



Developing GNA Agreements

This document is designed to guide federal and State/County/Tribal partners through the process of developing a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) project agreement.

USDA Forest Service Process

Overview

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) utilizes a collaborative approach for GNA. As part of this approach, the Forest Service developed agreement templates specific to GNA, which are designed to be completed jointly with the cooperator. There are three Good Neighbor Agreement templates that can be utilized to carry out GNA projects. They are:

- The Master Agreement - outlines the overarching agreement between the Forest Service and non-Federal partner, and does not specify projects or allocate funding.
- The Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA) - outlines the project specifications and funding, and falls under the umbrella of the Master Agreement.
- The Stand-alone Agreement - incorporates both the Master Agreement template language and project specific information, and does not fall under a Master Agreement.

This step-by-step is designed to assist with the GNA agreements that focus on project development and implementation, namely the SPA and Stand-alone Agreement, and does not address developing a Master Agreement.

The Forest Service has various timelines and deadlines for obligating funds for agreements, as well as for agreement review and execution. Please consult with your Forest Service Regional Grants & Agreements (G&A) specialist to determine these timelines and deadlines.

Step-by-Step (The general work-flow steps are provided below)

- 1) Initiation of GNA project idea - The Forest Service or the state/tribal/county partner (Cooperator) may initiate a project idea. This is typically done at a planning meeting, or at the field-staff level.
- 2) Ground-truth – Forest Service field staff and the non-federal partner should ground-truth the project site jointly to insure access, viability, and feasibility. Determining the financial feasibility is also necessary prior to agreement execution. This step may happen either before or after the initial project meeting.

- 3) Initial project meeting - The initial meeting should engage all partners and will cover establishing project location, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision timing, project goals, silvicultural prescription (if applicable), and tentative project timeline. It is helpful to have both area and site maps, along with the selected draft GNA agreement (Stand-alone or SPA) at this meeting. These can be provided by either the Forest Service or the Cooperator. (Please note, following the initial meeting, the signing partners will have additional work prior to finalizing the GNA agreement.)
 - a) Recommended individuals to include at the initial meeting:
 - i) Forest Service G&A specialist
 - ii) GNA coordinator and/or state/county/tribal GNA lead
 - iii) State/county/tribal field staff familiar with the project
 - iv) Forest Service program staff (at the District or Forest unit, as appropriate) familiar with the project
 - v) Forest Service Timber Management Officer, or other authorized personnel
 - vi) District Ranger/Forest Supervisor (optional)
 - vii) Engineers (both Forest Service and state, as needed)
 - viii) Other relevant project-specific state and federal technical staff
 - b) Action items to be completed during the initial meeting, or assigned to be completed following the initial meeting include:
 - i) Scope of Work (SOW) (joint)
 - ii) Financial plan (joint)
 - iii) Essential reforestation (KV), as required by the Knutsen-Vandenberg Act, and/or brush disposal (BD) information (Forest Service)
 - iv) Road maintenance information (gravel replacement, etc) (joint)
 - v) Road package (road reconstruction, etc) (Forest Service)
- 4) The Forest Service and Cooperator collaboratively develop the SOW, which may be finalized after or during the initial meeting. The portions of the agreement that each partner completes are identified and assigned at the initial project discussion.
- 5) If the GNA project includes timber removal, then the Timber Removal Plan (Appendix D in the SPA) will be developed jointly between the Forest Service and the state.
- 6) The financial plan is developed jointly between the Forest Service and the Cooperator, with final approval by a Forest Service G&A specialist. The financial plan estimates the revenue and/or expenses required for the project. If expenses exceed the revenue once the financial plan is completed, then the Forest Service will obligate the amount determined in the financial plan, and that same amount will be included in the GNA agreement. Financial plans may vary by Forest Service region. Please see the Forest Service G&A specialist for the region's financial plan template.
- 7) The Forest Service confirms the obligated amount for funded projects. Please note, there are specified timelines for Forest Service obligation of funds. Please connect with the Forest Service Regional office for deadlines.

- 8) The draft SPA or Stand-alone agreement accompanied by the SOW, Timber Removal Plan, timeline, and the financial plan is then distributed to all partners, including the G&A specialist for final edits. Any additional edits and mutually agreed upon changes (by the signing partners) are made to the agreement.
- 9) The final SPA or Stand-alone agreement is sent to Forest Service G&A for processing before sending to the Cooperator for signature. Electronic signatures are acceptable.
- 10) The Cooperator sends the signed agreement to the Forest Service G&A specialist. Forest Service G&A specialist signs the agreement, and forwards to the Forest Supervisor or Regional Forester for signature.
- 11) The Forest Service G&A specialist forwards the fully executed agreement to the Cooperator.

Bureau of Land Management Process

Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) uses a grant management approach to GNA. As such, the BLM provides grant funding to non-federal partners to accomplish work on BLM lands and the process follows standard grant application procedures. While collaboration between the BLM and non-Federal partner is still a vital element for developing a Good Neighbor project, the non-federal partner is responsible for completing all documents related to a GNA project.

The BLM does not have specific agreement templates for GNA. Instead, the traditional Project Proposal form, Budget Narrative and Detail form, and the Federal reporting forms SF-424 and SF424a are prepared by the non-federal partner and submitted to the Department of the Interior grants management website.

Step-by-Step (The general work-flow steps are provided below)

- 1) Initiation of GNA project idea - Either the BLM or the cooperator can initiate a project idea. This is typically done at a planning meeting, or at the field-staff level.
- 2) Initial project meeting - This initial meeting will include all partners, and will cover establishing location, NEPA decision and timing, project goals, silvicultural prescription (if applicable), and tentative timeline for the project. It is helpful to have area and site maps, and general project practices and goals at this meeting. These can be provided by either the BLM or non-federal partner. (Please note, following the initial meeting, the signing partners will have work prior to finalizing the GNA agreement.)
 - a) Recommended individuals to include at the initial meeting:
 - i) BLM field staff (fuels specialist or forester)
 - ii) GNA coordinator and/or state/county/tribal GNA lead
 - iii) State/county/tribal field staff familiar with the project
 - iv) BLM District Manager (optional)
 - v) BLM State Forestry Program Lead

- b) Action items to be completed during the initial meeting, or assigned to be completed following the meeting include:
 - i) Scope of work, goals & practices
 - ii) Budget (expected expenses and revenue)
 - iii) Timeline
- 3) The SOW is required in the project proposal. This is finalized after the initial meeting by the non-federal partner; the SOW is discussed collaboratively between the BLM and state/county/tribal partner, but the non-federal partner writes the SOW as part of the financial assistance application.
- 4) The non-federal partner develops the application for financial assistance through the Department of the Interior grants management website; or sends the application to the BLM State Forestry lead. Application documents include:
 - a) Project proposal
 - b) Budget detail and Narrative
 - c) SF-424 (Federal reporting form)
 - d) SF-424A (Federal reporting form)
 - e) Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)
- 5) The non-federal partner may submit the application documents to BLM field staff for review and edit prior to submission.
- 6) The non-federal partner submits all documents to the grants management website.
- 7) The BLM G&A specialist signs the agreement, and forwards it to the non-federal partner and local BLM field staff.