



FY 2009 Competitive Resource Allocation National Guidance (revised 5-12-08)



Introduction

The State & Private Forestry (S&PF) Redesign assumes that our collective efforts will be most effective if available resources are focused on issues and landscapes of national importance and prioritized, using state and regional assessments, on activities that promise meaningful outcomes on the ground. This concept is captured as: focus + priority + outcome. The Redesign Board of Directors identified “**competitive resource allocation**” as an effective means of ensuring that federal S&PF dollars are invested in projects that meet this standard.

Beginning in federal fiscal year 2008 (FY 08), an increasing percentage of the S&PF allocation will be invested in projects selected through a competitive process. These processes will be informed by the national guidance described below, but administered through a joint effort between the state forestry and USFS leadership in the northeast, south and west. It is anticipated that each geographic region will design its competitive process to address geographically significant issues and landscapes as well as the broad themes and direction provided at the national level.

FY 2009 Allocation Process

In FY 2009, fifteen percent of the “net available” S&PF allocation will be designated for the Redesign competitive process.

- The net available funding will consist of S&PF funds available after ear marks and national commitments are removed.
- The net available will include funds that are traditionally transferred to State Forestry agencies as well as funds that support S&PF capacity in USFS Regions/Area and the Washington Office. USFS Regions/Area will engage their State Forester partners in determining any reductions of funds that support Forest Service S&PF capacity.
- For FY 2009, the net available will not include funds in the Volunteer Fire Assistance, Forest Legacy and Federal Lands Forest Health Management programs.
- In conjunction with the distribution of initial budget advice to the USFS Regional/Area Offices, each geographic region (NE, S, W) will be informed of the amount to be available to it for competitive project allocation based on current distribution formulas.

The FY 2009 Competitive Resource Allocation Process shall adhere to the following national timeline:

Competitive Resource Allocation Process Timeline:

- January – April
- Geographic regions identify team

- Late April/Early May
 - Summer
 - October
 - November
 - December
 - December
- and develop RFP
 - Geographic regions issue RFP
 - WO provide initial allocation to Region/Area (depending on Appropriation Committee Bills)
 - Proposals due
 - Team review and rank proposals
 - Geographic regions leadership approve projects
 - Submit project list to WO

The geographic regions are responsible for the establishment of an interagency Competitive Allocation Team and have the flexibility for the design and implementation of a competitive process based on national Redesign guidance and regionally specific criteria. The interagency Teams in each geographic region will review project proposals and recommend projects for funding to the USFS Region/Area. The projects shall be reviewed and approved by the Region/Area/State leadership in the geographic region.

When the USFS receives its final appropriation from Congress, the Deputy Chief for S&PF will notify the geographic regions regarding their final competitive allocation and request their list of approved projects to be funded. The Regions/Area, working closely with States, will recommend the appropriate mix of program funds, and will provide the list of recommended projects for funding to the Deputy Chief. The Deputy Chief will allocate the requisite funding to the corresponding USFS Regional/Area Office for grant execution.

All non-competitive S&PF funding will be distributed according to existing methodologies. Matching requirements for dollars awarded through the competitive allocation process may be met through consolidation as currently handled through consolidated payment grants. Cash and in-kind contributions from other federal sources may not be used as match. USFS Regions / Area will work transparently and cooperatively with their State Foresters to determine how to equitably and effectively handle any decreases in S&PF capacity dollars.

For FY 2009 and beyond, S&PF leadership and State Foresters will work together to determine how to better incorporate USFS technical assistance and resources into the competitive process.

FY 2009 Competitive Criteria

The competitive component of the Redesign approach is intended to demonstrate that federal funds are being spent on projects that address both nationally and regionally significant issues or landscapes, as described by the national Redesign themes, and that hold the greatest promise for success on a meaningful scale. Projects may be on any combination of land ownerships, although S&PF funds should be spent on non-federal lands. Implementation may extend from 1-3 years. USFS Regions/Area and States are encouraged to work together when identifying and evaluating possible Competitive Resource Allocation proposals. USFS Regions/Area and States should coordinate multi-state and cross regional collaborative opportunities, while ensuring locally focused projects address national priorities. State and territorial forestry agencies are eligible to submit project proposals.

