals must be submitted electronically to trees@unl.edu no later than 5:00 P.M. CDT, July 31, 2020 to be accepted and receive consideration. Any project proposals received after 5:00 P.M. CDT on July 31, 2020 will not be accepted or considered.

Important changes for FY 2021

1. Based on mandates in the 2018 Farm Bill and procedural changes from the USDA, the Nebraska Forest Service will now review, score, and select up to five proposals from all eligible applications to enter into the regional competition for consideration for funding.
2. Projects focus on nonindustrial private forest land, or state forest land that is also rural.
 - a. 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 (2010)
3. State and territorial forestry agencies or an equivalent state agency, units of local government, non-profit organizations (defined as a 501c3), universities and Tribes are eligible to submit applications.
4. For-profit entities are not eligible to apply under this competition.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) program provides USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry (S&PF) competitive grants focused on promoting collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes and on furthering priorities identified in State Forest Action Plans. Proposals are now being accepted for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 grant cycle. All proposals must use the published 2015 Nebraska Forest Action Plan for reference, available on the Nebraska Forest Service website: nfs.unl.edu

Projects must focus on landscape-level outcomes, including a combination of land ownerships, and prioritize funding towards one or more of the following objectives:

- Reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires;
- Improve fish and wildlife habitats, including those of threatened and endangered species;
- Maintain and improve water quality and watershed function;
- Mitigate invasive species, insect infestation, and disease;
- Improve important forest ecosystems;
- Measure ecological and economic benefits, including air quality, soil quality, and productivity.

APPLICATION DETAIL

- State forestry agencies may submit up to five applications per state. Units of local government, Tribes, non-profit organizations (defined as 501c3), and universities are eligible to submit applications and may do so by contacting their state forestry agency. Please note, per program changes by the USDA, the state forestry agency must now review and determine which applications will be submitted. Tribes may alternatively choose to submit applications (up to two applications per state above and beyond the maximum of five allowed through the state forestry agency) through the USDA Forest Service Region where the proposed project is located by contacting the relevant USDA Forest Service tribal relations or LSR staff person for that region.
- Project proposals may be submitted for any amount up to \$300,000 each and each proposal is required to demonstrate a 1:1 match using only **non-federal funds**, unless a match waiver is acquired from the USDA Forest Service in advance of submitting the proposed project for consideration. Each state (including all applicant entities therein) is limited to no more than 15% of the total funds available for the West (likely to be at or near \$600,000 as a maximum award to any one state).
- Proposals must be based on a State Forest Action Plan (<https://go.unl.edu/forest-action-plan>) or an equivalent restoration strategy.

MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the Nebraska Forest Service website and review *all information* pertinent to successfully submitting an LSR proposal. There you will find an application worksheet, guidance on the LSR program and your submission, and examples of previously funded projects.

<https://nfs.unl.edu/landscape-scale-restoration-program>

DETAILS

Fiscal Year 2021: Landscape Scale Restoration Program National Guidance (Approved January 09, 2020)

Background

The Landscape Scale Restoration Program (LSR) is a USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry (S&PF) competitive grant program that promotes collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes and furthers priorities identified in State Forest Action Plans. The delivery of S&PF Programs is most effective when available resources are focused on priority issues and landscapes and leverage public and private resources. Coordination will take place to identify other applicable resources for landscape scale restoration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other stakeholders through mechanisms such as the Joint Forestry Team and state coordinating committees.

Beginning in 2008, the Forest Service in partnership with State Foresters embarked on a new effort to take an all-lands approach to nationally significant resource challenges, identifying the highest priority landscapes and integrating S&PF program authorities to make a targeted and meaningful impact on the landscape. The approach was: 1.) Focused on addressing issues of national importance and sustaining a diverse range of public benefits from forests and trees, 2.) Prioritized by using the best available technology and information to assess forest conditions and trends at the global, national, and state level and identified the best opportunities for investment toward meaningful change, and 3.) Designed to achieve significant outcomes by emphasizing collaboration, innovative partnerships, and work at appropriate scales and by improving our ability to assess and demonstrate our impact on the ground. Resources were focused through a competitive process (titled “Redesign Competitive Process”) administered through a joint effort between the Forest Service and regional state forestry organizations (Council of Western State Foresters, Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance and Southern Group of State Foresters).

