



WESTERN FORESTRY LEADERSHIP COALITION

FY 2025 Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 09-06-2024

Q: Who falls into the Pacific Island sub-competition?

A: American Samoa, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Territory of Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of The Marshall Islands are the 6 islands that receive a match waiver through statute and can apply to the Pacific Island sub competition. Hawaii, for example, must instead apply for the larger Western process.

Q: If I am applying for a Tribal or Alaskan Native Corporation project, where should I apply?

A: There is a separate tribal process available. You can apply through the western process (or other applicable region if projects are in the Northeast/Midwest or South) competing against all other eligible applicants OR you may apply through the tribal specific process. The Request for Proposals for Tribes is available on grants.gov.

Q: What are the applicants' first steps?

A: Look over the guidance documents on the [LSR webpage](#). Contact your state forestry agency, as they may have specific information about their state process. You can email lvisnak@westernforesters.org for contact information on the state forestry agency associated with your project area. They, along with the USDA Forest Service regional LSR contacts, are great resources.

Q: How does the Forest Service provide assistance?

A: The Forest Service helps with outreach efforts, answers questions regarding program authorities, can review application drafts, and acts as the points of contact in Regions to work with tribes opting for the separate tribal process. Post-award the Forest Service has a project oversight role: reviewing progress in regards to deliverables, timing and funding, ensuring compliance with federal regulations and program authorities, and reviewing/approves annual reports and project modifications.

Q: Can we pull abbreviations over from previous questions, or does it need to be spelled out for each question?

A: Yes, acronyms and abbreviations are welcome and should be identified once when first used.

Q: Can federal funds be a match?

A: No, federal funds cannot be used as match. Any federal funding must be designated as non-match leverage funds clearly within the budget and activities.

Q: For multi-state projects: Is it \$300,000 max for the total project request or \$300,000 max request per state/applicant? Would a two-state project be capped at \$300,000 or \$600,000?

A: The cap would be \$300,000 per state/applicant for the multi-state project. So a two-state project could receive \$600,000 across both states (\$300,000 per state) if neither of those states hit the 15% cap

Q: With an estimated 15% cap of \$600K (depending on total funding for the West), suppose a state/applicant submits 5 proposals that all rank high enough to receive funding. How would the funding be awarded across those projects?

A: If the sum of the 5 projects did not exceed \$600K (or whatever the 15% cap of the total for the West ends up being), the projects would all receive funding. If the projects in total exceed \$600,000 (or whatever the 15% cap ends up being), the top-ranking projects would be funded and projects ranking lower would not receive funding.

Q: Do tribal applications count towards the state's 15% cap, whether they are submitted through the state agency in the western process (as opposed to the separate tribal process in grants.gov)?

A: Yes, tribal applications count towards the 15% per state funding cap. The 15% cap applies to the state as a geographic area and therefore applies to all projects therein in order to ensure funds have a chance to be distributed across landscapes in the West. This is specific to the western process. Please see the tribal process grant opportunity on grants.gov for the guidelines for that process.

Q: For Question 4, Context, Goals, and Objectives, how much depth is needed to receive a high score? There is so much info requested any guidance on paring down lengthy responses would be appreciated.

A: The rubric at the end of the Western guidance describes what is required for a high score in more detail and is the same rubric scorers use making it a great resource for applicants. Acronyms can help you save on your character count, just be sure to define them the first time they are used so scorers know what the acronym stands for. You can also connect to sections of the Forest Action Plan that elaborate further on the project being in a priority area and aligned with those overarching goals to help shorten applications. Using numbering or bulleting points instead of writing full-sentence narratives can also help shorten goals and objectives.

Q: For the quantitative accomplishments section, can acres treated be "used" in more than one kind of measurement? For example, can an applicant count some of the same acres in the "acres treated for fuels reduction" and "acres treated to enhance wildlife habitat" categories, etc?

A: Yes. At least one quantitative accomplishment is required per project, but applicants can include more in their proposal. On the reporting side, when the application is awarded, awardees map the acres so that they are not double-counted in the project area polygon. Particularly if multiple activities are being performed, you will want to specify measurables that capture each of those activities even if within the same landscape.

