

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

LSR Program Overview (history, purpose and authority)

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. It is a key contributor to delivering on the Secretary's Shared Stewardship vision. 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.

Important changes for FY 2021

- Projects focus on nonindustrial private forest land¹ or state forest land² 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 census³.
- 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. For-profit entities are not eligible to apply under this competition.
- Proposals must be based on a State Forest Action Plan or an equivalent restoration strategy.⁴

Applicant Eligibility:

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.

How to apply: State and territorial forestry agencies or an equivalent state agency, units of local government, non-profit organizations (defined as a 501c3), and universities may submit applications through the relevant regional competitive process managed by the Council of Western State Foresters, Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, and the Southern Group of State Foresters in collaboration with the Forest Service.

Tribes may submit applications through the appropriate Tribal official to the Forest Service Region where the project is located. The Forest Service Regions will advance the proposal to the project review team for consideration in the competitive process. If a Tribal project is selected for funding, the Forest Service Region will work directly with the Tribe on the grant award.

Project Eligibility:

- S&PF dollars will be spent on non-federal lands that are:
 - non-industrial private forest land that is rural; has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees; and is owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian tribe, or other private legal entity; and/or
 - State forest land that is rural; is under state or local governmental ownership and considered to be non-federal forest land.
- LSR projects are delivered utilizing specific authorities included in the [Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978](#) as amended. Allowable S&PF program authorities: Forest Stewardship, Rural Forestry Assistance, Urban and Community Forestry, Forest Health Protection, and

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; and (C) is owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian Tribe, or other private legal entity. (2018 Farm Bill)

² The term State forest land means land that (A) is rural, as determined by the Secretary; and (B) is under State or local governmental ownership and considered to be non-Federal forest land. (2018 Farm Bill)

³ U.S. Census. 2010. USA Census Populated Places Areas. [Online data: <https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=4e75a4f7daaa4dfa8b9399ea74641895>; <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-total-cities-and-towns.html>]

⁴ A restoration strategy that is complete or substantially complete; is for a multiyear period; covers nonindustrial private forest land or state forest land; is accessible by wood-processing infrastructure; and is based on the best available science.

Community and Private Land Fire Assistance (State Fire Assistance). Ineligible authorities: Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance (Volunteer Fire Assistance), Forest Legacy, Community Forest and Open Space Conservation, and Federal Lands Forest Health Management.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 “non-match” leveraged funds do not need to meet the same standards.
- Implementation can extend one-to-three years; however projects should be fully funded in year one.
- Proposals must advance priorities identified in a State Forest Action Plan or equivalent restoration strategy that;
 - is complete or substantially complete;
 - is for a multi-year period;
 - covers non-industrial private forest land or state forest land;
 - is accessible by wood processing infrastructure; and
 - is based on the best available science.

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:

- i. Purpose Statement – Projects should effectively address the program’s purpose statement which is “to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes”.
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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.
 - *Reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires;*
 - *Improve fish and wildlife habitats, including for threatened and endangered species;*
 - *Maintain or 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 and soil quality and productivity.*
- v. 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.
- vi. 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).

- vii. 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.
- viii. 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 LaSR 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), and
 - 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.