In 2014 Congress recognized LSR through annual appropriations - by including LSR as a budget line item in the fiscal year (FY) 2014 appropriations bill - and approved LSR as the funding mechanism for a competitive process focused on the priorities identified in State Forest Action Plans. A portion of LSR funds continues to be split among the three regional state forestry agencies and competed for via regional processes.

The 2018 Farm Bill amended the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA), directing the Forest Service, in consultation with State Foresters or appropriate state agencies, to establish a competitive grant program to provide financial and technical assistance to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes. In response the Agency is implementing the changes identified in the CFAA through administrative changes. These changes build upon the foundation of the LSR program.

The fiscal year (FY) 2020 grant cycle was considered a transition year for the program with full execution of the 2018 Farm Bill beginning with this FY2021 grant cycle.

Proposals must be based on a [State Forest Action Plan](#) or an equivalent restoration strategy.

Project Eligibility:

1. The term nonindustrial private forest land means land that:
 - a. is rural, as determined by the Secretary;
 - b. has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees;
 - c. is owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian Tribe, or other private legal entity.
2. The term State forest land means land that:
 - a. is rural, as determined by the Secretary;
 - b. is under State or local governmental ownership and considered to be non-Federal forest land;
 - c. is rural, as defined in U.S. Census, 2010. [Online data available here.](#)
3. A restoration strategy that is:
 - a. A. complete or substantially complete;
 - b. for a multiyear period;
 - c. covers nonindustrial private forest land or state forest land;
 - d. is accessible by wood-processing infrastructure;
 - e. is based on the best available science.
4. Ineligible authorities: Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance (Volunteer Fire Assistance), Forest Legacy, Community Forest and Open Space Conservation, and Federal Lands Forest Health Management.

(A) Federal funds require a 1:1 match from non-federal sources. Territorial, flag islands, and freely associated states must provide a 1:1 match on funds received in excess of \$200,000. Activities performed with match must meet the same requirements as the federal funds, e.g., match cannot be used for construction, research and other ineligible activities.

(B) Research is not eligible (federal funding or match) through this program. Construction is not an allowable cost (federal funding or match) and projects that involve requests for funds and/or provide match for construction of new buildings or roads are not eligible.

(C) Cash and in-kind contributions for project elements that do not fall within S&PF program authorities included in the LSR competitive allocation may not be used as match. Other “nonmatch” leveraged funds do not need to meet the same standards.

(D) Implementation can extend one-to-three years; however, projects should be fully funded in year one.

(E) Proposals must advance priorities identified in a State Forest Action Plan or equivalent restoration strategy that is:

1. Complete or substantially complete;
2. for a multi-year period;
3. covers non-industrial private forest land or state forest land;

4. accessible by wood processing infrastructure;
5. based on the best available science.

(F) **Project Development and Selection Process** During project development, applicants are encouraged to seek guidance from the appropriate state entity and Forest Service region to ensure the project aligns with the program purpose, eligibility and CFAA criteria. Regional state forestry organizations may utilize informal and formal (e.g., abstracts submissions, pre-proposals, etc.) opportunities to review project proposals.

Regionally recommended projects are due to the Forest Service Washington Office Deputy Area Budget Coordinator Anne Buckelew (anne.buckelew@usda.gov) by February 1, 2021. When the Forest Service receives its final appropriation from Congress, the Deputy Chief for S&PF will notify the corresponding Forest Service Regional Office regarding their final allocation for LSR projects.

LSR Competitive Criteria The competitive process is intended to support high impact projects that promote collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes, leverage public and private resources and that further priorities identified in each State's Forest Action Plan.

Successful projects are cross boundary and include a combination of land ownerships including tribal, state and local government, and private (e.g., multiple private landowners; private and state landowners; state and Federal landowners; state and local government; state and Tribal landowners, etc.). Funds may not be used on federal land, however coordination with and proximity to landscape-scale projects on federal or state land is encouraged to achieve impact across ownerships.

LSR projects should be the appropriate scale to address the priorities identified for the landscape (e.g., water quality and watershed health improvement, wildfire risk reduction, fish and wildlife habitat improvement and forest health improvement) and to accomplish the desired outcomes identified for the landscape.

All proposals will address the following elements:

(A) Purpose Statement – Projects should effectively address the program's purpose statement which is "to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes".