Q: How would a project that implements a practice on the ground based on previous findings from ongoing research (but which is NOT research itself) be viewed if the research entity is involved as a partner doing the monitoring using only eligible non-federal, non-match funds?

A: A research entity could be included as a partner, with their contribution included as non-match leverage. Any research items included in a project description MUST explicitly outline their funding source as being from non-federal funds.

Q: What size of landscape is expected for these projects?

A: There is no set geographic size expected.

Q: Do LSR projects have to be forestry-oriented or are other vegetative types okay?

A: If LSR projects are clearly linked to the state Forest Action Plan (or an equivalent state-wide restoration strategy) and to one or more Landscape Objectives, and are in line with the Cooperative Forestry program authorities, then projects could incorporate elements that might be relevant to other vegetation types. Be sure that the project abides by the definitions of "nonindustrial private forest land or State forest land" as outlined in the National LSR Manual.

Q: Who should I contact for a review of my draft application?

A: You can reach out to your state and USDA Forest Service regional contact to see if they may be able to assist in reading through your application. Contact Leena Visnak if you are unsure of your state or regional contacts. lvisnak@westernforesters.org

Q: For the match purposes do the expenditures only count after the award is made? When is match "Due"?

A: Yes, you can not use work done pre-award. Match is "due" at the time of award. Applicants should explain all match funds, including in-kind, at the time of award and then they will document match throughout the life of the project (up to 3 years).

Q: Is rural County-owned land eligible?

A: Yes, State Forest land is defined as land that is rural, owned by a state 'or local government' and considered to be non-federal forest land. County-owned land would be considered owned by the local government.

Q: Is it possible to have a joint cross-boundary application with the Forest Service? How will the grant be allocated?

A: Yes! However, anything done on the federal side of the property line can not have LSR grant funds associated with it and this must be clearly documented in the application. The collaboration with the Forest Service would bolster and increase the score for the cross-boundary collaboration section, which includes the proximity to or inclusion of multiple land ownerships.

Q: Are cross-state partnerships scored higher?

A: The cross-boundary collaboration section tends to score much higher for this- but no there is no specific point allocation for this.

Q: If an area is in the red on the LSR project planning tool, that means that a project is not eligible, correct?

A: Correct, areas shown in red on the eligibility tool are areas that are not considered 'rural' as defined by the LSR program rules due to the population being too high. Please check that all your GIS points for your project area polygon fall in eligible areas.

Q: Does the Project Eligibility tab on the LSR project planning tool show what's definitely eligible, or just what meets the eligibility requirements for being "rural", but does not necessarily meet other eligibility requirements?

A: The eligibility tab on the tool shows just the rural requirement is met based on the most recent census data. Please note, if you are located on a Pacific Island (including the state of Hawaii) data may not be fully complete and you should contact the program manager to assist in the assessment of the rural requirement. Contact Leena Visnak if you are unsure who your program manager is: lvisnak@westernforesters.org.

The project planning tab can be used for the other land type requirements but is not determinative. Due to land ownership change and other factors (e.g. land shifting to commercial agricultural purposes), that tool is meant as a starting point, but you may need to provide further explanation to show the land eligibility is met.

Q: Is planting shrubs an allowable use of LSR grant funds?

A: Generally speaking, planting native shrubs is allowable under the LSR authority when those plantings are part of a larger forest ecosystem restoration effort that contributes to program objectives like wildlife habitat and/or water quality. If the plantings described in the proposal

intended to restore or establish a riparian forest and are connected to upland forests or if native shrub plantings are described in the proposal as part of a larger forest ecosystem restoration effort contributing to the improvement of wildlife habitat and/or water quality enhancement then that is allowable under LSR.

Q: Would a sagebrush-dominated system be ineligible based on the lack of trees?

A: Using the planning tool is a great place to start to determine land eligibility. LSR projects must achieve on-the-ground outcomes on rural forest land, which is also considered nonindustrial private forest land, State Forest land, or both. Forest land is defined as land that has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees. Additionally, LSR project land must be owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian tribe, or other private legal entity.

Q: What tribal land qualifies?

A: There has been a determination from USDA that Tribal trust lands are eligible. Tribal land owned in fee simple are also eligible.

