



USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region, State and Private Forestry

Grant Tips Guide

April 2022

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Information Needed for All Grants & Agreements

Key Contacts

The Albuquerque Service Center (ASC) - sm.fs.asc_ga@usda.gov: ASC processes and manages all invoicing and payments. Send Advance & Reimbursement Requests (SF270's) with the full grant number in the subject line.

The Grants Inbox - sm.fs.R9SPFgrants@usda.gov: Grants Inbox processes all grant application forms, financial reports, performance (written) reports, modifications, and any other grant-related questions. Please copy your Program Monitor when submitting documents and include the full grant number in the subject/body of the email.

USFS Administrative Contact: The Grants Management Specialist assigned to processing your proposal, modification or award. Their information can be found in your award letter.

USFS Program Monitor: The technical specialist assigned to assist you with questions about your narrative, project technical assistance and progress reporting. Their information can be found in your award letter. The Program Monitor needs to record updates on grant progress on a regular basis, and may request a phone call, site visit or email to get the most up-to- date information regarding whether the project is on track as planned/outlined in the proposal narrative.

If needed, address formal correspondence to:

Deputy Regional Forester, S&PF
USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region
State & Private Forestry, Office of Grants & Agreements
626 E. Wisconsin Ave Milwaukee, WI 53202

Pre-Award Information

Grant Proposal

- See the Grant Application Package & Forms Checklist in Appendix A of this document for all required forms.
- Submit a completed grant application package either through grants.gov (if applicable) or by sending directly to the Grants Inbox at SM.FS.R9SPFgrants@usda.gov

SAM.gov Registration/Renewal

- The SAM registration must be active and in good standing at the time of the proposal submission and throughout the life of the award. If the SAM lapses, all work must stop until the registration is renewed. No costs during the period of a lapsed SAM registration are allowable for payment.
- The Forest Service Financial Office may not process an award for obligation if a SAM registration expires within 30 days

of the obligation.

- The Unique Entity ID (UEI) has replaced the DUNS Number in SAM.gov, and should be referenced on your SF424. If you need assistance with this, please go [<HERE>](#).

Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights Compliance

A Civil Rights Review is required to show recipients comply with USDA's Equal Opportunity Program before an award can be issued, which will be done via telephone or in-person by a Forest Service staff member. Please see the [Complying with Civil Rights brochure](#) for details. The following are examples:

- Statement of affiliation with the USDA Forest Service should be present on applicable products, websites, and signs.
- The USDA Nondiscrimination Clause should be present on publications and websites.
- *And Justice for All* [posters](#) should be posted in a visible location for employees and customers.
- Outreach and promotional illustrations should include diversity of race, age, gender, and people with disabilities.

Award Letter

- The award letter contains vital information about your grant such as payment methods, contact information, and reporting requirements.
- Ensure all information is correct in your award letter prior to signing, including start/end dates (period of performance), pre-award costs, & payment types.
 - If pre-award costs are authorized, you may submit invoices for your project costs as far back as the project start date listed in the award letter.
 - The payment clause will, by default, list Reimbursable Payments. If an Advance is necessary, this must be negotiated and approved before signature of the Award or requires formal modification of the award.
- Your award is not fully executed until the USFS Signatory signs the award and returns a copy for your records.

Payment & Reimbursement

Submit all payment requests to ASC at sm.fs.asc_ga@usda.gov by sending an **SF-270 - Request for Advance or Reimbursement** with the full award number in the subject line, CC'ing your Program Monitor.

- To expedite payments, include a detailed account of expenses to support the SF-270.
- For awards with multiple projects/programs, please clearly annotate in the header column block each funding program currently requesting payment for the time period of the invoice
- A Valid SAM registration is required to receive reimbursement requests. Funds will be deposited to the account associated with the organization's SAM registration.
- In order to reflect a timely audit trail and accurate accrual information, the Reimbursement of expenditures should be submitted in accordance with grant activities. We recommend quarterly reimbursement requests, but no more frequently than monthly is permitted.
- All reporting must be up-to-date and recorded in our financial system before invoices can be approved.

Final Invoicing: Final invoices must document complete match amounts as recorded in the original application. Please note that Final invoices are not normally paid without a final written report. Submit the final written report before or at the time of invoicing to the [Grants Inbox](#) (which is not the same as the ASC address to which you submit the invoice).