Projects funded in FY 2009 should consider the following key Redesign concepts:

- Purpose Statement – Projects should effectively address the Redesign purpose statement which is to “*shape and influence forest land use on a scale and in a way that optimizes public benefits from trees and forests for both current and future generations*” and will be consistent with S&PF authorities.
- National Relevance – Project should be focused on issues or landscapes of national importance as identified by the Redesign National Themes, and associated outcomes identified in the National Assessment and State Assessment.
- Prioritization – Projects should be based on an analysis within the state or region that identifies the issue or landscape being addressed as a high priority. For States that have not completed a State Forest Resource Assessment, the State may use other existing plans or assessments such as Forest Stewardship Spatial Analysis Project assessments, State Forest Stewardship Plans, State Urban and Community Plans, and other state or regional assessments and plans, to help identify priority issues or landscapes.
- Project Scale – The project scale shall be a function of the most appropriate size associated with the issue or landscape of national importance, and may result in single, multi-state or multi-region implementation.
- Collaboration – Projects should involve diverse collaboration and partnerships in planning and implementation.
- Outcomes – Projects should prioritize funding and other resources toward the achievement of measurable outcomes. In addition, the geographic regions should work towards including state performance in the future, such as giving additional consideration to states that meet or exceeded their anticipated outcomes on previous projects.
- Integrated Delivery – Projects should seek to improve the delivery of public benefits from forest management by coordinating with complementary state and federal programs when possible. Regional evaluation criteria may consider projects that integrate outcomes.
- Leverage – Projects should maximize State and Private funding by using it to leverage resources and other contributions from both federal and non-federal entities that share the mission, promote Redesign intent and support state capacity needs. While proposals can be submitted for multiple funding opportunities, the project application needs to clearly identify the requested funds and associated cost-share from the competitive resource application process and acknowledge leveraged contributions. Match should be documented.
- Influence Positive Change – Projects should include a component of outreach, training, lessons learned, or related opportunity such that implementation of the project results in skills and capability that extends beyond the life of the project itself.

Reporting and Accountability

Each geographic region will provide a year end report outlining the methods involved in their competitive process, activities and accomplishments of funded projects, and lessons learned.

Additional performance measures and reporting requirements will be determined in coordination with national program managers and the Demonstrating and Communicating Results Working Team.

Geographic Region Requirements:

In order to ensure the Redesign Competitive Resource Allocation process is transparent and fair, the geographic regions shall implement the following measures:

1. The Competitive Allocation Team will consist of an equal number of Forest Service and State representatives with diverse skills, develop a process to ensure consistency in proposal evaluation, identify rotation and duration of terms for team members, and address possible conflict of interest (such as having each State representative not score his/her own projects).
2. Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) that includes
 - a. overview of the review process,
 - b. composition of the review team,
 - c. scoring guidance- which incorporates the national themes, associated national strategic objectives, regional strategic objectives, and weights for each selection criteria,
 - d. a standard proposal template, and
 - e. for those Geographic Regions that require States to rank proposals, the RFP shall provide information explaining how the rankings will be applied during the competitive process.
3. Starting in FY09, Geographic Regions shall establish proposal and/or funding limits (either per State and/or per project) for the competitive process.
4. Each geographic region shall designate a Forest Service and State point of contact to answer questions and concerns, as well as share and coordinate information to ensure consistency and clarity and help address cross-regional issues.
5. Multi-year projects should be fully funded in one year. If not possible, each subsequent phase will need to compete on its own.
6. The geographic regions shall collaborate during their respective evaluation processes for multi-region proposals

In addition, the Redesign Competitive Resource Allocation should consider the following:

1. It is recommended that the RFP include examples of high scoring proposals to give States and the Competitive Allocation Team additional clarification.
2. Geographic regions are encouraged to host a workshop to disseminate information on the competitive process and assist States with proposal development.