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Request for Proposals

Application

FAQ

Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program

Frequently Asked Questions



The Five Star Partnership (National Association of Counties, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Wildlife Habitat Council, in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration) developed this Frequently Asked Question list to provide potential Five Star applicants with added information on the Five Star Grant Program criteria and supplements the Request for Proposal and the Five Star Grant Guidance. Note the subheadings below match the Five Star Proposal Narrative Guidance.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND NEEDS

Q. What are the key components of a strong proposal?

A. Key components include:

1. Strong, measurable ecological benefits derived from restoration of a specific wetland and/or riparian area(s).
2. A coordinated education/training and community outreach component, and a demonstrated socio-economic need that the project will address.
3. Broad and diverse partnerships, at least five partners typically representing local government (e.g., Boards of Commissioners, Departments of Public Works, Environmental Services, Cooperative Extension), federal, state, and/or tribal governments, schools and school boards, youth corps, citizen groups, conservation organizations, and local businesses.
4. Leveraging funds requested with other partner contributions (which can include both cash and in-kind good and services).

Q. Does the Five Star Grant Program have a matching funds requirement?

A. The Five Star Partnership strongly encourages the applicant to have a group of partners and donors in place that have pledged to provide funding and/or in-kind goods and services before applying for a Five Star grant. Projects that can leverage the amount of funds requested with significant cash or in-kind contribution from project partners are much more competitive. On average, competitive projects are usually able to demonstrate partner contributions of at least 1:1 and often significantly higher (e.g., >2:1). Matching contributions can be both federal and non-federal.

Q. What kind of attachments can I send with my application?

A. Applicants can send maps of the area, photos of the site to be restored, any previous educational material, and/or literature on the site. Attachments should be limited to those that will allow reviewers to better understand what you are trying to accomplish with the project.

Q. How developed should the educational/training and community outreach components of the proposed project be at the time of the application?

A. The project should have coordinated with knowledgeable entities that have agreed on an outline and an action plan of their educational/training and community outreach aspects of the program with a proposed timeframe. The ideal project is one that is strong in all of these aspects and that builds on this initial framework to continue those efforts well past the one year of Five Star funding. The project should have at least an outline of the educational, training, or outreach program with a proposed timeframe for implementation. The ideal educational/training component will be one that continues after the restoration work is complete.

Q. Does a particular site(s) need to be identified in the proposal?

A. The most competitive proposals are those that have identified a specific wetland and/or riparian area to be restored. Applicants are encouraged to provide detailed information about the current conditions of the site, the methods to be used to restore the site, and long-term maintenance and monitoring activities. In this way, reviewers can make reasonable judgments about the ecological significance and success of the restoration work. For this reason, programs that propose to identify restoration or stewardship projects in the future are

less competitive.

II. FINAL PRODUCTS

Q. What are anticipated environmental results and how do I address those?

A. In the planning stage of a project, it is sometimes hard to perceive what the exact final environmental outcome will be, but it is important to show grant reviewers that you have thought about this. Discuss potential acreage or stream miles to be restored, types of habitat to be improved and species to benefit, the amount of vegetation to be planted, and the future benefit that the project will have on water quality and other environmental factors. Applicants should keep in mind that a competitive application will have a significant focus on long-term monitoring and the successful production of measurable, on-the-ground results.

III. PARTNER JUSTIFICATION

Q. Can the Five Star Program be listed as one of the partners for the project?

A. No. The applicant can be listed as one of the partners, but not the Five Star Program. Please list ALL partners under "partner contributions," even if the value of their contribution is still to be determined.

Q. What if we have less than five partners?

A. While the Five Star Partnership urges all applicants to have at least five partners for a Five Star project, having less than five partners does not mean that your proposal will not get due consideration. However, the applicant should keep in mind that the majority of the proposals that the Five Star Partnership receives do have at least five partners, and the grant awards are competitive.

Q. What are considered "partner contributions?"

A. Partner contributions can be in the form of a cash contribution, the donation of materials or tools, or the contribution of in-kind services, such as volunteer labor and technical expertise. Contributions should generally be restricted to those directly involved in the proposed scope of work, but can include planning and other related activities conducted within one year of the proposed start date for the project. Both federal and non-federal contributions should be listed.

