



Good Neighbor Authority Frequently Asked Questions

General Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Questions

What practices can be performed through GNA?

Forest, watershed, and rangeland restoration services are authorized through GNA. Examples of authorized practices include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Forest restoration: stand improvement, prescribed burning, reforestation
- Forest health practices: chemical spraying for insects or disease, forest thinning
- Hazardous fuels reduction: forest thinning; targeted grazing; piling, removing, or burning slash; and prescribed burning
- Fish and wildlife habitat improvement: fish passages (including designing and constructing), instream fish structures, developing wildlife water sources, constructing brush piles for wildlife, constructing beaver analogs, installing duck boxes
- Watershed restoration: seeding for soil stabilizations, and decommissioning existing roads

Are commercial timber sales allowed through GNA agreements?

Yes. Commercial timber sales performed with the intent of forest restoration, forest health, fuels reduction, wildlife habitat restoration, or any other restoration service authorized by GNA. Currently, only state agencies are authorized to enter into revenue generating agreements.

What types of road work can be performed with GNA?

Cooperators are authorized to repair, reconstruct, decommission, and restore USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) National Forest System (NFS) roads, or construct temporary roads necessary to carry out authorized restoration services under a Good Neighbor agreement. Construction of permanent roads is not authorized. At this time, the law does not currently authorize the reconstruction of permanent or paved roads under Good Neighbor on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands.

Can GNA be used to hire staff?

Yes. The non-federal agency can hire staff to perform forest, rangeland, or watershed restoration services through GNA. If the Forest Service or BLM supplies 100% of the funding, then the hired staff person may only work on respective federal lands, unless funding is appropriated through the Wyden Authority. It is important to note that GNA cannot be used to supplant Forest Service positions.

Can GNA be used to conduct National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis?

Yes. The non-federal agency can perform NEPA analysis and/or contract NEPA analysis services, but the NEPA decision remains with the Forest Service and/or BLM.

Can GNA funding be used to pay for meeting space?

It depends. GNA agreements may include funding for meeting space only for the purposes of project planning and implementation. Funds from a GNA agreement may not generally be used for meeting space.

What services and common practices are not authorized through GNA?

Activities with the sole benefit to recreation, without providing direct restoration services, are not authorized through GNA. Capitol improvements such as building, parking lot, and permanent road construction are not authorized through GNA. Activities that supplant or replace regular Forest Service inventory, such as regularly scheduled standard stand exams, are not authorized.

Who determines if a practice is appropriate for a GNA agreement?

Determining which type of cooperative agreement (GNA, participating agreement, stewardship contract, challenge cost share, etc.) is most appropriate for a specific practice should be made collaboratively between the partners. The Forest Service or BLM G&A staff make the final determination concerning if GNA is the appropriate agreement type. Determining if the practices and project fall under the requirements of being considered a “restoration service” is done at the program staff level.

How long do GNA agreements last?

Good Neighbor agreements (master, stand alone and supplemental project agreements (SPA)) can last up to ten years. Supplemental project agreements cannot extend beyond the Master Agreement.

Can GNA be used on designated roadless areas on National Forests?

Yes. GNA can be used on roadless areas, and roadless study areas, within NFS lands, as long as the activities are included in the Forest plan.

Can GNA be used in designated wilderness areas on National Forests and/or BLM lands?

No. The Farm Bill language specifically excludes use of GNA on designated wilderness areas and wilderness study areas.

What federal lands can GNA be used on?

Only Forest Service and BLM lands are eligible for GNA projects. No other federal land is currently eligible.

Can one GNA agreement be used on cross-boundary projects that include both BLM and Forest Service lands?

No. Even when there is one large project with multiple land ownerships, BLM and Forest Service have different agreement types and processes, and each agency must have a separate agreement with the non-federal partner. The non-federal partner, however, has the discretion to utilize one contract across both federal agencies and other landowners.

Should the Forest Service or BLM contract language be included in a GNA agreement if the state agency is the contract administrator?

No. If the state/county/tribe is utilizing their contracts and procedures, then federal contract language is not included in the SPA or Stand-Alone agreement. While there are specific Forest Service contract requirements outlined in the Timber Removal Plan and Appendix E, the state is not required to explicitly use federal contract language; only to meet the intent outlined in the SPA.