Q: What qualifies as an 'equivalent state-wide restoration strategy'?

A: As per the National LSR Manual, an equivalent restoration strategy:

- 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.

Applications that use an equivalent restoration strategy should address how the strategy is equivalent by addressing these factors within their application.

Q: How should a Tribal entity go about applying through a state agency?

A: Tribal entities should contact the state in which the project is located to run their application through the state agency (total application limit per state is 5). The separate tribal process is also available for those that wish to apply directly to the Forest Service and to only compete against other tribal applications.

Q: Would National Forest staff have any role in developing proposals or administering the grant?

A: National Forest staff can definitely play a role. Communication early can help demonstrate collaboration or other proximate projects that can help strengthen the proposal. Grant administration will happen at the State and Private Forestry Office in your Forest Service Region.

Q: Must Tribes be federally recognized to apply?

A: Only federally recognized Tribes may apply.

Q: What do I do if the login information provided to the state forestry agency appears to not be working?

A: If you are unable to login to the forestrygrants.org portal, a lockout may have occurred. After three failed login attempts, the system security locks the login. Sometimes this happens through no fault of the user trying to login, but merely due to the high security settings of the site. Please contact lvisnak@westernforesters.org if you are having any issues with your grant portal login.

Q: Can LSR funds or match funds be used for meeting costs for collaboratives?

A: Post award meetings for the parties that will be performing the work to plan/coordinate can be covered by LSR or match funds. The meeting space and facilitation are acceptable covered costs, but not lunch. If counting payroll or time towards match, you must make sure this time/cost is well documented. There must be outcomes outside of the meeting itself, meaning that the collaborative meetings are not the sole focus or purpose of the proposal.

- Non-match leverage funds can be used for any other meeting costs (such as lunch).

Q: Can cost-share or landowner reimbursement be done under LSR?

A: The State and Private Forestry authorities for this program are: Forest Stewardship, Rural Forestry Assistance, Urban and Community Forestry, Forest Health, and Cooperative Fire; all as included in the [Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act](#). Under the Rural Forestry Assistance program, Federal funds (and the match for those funds) may be used to carry out a range of conservation practices (listed in the CFAA) on private forest land; for partners or contractors to carry out the work on private forest lands.

- The Federal funds (and associated match) cannot go directly to the private landowner, e.g., the funds cannot be used to cost-share individual forest management practices with individual landowners; and cannot be paid to, reimbursed, or granted directly to the private landowners. All 1:1 match for the Federal funds must meet these same requirements.
 - o Note: There is additional information about eligible activities for Forest Stewardship and Rural Forestry assistance (which includes State Forestry Assistance) in the [Forest Stewardship Program National Standards and Guidelines](#).
- If you were planning to pay the landowners directly, then that is not allowable under LSR authorities. Here are a few options to consider:
 - o Revise the project application so that, instead of funding going to landowners, funding goes to partners/contractors to carry out the work on private forest lands OR
 - o Pay for that component of the project with some other funding source (funding beyond the 1:1 required match, such as additional non-match

leveraged funds) OR

- o Remove that component, and associated administrative, travel, and other expenses for the sub-grants, from the project application.

Q: Can an applicant include partners as contractors and pay them a chunk that they then use to cover their project expenses?

A: Partners may be considered contractors or they may be subrecipients depending on the circumstances. Subrecipients must be eligible entities to be classified as subrecipients and take on greater responsibilities and roles for performing the grant, including being subject to the compliance requirements of the grant agreement. Paying a contractor directly would need to abide by procurement rules and regulations. It is more likely that a partner would be considered a subrecipient vs a contractor, but circumstances may vary.

For more information on determining if an entity may be considered a contractor or a subrecipient and the accompanying requirements, see [2 CFR 200.331](#).

Q: Could a commitment of certain volunteer hours satisfy match hours alone as in-kind, or does there need to be a certain amount of cash match as well?

A: While the source of match and non-match leveraged funds should be specified, and costs should be well detailed, there is no minimum cash match required. With the exception of the Pacific Islands, the LSR statute and proposed National LSR Manual specifies, “a grant recipient shall be required to match the Federal grant funds 1:1 from non-Federal sources with funds or in-kind contributions.” An in-kind match may be in the form of services, supplies, real property, and equipment. The value of the service may be used for the matching requirements, if the services are necessary, reasonable, and allowable.