(B) Project Scale –The project scale shall be a function of the most appropriate size associated with the ownerships, objectives and outcomes (including cross boundary goals) for the priority landscape. Projects should describe the project area, the land ownerships and specific areas targeted for treatment.

(C) Partner Engagement– Projects should identify partners that are actively engaged and add value towards project planning and implementation. Collaboration may be qualitative in nature, and the contribution of the partners may be more important than the number of partners involved in the projects. Financial contributions should be documented under leverage.

(D) Objectives – Projects shall prioritize funding and other resources towards one or more of the resource objectives identified below; successful projects will, in many instances, address multiple objectives.

1. Reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires;
2. Improve fish and wildlife habitats, including for threatened and endangered species;

3. Maintain or improve water quality and watershed function;
4. Mitigate invasive species, insect infestation, and disease;
5. Improve important forest ecosystems;
6. Measure ecological and economic benefits including air quality and soil quality and productivity.

(E) Measures and metrics – Projects will clearly describe how the selected objectives will lead to measurable outcomes on the landscape and how applicants will measure progress towards those outcomes. Proposals that clearly articulate the planned results of their effort and the metrics by which those results will be measured (e.g., acres treated to reduce hazardous fuels, acres treated for insects and disease, acres of trees and seedlings planted to enhance water quality) will be prioritized for funding. Proposed metrics should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

(F) Collaboration and integrated delivery – Projects should seek to improve the delivery of public benefits from forest management by coordinating with complementary state and federal programs and partnership efforts when possible (e.g., Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, landscape areas designated for insect and disease treatments, Good Neighbor Authority, stewardship contracting projects, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs and appropriate state-level programs).

(G) Leverage – Projects should maximize S&PF funding by using it to leverage contributions from both federal and non-federal entities. Projects that leverage funding from multiple entities will be given priority. Project applications should include a budget table that clearly identifies LSR requested funds and associated non-federal contributions from each partner and separately document non-match leveraged contributions. Successful applicants will be required to report information on match and non-match leverage each fiscal year.

(H) Knowledge and technical transfer – Technical transfer is the sharing of knowledge, tools and innovations for practical application. Projects should describe how others will learn from project implementation including the project’s potential to inform practitioners and enhance the effectiveness of similar initiatives. Knowledge and technical transfer need not necessarily be between states, but should aim to share innovation across the landscapes of importance as relevant. While projects may include a component of outreach, education and training as a means to achieve the project goals, it should not be the sole outcome.

Reporting and Accountability:

All funded LSR grant recipients are required to provide annual accomplishment reporting through the Landscape Scale Restoration (LaSR) database in order to better track and communicate program outcomes. LSR accomplishments are also recorded spatially in LaSR by identifying discrete areas where on-the-ground implementation/activities occur during the life of the project. Grant recipients are responsible for assuring that all required reporting is complete, correct, and entered into LSR by the date established by the Forest Service Region. All data entries should be fully completed no later than October 28, 2021.

Grant Administration

- LSR grant awards require a 1:1 match from the grant recipient or a 1:1 match on funds received in excess of \$200,000 for territorial, flag islands, and freely associated states. **Cash and in-kind contributions from other federal sources may not be used as match.**
- Modifications to competitively-awarded grants (whether the project is an individual grant or part of a consolidated payment grant) should be handled between the signatories of the grant (e.g., the State Forester and the relevant Forest Service Regional Office).
- For state forestry agencies, matching requirements for funds awarded through the competitive process may be met through consolidated payments.

Geographic Region Requirements:

In order to ensure the LSR grant review process is transparent and fair, the geographic regions shall implement the following measures:

1. The LSR grant review teams will:

- a) Consist of an equal number of Forest Service and state representatives with diverse skills. Project review teams may engage additional federal, state or local governmental representatives during the review process to ensure teams have the appropriate composition and expertise needed to review the projects submitted;
- b) Develop a process to ensure consistency in proposal evaluation;
- c) Identify rotation and duration of terms for team members;
- d) Address possible conflict of interest (such as having each state representative not score his/her own projects);
- e) Ensure projects are consistent with S&PF authorities.

2. Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) that includes:

- a) An overview of the review process;
- b) Composition of the review team;
- c) Scoring guidance, which requires an explicit tie to State Forest Action Plan and/or restoration strategy identified priorities, focuses on outcomes as well as regional strategic objectives, and provides weights for each selection criteria;
- d) For those geographic regions that require State Foresters to rank proposals submitted for their state, the RFP shall provide information explaining how the rankings will be applied during the competitive process.