Reporting (Interim & Final)

Submit all progress reports & financial reports (SF425s) to the Grants Inbox at sm.fs.R9SPFgrants@usda.gov

If the award letter states:	Reporting Period	Due to the Grants Inbox by:
Annual Reports	January 1 - December 31	No later than March 31

Progress (written) Reports:

- Your Program Monitor will provide a template and instructions. For more specific reporting requirements related to competitive programs (ie. GLRI, LSR, WRR/WR) please see the [Appendix B](#).
- You may send a Final Report to your Program Monitor before officially submitting it. A final report is due no later than 120 days after the grant end date and covers the entire grant period, though we recommend submitting it within the first 30 days after the expiration to facilitate prompt payment of final invoices.

Financial Reports (SF425s):

- A Federal Financial Report, [SF-425](#), is due annually at the above schedule. We recommend that match is documented on this report each year. A final financial report is due no later than 120 days after the grant end date and covers the entire grant period.

Modification Requests

Any changes to your project as outlined in the award letter require PRIOR written approval, which may include a formal modification or informal written approval. The list below is not exhaustive; contact the Grants Inbox and your Program Monitor to discuss any changes. All reports must be up-to-date in order to execute a modification.

Programmatic Revisions and Administration Changes

- Administrative changes.
- Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
- Change in a key person specified in the application or Federal award document, such as change in principal investigator, project leader, or financial/administrative staff or their scope of effort.
- The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.

To request a programmatic revision: Email a revised [SF-424](#), addendum or revised proposal narrative for changes in scope, and letter explaining why the modification is needed to SM.FS.R9SPFgrants@usda.gov.

Budget Revisions

- Increase or decrease of Federal funding to complete the original scope of work or modified scope of work.
- Reduced amount of approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the grantee.
- Reallocation of funds among cost categories
- Transfer of funds allotted for Personnel Salary to Contractual Costs.
- Transfer of funds allotted for training allowances (direct payment to trainees) to other categories of expenses.

To request a budget revision: Email a revised [SF-424](#) and [SF-424A](#) along with a letter addressed to the Deputy Regional Forester explaining the budget change and why the modification is needed

Extension Requests

To request: Email a revised, signed [SF-424](#) along with a letter addressed to the Deputy Regional Forester at least 90 days prior to the grant end date. The letter should request a time extension, either with modifications (see above) or just as a “no-cost time extension,” and explanation of the need.

Length: Beginning in 2021, extension requests will automatically receive the option to extend to the maximum period of performance. When requesting an extension, please review accounting data to see if a budget adjustment is also needed, which can be consolidated into the same request for efficiency.

Appendix A: Grant Application Package and Forms Checklist

Most of the grant forms for your application package can be found at [Grants.gov SF-424 Family web page](#) (NOTE: ADForms may be found under “USDA-AD-forms”). If any of the below forms were submitted through grants.gov, they do not need to be submitted again.

Grant application packages should consist of:

- ☐ If the grant will continue multiple funding and projects, then a narrative summary should be the top document giving an abridged version of the entire award.
- ☐ An individual grant proposal narrative and detailed expanded budget for each program/project funded. For competitive grants (GLRI, LSR, WR/WRR, etc), the narrative template may differ. Contact your Program Monitor for the preferred format. For Core funding, the grant narrative should be in the template format provided by the Eastern Region and available in this [Narrative Formats folder](#). We encourage use of the budget spreadsheet.
- ☐ Project and administrative contact names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.
- ☐ If listing indirect costs in the budget, include a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), or a statement declaring the use of the 10% de minimis rate, or a statement that no rate is established or desired.

Include a completed and signed copy of the following application forms as applicable

- ☐ SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance
- ☐ SF-424A Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs
- ☐ One of the following Financial Capability Documents (the Forest Service will provide this):
 - State agencies: FS-1500-22B Financial Capability Checklist OR
 - All others: FS-1500-22A Financial Capability Checklist
 - If you are a new recipient OR if your entity hasn’t completed this form within the past 5 fiscal years, you must also complete the FS-1500-22: Financial Capability Questionnaire
- ☐ For projects requesting \$100,000 or more of Federal Funding, one of the following:
 - For grant recipients that **do not** lobby: [FS 1500-35](#) Certification Regarding Lobbying
 - For grant recipients that lobby: [SF-LLL](#) Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- ☐ For incorporated organizations only (non- and for-profit): AD-3030 Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

Note: The following forms are NOT required if your entity has certified the Federal Financial Assistance Reps/Certs in SAM.gov during registration/renewal. If not, include a completed and signed copy of the following application forms:

- ☐ SF-424B Assurance for Non-Construction Programs
- ☐ AD-1047 Certification Regarding Department, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters
- ☐ One of the following Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements:
 - Non-profits, for-profits, local gov’t & educational institutions: AD-1049
 - State agencies: AD-1052

For Legacy/Community Forest Projects:

- ☐ Use SF-424D & SF-424C instead of SF-424 A and SF-424 B.