Q. Does volunteer manual labor count towards the educational/training component?

A. Volunteer labor should be supplemented with educational programs, such as presentations or workshops, in order to be considered as part of the educational component. It is important that volunteers understand how they are adding to the project and what the overall ecological objectives are.

IV. PROJECT BUDGET

Q. What items cannot be purchased with Five Star grant funds?

A. Five Star grants are intended to be used for direct environmental restoration and education expenses. Items such as cameras, computers, graduate assistantship wages, and boat time should not occupy a major portion of your proposed budget. Boardwalks, constructed trail materials, gazebos, T-shirts, and hats are some of the items that cannot be purchased using Five Star grant funds.

Q. Can Five Star funds support staff salaries and benefits?

A. Yes. Five Star funds can be used to pay for salary and benefits of staff directly involved in project planning and implementation. However, applicants are encouraged to keep requests for salaries and benefits to 50 percent or less.

Q. Should pending requests for funding be included in the budget table?

A. No. Only funding that has been committed to the project should be included in the table. Your project narrative can include a description of outstanding proposals.

Q. Should in-kind contributions be given a dollar value in the budget?

A. Yes, where at all possible, in-kind contributions should be given a dollar value in the budget. Volunteers provide valuable time and energy to the project that should be measured in a dollar amount. Use the prevailing rate that would be paid for a contractor for similar service - or the professional rate of an individual who is donating their professional time/expertise. \$10/hr is an appropriate default for manual labor (e.g., for planting trees). This amount can be counted toward your total dollar amount in dollar contributions to the project. Please list number of hours and hourly wage you are using. However, note in the Cash/In-Kind column that this dollar amount representative of in-kind services.

V. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q. Where can Five Star projects be located?

A. Only projects in the U.S. or its territories will be considered for funding.

Q. What is the timing of the award?

A. Applications are due at the beginning of March every year. Final decisions are typically announced in mid-June. If they are successful, a grant agreement will be generated within three months after receipt of award notification. Once a grant agreement is in place, grantees are eligible to submit an invoice for payment for completed work at that time.

Q. How long are the Five Star funds available?

A. The duration of the grant availability is typically one year after the start of the project. For example, if you are awarded a Five Star grant in June, but do not initiate the project until September, the portion of your project that is utilizing Five Star funds should end the following September or soon thereafter.

Q. What is the definition of "restoration?"

A. Restoration involves returning an area to its former natural condition. For example, restoration of wetlands may involve plugging drainage ditches to restore a site's former hydrology, planting native plant species, and removing invasive species. Restoration does not include simply clearing an area of trash or debris, nor is it creating new wetlands where such habitats did not previously exist (i.e., wetlands "creation").

Q. What is the definition of a "riparian area?"

A. We often get questions about whether a project would fall within a riparian zone. To clarify, we are typically referring to stream buffers or floodplain projects. Riparian areas are the vegetated zones along streams and rivers and around lakes, creeks, and bogs. When riparian areas stay wet through most of the year, like marshes or swamps, they are also called wetlands. Examples of the importance of riparian areas are:

1. They improve water quality by filtering out sediment.
2. They act as sponges to reduce flooding and increase water availability for drinking and irrigation.
3. They provide habitat for fish and wildlife.

Q. What coastal habitat restoration projects are eligible for consideration?

A. Coastal habitat restoration projects eligible for consideration are those that will benefit NOAA trust resources. NOAA trust resources are living marine resources and their habitats which include, anadromous fish species; commercial and recreational resources; endangered and threatened species; marine mammals and sea turtles; mangroves; marshes; seagrass beds; coral reefs; riparian areas (which support anadromous species); dune systems; areas identified by NOAA Fisheries as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) or Habitat Areas of Particular Concern; and other coastal habitats. NOAA trust resources can also include marine habitats and resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and areas under state coastal management programs.

Common examples of coastal restoration activities include: improvement of coastal wetland tidal exchange, dam removal, fish passage improvement, reef/substrate creation or enhancement, invasive species removal, planting of native marsh grasses/submerged aquatic vegetation/beach vegetation/riparian buffers, re-establishment of dune systems, and marine debris removal.

We make conservation your best business decision - Partnerships that work - Solutions that last

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