Match for the LSR grant program must be met by eligible and allowable costs and is subject to match provisions in grant regulations (see [Federal Regulations Title 2 Part 200.306](#) and [Subpart E for Cost Principles](#)).

Q: How do you verify the rural eligibility requirement of a project?

A: Projects must achieve on-the-ground outcomes on rural forest land, which is also considered nonindustrial private forest land or State forest land. To check if your project matches the rural eligibility requirement, please check this [website](#).

Q: Is there a recommended project time frame? Can you have a multi-year project

A: While LSR projects are fully funded in a single year, the fiscal year in which the project was submitted, the applicants have a multi-year timeline with a three year limit to complete their project.

Q: Is the number of years from when the grant is awarded or when the money is received?

A: The LSR application process is a one-year cycle. Applicants will receive funding within the fiscal year they applied to. After an application is approved by the Washington Office to receive funding you will be asked to fill out further grant paperwork. Once that is complete, the final grant agreement will specify the exact end date.

Q: If an applicant is awarded funds in one year, does that limit opportunities to receive funding in future years?

A: No. Being awarded in one year would not preclude future year applications if the capacity exists to take on additional projects. Projects can also be built upon in future years by applying for phase 2 of the project to expand the impact on the landscape. Please indicate in the application if phase 2 of a previously awarded project is being applied for.

Q: What is the role of SPF authorities? Is this who designates the State Forestry Contact?

A: LSR projects must abide by the State and Private Forestry authorities: Forest Stewardship, Rural Forestry Assistance, Urban and Community Forestry, Forest Health Protection, and Community and Private Land Fire Assistance (State Fire Assistance). These, along with grants and agreements rules within the CFR, dictate which types of activities are allowed under LSR. The State Forester generally designates who among their staff is the LSR point of contact.

Q: Is monitoring allowed? For example, if streams are treated to enhance fish habitat, don't we need to monitor fish responses to report quantitative metrics? Is monitoring different from research?

A: Yes, monitoring is permitted. Part 1 of the project would be treating the fish habitat, which is an on-the-ground outcome, and part 2 would be monitoring. Research is defined as testing a new theory or hypothesis, where the end product may be a new model that will be published. LSR grant funds/match can not be used for this. Monitoring would be a part of reporting the on-the-ground outcome(s) and, therefore, different from research.

Q: How does the funding for multi-year projects get received?

A: The guidance states: *"Multi-year projects will be fully funded in a single year, namely the fiscal year of the project application. If it is not possible to undertake all work to achieve the goals of a project through a single LSR project application, each phase will need to compete as a new project application."* Multi-year project funding is awarded in a lump sum (i.e., FY25 awardees have the total funds they applied for *available* all at once (up to \$300,000 award available)). However, LSR grant funds are not provided to applicants in a lump sum upfront before the completion of work. They are instead delivered as a reimbursement from those funds awarded/available after those funds are expended by the applicant and a reimbursement request is submitted. Because the entirety of those funds become available

that first year, an applicant may do the work and submit requests for the total funding within that first year. Applicants have up to three years to complete the grant work. The funds requested (up to \$300,000) plus the same amount in match is considered one phase, and any future phase over that would need to reapply. It is not an annual re-application process if an awardee does \$150,000 worth of work year one and \$150,000 of work year two, for example. It is available within that first year but can be spread out throughout the life of that grant.

Q: Can you speak to what the reporting process is like after you receive an award?

A: LSR uses the LaSR reporting system. Awardees will work with federal and state contacts on their reports. All requirements (financial reports and performance reports) will be outlined in the eventual grant agreement at the time of award. Awardees will be required to report annually, with specific accomplishments including those quantitative accomplishment measures feeding into the LaSR reporting system.

REMINDER!

Please be sure to consult your USDA Forest Service Region and WFLC staff early and often in the proposal process to ensure that your project meets all the requirements before submitting applications through the online portal.

Please see the Forest Service [LSR webpage](#) or Western Forestry Leadership Coalition [LSR webpage](#).