For State Fire Assistance (SFA), Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA), WRR/WR Programs:

- ☐ The relevant [National Fire Plan Operating Reporting System \(NFPORS\) Activity Forms](#). Refer to the Business Rules available at the above link.

Appendix B: Specific Grant Program Information

Competitive Grant Programs

Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR)

Application: The request for proposals is usually announced in June, with applications due to State Forestry Agencies in August and submitted to the U.S. Forest Service through grants.gov by September. LSR applications submitted through grants.gov include most required documentation for the grant application packet. U.S. Forest Service grants specialists and your program monitor will work with you to complete any clarifications, corrections, or additional documents needed during the award process.

Timeframe: LSR grant applications have an initial 3-year time frame.

Reporting: Enter accomplishments for LSR grants annually into the LaSR reporting system (accessed through [LaSR website](#)). If you have not accessed the LaSR website in the past you may have to set up an account. Follow the instructions in the [LaSR User Guide](#). This reporting is due no later than **October 28** each year and describes progress achieved from the start of the grant through September 30th of that year. The annual written interim grant progress report needed for standard program monitoring purposes (**described on page 3**) can be generated in LaSR and sent to the grants inbox (SM.FS.R9SPFgrants@usda.gov) with a copy to your program monitor.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

Application: GLRI proposals submitted through grants.gov include most required documentation for the grants package. Forest Service grants specialists and your program monitor will work with you to complete any clarifications, corrections, or additional documents needed during the award process.

Reporting: As of 2021, new GLRI grants follow the annual reporting cycle described in this document. *For GLRI grants awarded prior to Fiscal Year 2021*, written interim progress reports are due every 6 months with reporting periods as follows: grant start date through June 30, due July 30 and through December 31, due January 31. Grant recipients must provide photo documentation of funded projects and environmental progress at appropriate phases and appropriate illustrations, diagrams, charts, graphs, geographic information and maps to show results. Projects must post a visible project identification sign, erected as appropriate at each on-the-ground project, that includes project information and purpose, GLRI reference, and Federal agencies involved.

Cohesive Fire Strategy (Cross-Boundary, WRR & WP)

Application: Three types of grants are available under this program: 1) Cross-Boundary Wildfire Hazard Mitigation on Non-Federal Lands (Cross-Boundary Mitigation), 2) Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) & 3) Wildfire Preparedness (WP). The request for Cohesive Fire Strategy proposals is usually made in late October, with applications due to the Forest Service in December via grants.gov. Forest Service grants specialists and your program monitor will work with you to complete any clarifications, corrections, or additional documents needed during the award process.

Reporting: For Cohesive Fire Strategy, interim progress and financial reports are due annually, following the financial reporting requirements described on page 2-3.

Non-competitive Grant programs

Congressionally Directed Funding

Reporting: Periodic updates are requested by members of Congress, often without a lot of notice.

Core Funding

Please review the Financial Advice to the States Document for more detailed information.

Application: Once the federal budget has been appropriated for the fiscal year (usually between October and December), the U.S. Forest Service will allocate funds to each region and then to each state. When completed, the Eastern Region will issue

Financial Advice to States and State Allocation Sheets. This includes a list of funding available for annual programs and advice regarding content for each program's narrative. The narrative should follow the program-specific Advice to States. This information is usually provided between January and April, but in cases where the federal budget appropriations are not passed until later in the year, the advice will be delayed.

Timeframe: We request that grant applications have a 5-year time frame. It is critically important that all grants are completed within five years of the award date. Grants cannot be extended beyond five years. The award date is the date when the Forest Service signed the award (not the date of the first invoice). For grants awarded in prior years with less than a 5-year time frame, if needed, grantees can formally request a one-time grant extension to bring the grant to maximum time frame.

Note: Some types of grants, such as Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, or congressionally directed priorities such as the Sustainable Urban Forest Resilience grants, may require different time frames which will be communicated to those grantees.

Reporting: In addition to the standard grant reporting requirements outlined in the Grant Tips Guide, annual program grants also require annual program accomplishment reporting. Details are outlined in the Financial Advice to States and included in the grant narrative template. These are typically due in mid-October and should reflect achievements completed during the previous federal fiscal year.

- For Consolidated Payment Grants, match is required to be shown on annual SF425s.
- When submitting reports to the Grants Inbox, please ensure they are submitted by Grant Number rather than by Program.