3. Each geographic region shall:

- a) designate a point of contact to answer questions and concerns, as well as share and coordinate information to ensure consistency and clarity;
- b) develop a process by which eligible applicants submit proposals to the program for equal consideration; and
- c) provide access to relevant program and application resources including application deadlines, RFP, and final project lists via a publicly accessible website.

4. The State Forester regional organizations shall coordinate when evaluating cross-regional project proposals and will determine which geographic region will review and score any such proposals. State Forester regional organizations shall collaborate during the respective evaluation process for multi-region

proposals and work with the Forest Service Region to ensure cross-regional projects are able to be funded if selected.

5. Multi-year projects should be fully funded in one year. If not possible, each subsequent phase of a proposed project will need to compete through the annual competitive process.

All successful grantees, must be willing to enter into an agreement with the University of Nebraska as a sub grantee.

Proposals MUST include the following 11 elements in the order outlined below:

1. Lead Applicant Group/Agency

- a. Must include: (For internal grant process, please provide this information for you organization, do not provide NFS information here)
 - i. Contact Person Name
 - ii. Address
 - iii. City, State, Zip code
 - iv. Phone
 - v. Email Address
- b. Descriptive Title of Project
- c. Partnering Agencies and/or Organizations
- d. Project Duration (not to exceed 3 years)
- e. Is this a multi-state project? (yes/no)

2. GIS Coordinates (may be more than one area)

- a. Must include:
 - i. Reference Point Name
 - ii. Lat/:Long
 - iii. Description

3. Project Overview/ Purpose Statement (5 Points. 1250 Characters including spaces)

Provide a succinct and relevant project overview/purpose statement; clearly communicate the value of the project. Description should include: location and importance of landscape; landscape need; high level overview of main goals, objectives, and deliverables; collaboration, boundaries, jurisdictions; amount of funds requested and total project value; and relationship to Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy) and Landscape Objectives.

4. Context, Goals Objectives (15 points. 2500 Characters including spaces)

Context should clearly identify priority landscapes and issues that are the focus of the project. Goals and objectives should be explicitly explained and linked to state Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy) priorities and to the Landscape Objectives. The need for treatment of the landscape should be clearly explained, and the goals of the project should be clearly addressed, and linked to the needs. Project objectives should be clearly identified, developed, and linked to project goals.

5. Proposed Activities (20 Points. 3000 Characters including spaces)

Clearly describe activities to be completed with grant funds and leveraged resources. All project expenditures should be explicitly identified and linked to specific project goals, objectives, and activities. Match funds, their source, which goals they support, and specific costs should be well detailed. The financial contributions of partners should be documented clearly under leverage. Projects that leverage funding from multiple entities will be given priority. Please note: Any research items included in a project description MUST explicitly outline their funding source as non-federal funds. Projects that use S&PF dollars to fund research are considered ineligible.

6. Budget

Grand Total						
	Leverage (1)					
	Grant	Match		Non-match	Source	Total
	Requested Funds	Applicant	Non-federal contributors	Applicant, non-federal and/or federal match	Third Party Contributors	Total Project Costs
Personnel/Labor:						
Fringe Benefits:						
Travel:						
Equipment:						
Supplies:						
Contractual:						
Construction (2):						
Consolidated (3):						
Other						
Indirect Costs (3):						
Total:						

- (1) Leverage includes all three categories: match, non-match, and source. Funds qualifying as "match" must meet the same program requirements as grant funds (e.g., program authorities, non-federal sources). Other "non-match" leveraged funds do not need to meet the same standards (e.g., may include funds for construction, funds from other federal partners). Partnership with other USFS programs outside of State & Private Forestry, as well as other federal and state programs is encouraged.
- (2) If any part of your match requirement is being covered through a consolidated payment grant (i.e. state spending of non-federal funds on activities that meet S&PF program authorities but are not tied to this proposal), please place it here.
- (3) Indirect costs must be tied to an established rate. Waived indirect costs are an acceptable source of match.

