



Resource: Master Agreements

Summary

The Forest Service and partners have a variety of agreement instruments to formalize their work together, depending on the purpose and objectives of the partnership. Knowing the basics of Master Agreements, Stand-Alone Agreements, and Supplemental Project Agreements will help with deciding how to set up and maintain partnerships. Deciding which agreement to use and at what level involves an assessment of the kind of partnership, duration, funding strategies, project scoping, resource allocation, and type of work to be undertaken.

Key Definitions

Master Agreement – An agreement executed between the Forest Service and a cooperator that establishes a framework for completion of separate but related projects. Master agreements may be national, regional or local in scope.

Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA) – An instrument executed under the umbrella of a Master Agreement that address individual projects tiered to the Master Agreement.

Agreement Instrument – A document or formalized arrangement used to accomplish a specific type of work and define rights, duties, entitlements and/or liabilities between the Forest Service and a partner.

Executing Master Agreements

Types of Agreements

The most common types of Master Agreements are Challenge Cost Share, Participating, and Stewardship Agreements. Other types of agreements that can be set up as Master Agreements are Good Neighbor, Collection, Inter-agency, Road, Law Enforcement, and Fire. Master Agreements may be executed at any administrative level of the agency.

National Master Agreements are executed at the Washington Office (WO) and generally cover the entire agency or cross regional boundaries. The responsibility for negotiating, executing, and managing national Master Agreements also rests with the WO. Once a National Master Agreement is in place, SPAs can be implemented at the regional or unit level in any area covered by the agreement.

Region/Forest/Station/Institute Master Agreements are executed at the corresponding level and generally cover the area within that unit's purview. The responsibility for negotiating, executing, and managing master agreements at this level rests with the unit that initiated, negotiated, and signed the master. SPAs are implemented only within that unit's area of responsibility.

When to employ a Master Agreement

- When the Forest Service and the partner anticipate working together over a long period of time
- If work can be broken out in time, boundary, or other administratively based segments,
- If the Forest Service plans to fund an agreement in multiple phases, and/or,
- To implement national or regional strategies with similar objectives across a broad area.

When to employ Stand Alone Agreements

- On projects that can be covered under one scope of work and financial plan,
- When the project is for a non-severable purpose,
- When the Forest Service can fully fund a project in the first year, and/or
- When the project impacts only one administrative area of the agency and can be managed at that level.

Helpful links and resources

[Forest Service Partnerships 101](#)

[Forest Service Funding Resources](#)

[Leveraging Master Agreements Peer Learning Session](#)