

State and Private Forestry

FY 2011 Western Competitive Resource Allocation

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

REGIONAL GUIDANCE

Q: How will the states “work together” with their US Forest Service Regional partners?

A: The FY2010 and FY2011 National Guidance state that – “USFS Regions/Area and States shall work together when identifying and evaluating possible Competitive Resource Allocation proposals.” This is NOT a requirement for regional USFS review of proposed projects and is not an opportunity for USFS rejection of a project proposal; rather it is meant to encourage constructive collaboration. A set of discussion questions is available to guide this interaction, but projects are still submitted by States into a west-wide competitive process (run by the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition). Working with the USFS Regions is meant to improve projects.

Q: Can I still email all of my state’s project proposals in one package?

A: Yes. Using the proposal forms available online, you may submit a single form by clicking the “Submit Form” button (it will automatically generate an email message). You may also submit single or multiple forms (i.e., a complete state package) by including the PDF documents in an email to dcoelho@fs.fed.us. All received forms will be promptly acknowledged via email.

Q: How are multi-state projects that cross regional competitions (West, Northeast, South) being handled?

A: Current National Guidance states that “geographic regions shall collaborate during their respective evaluation processes for multi-region proposals.” In order to fulfill this collaborative requirement and ensure the viability of such proposals, multi-state projects that cross geographic regions should be submitted in their entirety (as one application) for review by one geographic region (Northeast, South, West) and will be funded by the applicable USFS Regions/Area. The multi-state project should be submitted to the geographic region that has the *largest amount of funds* within the proposal unless there are compelling reasons for an alternative approach. When funding levels are similar across geographic regions, then staff expertise, workload, past funding, and other considerations will help the State and Regional leadership to decide into which geographic regional process the project will be submitted. The discussion to determine a “lead” geographic region should happen among USFS Region/Area and State leadership early on in the proposal development process.

PROJECT PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SCORING

Q: How do match, leverage, and collaboration differ? How will each item be scored during the FY2011 Western Competitive Grant Process?

A: “Match” is the required contribution from the State and other non-federal partners equal to the amount of the grant requested. Measured in dollars and described in a narrative, “leverage” is the project-specific value of contributions by the applicant and project partners toward mutual outcomes. “Collaboration” is the demonstrated engagement of partners in project development and implementation. Match is required for project eligibility, but is not scored. Leverage and collaboration are evaluation criteria and will be scored. Interested in more? Read the fact sheet with examples of each.

Q: What is meant by “sphere of influence”?

A: A project may have a larger “sphere of influence” than its physical footprint, its duration, and the people involved. A project that adds value beyond project and/or State boundaries and/or can be used as an example and replicated in other areas and by other groups has a large sphere of influence. Replication may happen concurrently with project implementation, but more likely will happen in the future once others have the opportunity to learn from the success of the project.

Q: What is meant by “meaningful scale”?

A: Bigger is not always better. A project scale that is “meaningful” is linked to the project objectives and is the appropriate scale at which to accomplish those objectives. For example, if the objective is to reduce sedimentation in a watershed through improved forest management, then the project scale should be the whole watershed, not a portion of it, and need not include lands outside of the watershed.

Q: Will linking a project proposal to a priority area identified in a Statewide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy be scored?

A: No. However, making a tie to a completed Statewide Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy is an eligibility requirement. States are encouraged to reference Assessments & Strategies in the project description and use these documents when defining the appropriate geographic scale of the project, scope and goals, objectives and output measures, outcomes, and how grant funds are to be used.

WESTERN COMPETITIVE GRANT TEAM

Q: Is the composition of the western competitive grant team responsive to the requirement for States to “work together” with their US Forest Service regional partners?

A: Yes. Composed of both state and federal representatives, the western competitive grant team evaluates project proposals and makes funding recommendations to the WFLC Executive Board (also composed of state and federal members). The team also discusses and brings up any process questions that need to be addressed by the WFLC Board and membership. These discussions lead to updates to the western regional guidance, proposal forms, and related documents each year.

Q: How are members of the review team appointed and selected?

A: Members of the review team are selected to maintain a balance of state (1/2) and federal (1/2) representatives, as well as geographic, disciplinary, and programmatic diversity. In the past, the WFLC committees were responsible for nominating members. Nominations are now received from the WFLC membership and approved by the WFLC Executive Board. Team members serve for a period of 3 years.

Q: Will members of the review team undergo training to improve consistency of reviews from one reviewer to the next?

A: Yes! Given the diversity of the grant team, scores will never be totally consistent, but the team will be undergoing an orientation and a “calibration” scoring exercise to improve consistency in interpretation of the evaluation criteria.