7. Deliverables/Outcomes (15 Points. 2500 Characters including spaces)

Clearly lay out deliverables and outcomes and link them to achievement of state Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy) priorities and to the Landscape Objectives. Clearly describe how the selected objectives will lead to measurable

outcomes on the landscape and how applicants will measure progress towards those outcomes. Clear articulation of the planned results of these efforts and the metrics by which those results will be measured (e.g., acres treated to reduce hazardous fuels, acres treated for insects and disease, acres of trees and seedlings planted to enhance water quality) will be prioritized for funding. Proposed metrics should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

8. Collaboration and Cross-boundary (15 Points. 2500 Characters including spaces)

Proposals should address all elements listed below and demonstrate use of coordination and partnerships with complementary state and federal programs to improve outcomes. Proposal should describe how the project is cross-boundary. Projects should clearly identify partners that are actively engaged and add value towards project planning and implementation. Collaboration, both qualitative and quantitative, should be detailed. Proposal should demonstrate partnership, convey how regular meetings/dialogue of partners will be convened, describe how the project cultivates organization of partners/landowners around common goals/objectives, detail the sharing of funding or resources, and explain how the project generates commitment to working across boundaries for achievement of the project. Project proposal should detail prior collaborative work. High scoring projects may also coordinate with or be proximate to other landscape-scale projects on federal or state land to increase collaboration and overall impact.

9. Forest Action Plan (10 Points. 2000 Characters including spaces)

Proposal should clearly describe the need for the proposed project and relate it to one or more priority landscapes, issues, areas, or strategies identified in the state Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy). Project may additionally use Forest Stewardship Priority Areas and other state or regional assessments and plans, including those completed by other agencies or partners to help strengthen the identification of priority issues or landscapes. Use of these other documents enhances the case for prioritization, but the linkage to the state Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy) must still be clearly established. Clearly describe how the need for the project is directly linked to the state Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy) priorities. Explain that the landscape falls within a priority area identified in the state Forest Action Plan (or equivalent restoration strategies). Describe how project strategies align with strategies identified in state Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy).

10. Meaningful Scale/ Cross Boundary (10 Points. 2000 Characters including spaces)

Clearly describe how the project scale (i.e. scope) is a function of the most appropriate size associated with ownerships, objectives, and outcomes (including cross-boundary goals) for the priority landscape. Projects should describe the project area, the land

ownerships, and specific areas targeted for treatments. Detail how the scale is sufficient to address the identified relevant priority landscape and issues from the Forest Action Plan (or equivalent state-wide restoration strategy) and the Landscape Objectives being addressed by the project. Clearly articulate the rationale for why the scope is meaningful. A project may also coordinate with or be proximate to other landscape-scale projects on federal or state land as a means of enhancing the scope of the project.

11. Sustainability of Outcomes (10 Points. 2000 Characters including spaces)

Projects should describe how others will learn from project implementation, including the projects potential to inform practitioners and enhance the effectiveness of similar initiatives. This knowledge and technical transfer need not necessarily be between states but should aim to share innovation across the landscapes of importance. Provide rationale for why dollars invested will sustain project outcomes into the future, beyond project end date. Clearly outline replicability to increase future impact. Explain how development and/or strengthening of partnerships will also be a means of supporting project outcomes beyond the project end date. Describe how the project results in skills and enhanced capabilities that extend beyond the life of the project. Project displays how this investment will lead to a specific, quantifiable, cost effective, replicable benefit that addresses the priority landscape and issues from the Forest Action Plan (or equivalent statewide restoration strategy), as well as the Landscape Objectives. Describe how project results in resource sharing and cross-boundary/jurisdictional agreements that extend beyond the project period. Please note: While projects may include a component of outreach, education, and training as a means to achieve the project goals, it should not be the sole outcome.

Note for grant preparers:

- Any missing elements (11 listed above) from a proposal will result in an incomplete proposal and the proposal will not be considered.
- Proposals that exceed the number of characters allowed will result in the proposal being removed from consideration. Due to differences MS Word character counts, a 2.50% overage is allowed for this process only, when grants are entered into the portal for official scoring, all must be less than or equivalent to the characters as allowed by the portal. No exceptions are allowed.
- Proposals must be submitted to the state forest via email on or before July 31, 2020. Only proposal submitted at or before 5 pm CDT. Will be considered.
- Proposals must be submitted as a word document and a PDF. Any proposals not submitted in both formats will not be considered.
- For more information visit <https://nfs.unl.edu/landscape-scale-restoration-program>