Are GNA projects required to follow Forest Service or BLM policy and/or procedure?

GNA projects are required to follow the law, and these requirements are outlined in the GNA guidance handbooks provided by the Forest Service and BLM, respectively. GNA is intended to provide the flexibility of utilizing the non-federal partner policy and procedures for contracting and practice implementation, in accordance with the GNA federal handbook policies. If the non-federal partner is assisting with a commercial timber sale that the federal partner will administer, then the federal policies and procedures shall be followed. If the non-federal partner will be administering the contracts, then the non-federal procedures will be followed.

If the state holds the program revenue from GNA commercial timber sales, can that money be used on state or private property to achieve GNA goals?

No. Forest Service appropriated funding may be allocated through Wyden Act, but program revenue from GNA may only be used on National Forest or BLM lands on GNA projects.

Who is authorized to sign GNA agreements?

Forest Service agreements require signatures from the Regional Forester or Forest Supervisor, Grants & Agreements Specialist; and Governor or designated representative from a state, county, or indian tribe.

BLM agreements are signed by the Grants and Agreements Officer and the Governor's designee. The non-federal partner digitally signs each application document as they are submitted to Grant Solutions.

Financial Plan and Reporting Questions

What is a financial plan?

The financial plan is an estimate of expected revenues and expenses for the GNA project, and is required for all Forest Service GNA agreements. It is an excel spreadsheet which both the Forest Service and the state/county/tribal partner complete.

BLM GNA agreements do not utilize a financial plan; BLM currently uses the standard BLM Financial Assistance Budget Detail and Narrative Form (along with the SF-424).

Is there a financial plan template from the Forest Service, Washington D.C. Office (WO)?

No, the Forest Service does not currently have a standard financial plan template issued from the WO. Each Forest Service region utilizes their own financial plan template. Contact your regional Forest Service Grants & Agreements staff for the most current financial plan for your region.

Are financial plans required to include costs for Essential Reforestation (KV) and Brush Disposal (BD) on NFS Lands?

No. If KV and BD are required, the National Forest has the discretion to pay for these costs out of their annual appropriations budget if they choose. In the case that KV and BD are required, and the National Forest prefers these costs come out of generated project revenue, these costs may be included in the initial SPA financial plan or added at a later date through a SPA modification, and a corresponding Collection Agreement Financial Plan. The Collection Agreement Financial Plan is a separate document from the SPA or Stand Alone Agreement financial plan.

How is revenue generated from a commercial timber sale in a GNA project handled?

As of the 2018 Farm Bill, revenue generated from the commercial sale of timber is held by the state agency, to be used exclusively on Forest Service or BLM lands on future GNA projects.

Who decides where the revenue from GNA projects is spent?

GNA program revenue can only be spent on federal lands. The state agency and federal partner collaboratively determine where any revenue will be allocated for additional GNA projects.

Can GNA revenue be transferred from one National Forest to another?

Yes, as long as both forests agree to the transfer, and they are both within the same state. Transfer of revenue from one SPA to another is only authorized through October 1, 2023.

Can revenue generating GNA agreements extend beyond the Oct 1, 2023 sunset date?

Yes. A GNA agreement executed prior to the October 1, 2023 sunset date may continue to generate and expend revenue beyond the expiration date and until that GNA agreement expires (up to 10 years). However, any transfers between agreements needs to be completed prior to the October 1, 2023 date. If there is revenue remaining at the expiration of a GNA agreement (following the sunset date) it must be returned to the U.S. Treasury. Appropriated dollars cannot be transferred between agreements.

How are GNA projects funded?

There is no funding attached to GNA. Funding for projects may come from a state/county/tribal agency, from appropriated funding from the Forest Service or BLM, from program revenue, revenue transferred from previous SPAs, or from a third party. Funding must be determined and obligated prior to SPA execution.

What type of reporting is required for GNA agreements?

The reporting requirements are indicated in each individual GNA agreement, with a minimum reporting period of annually. Annual reporting requirements include the SF-425, and performance report.