APPENDIX A: MAP Application Tips

Additional help on how to complete your NFF Matching Awards Program application

This appendix provides tips on answering certain questions in the Matching Awards Program application, with the intention of helping you submit a competitive proposal. Use this guidance as a supplement to, not a replacement for, the instructions in the online application form and eligibility information in the RFP.

Project Name

Tips: Provide a concise, descriptive name for the proposed project. Avoid using acronyms.

Amount Requested

Tips: Indicate the amount you are requesting from the NFF for this project.

Double Check: Make sure this is consistent with the total NFF Request in the financial plan you upload (see below).

Executive Summary

Instruction: In about a paragraph, provide an abridged version of the proposed project.

Tips: For best results, you may wish to complete this section LAST. This is a brief summary of overall proposal, including the need, goals, methods, and outcomes. Nothing should be included in the executive summary that is not in the rest of the proposal.

Project Need

Instruction: In brief narrative form, succinctly and persuasively describe the need for the project, including the broader ecological, social, and/or economic issues the project will address. Indicate the National Forest System management issues involved and alignment with broader-scale conservation initiatives, if any.

Tips: This section asks you to respond to the WHY of the project. Make a compelling case for what is wrong, before you describe later in this proposal the specific steps that you will take to fix it.

Goals and Objectives

Instruction: In brief, bulleted sentences, list the specific goals and objectives the project will accomplish and detail where it is located within the National Forest System.

Tips: This section asks you to describe WHAT you plan to accomplish in the project and WHERE you plan to accomplish it. Succinctly describe the work you plan to complete under the grant. Describe specific location(s) of the work, and do not generalize. Successful applicants often use SMART criteria in their goals and objectives.

Methods

Instruction: In a succinct narrative or bulleted-paragraph format, describe the specific steps you will take to achieve each individual goal or objective. Include an implementation timeline that details discrete tasks and the individuals responsible for conducting each. Describe how the project engages other partner organizations.

Tips: This section asks you to respond to the HOW of the project. Clearly describe the individual actions that your organization will complete to advance each goal or objective. The timeline should be monthly or quarterly and indicate staff involved. Include detail on the role that other organizations will play in the project.
Specific Outcomes

Instruction: Indicate the projected outcomes of the project. In bulleted format, quantify tangible outcomes in units such as the number of miles maintained, acres treated, trees planted, or volunteers engaged. Include a narrative portion to describe specific qualitative environmental or social impacts.

Tips: This section asks you to detail the anticipated quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the project. Be specific, and describe the accomplishments you expect. If you are tracking something easily countable, like miles of trail maintained or hours a youth crew will work on a project, put it in a bulleted list or in brief bulleted sentences and be sure to include numbers to indicate the amount of work you expect to complete. If you are also tracking something harder to quantify like the change in user behavior, or increased social license because of a completed project, describe that in a brief narrative format. Be as specific as you can, use numbers wherever possible, and do not generalize.

Evaluation

Instruction: In brief narrative format, describe the following:

- The metrics that will determine whether the project achieved the goals and objectives set out, and who will determine it; and
- The type of evaluation and monitoring, if any, that will occur to know that the project was demonstrably effective over the short, medium, and long term, as well as how evaluation results will be incorporated in future work.

Tips: This section asks you to identify how you will know that you had an impact and accomplished your goals.

- How will you determine whether the goals and objectives were completed, and how will you assess the quality of the work?
- The NFF is interested in three primary types of monitoring in this context: baseline, implementation, and effectiveness. Describe how your project utilizes any or all of these.

Dissemination

Instruction: In brief narrative format, describe how the organization will broadly communicate the project successes and challenges once work is completed.

Tips: This section asks you to identify how you will share your successes and lessons learned. Describe how you will communicate the project outcomes internally and externally. Are you only posting a photo on Facebook, or are you also presenting at a workshop or preparing an instructional handbook?

Civic Engagement

Instruction: In brief narrative format, describe the extent to which the community is directly engaged in the planning, implementation, and/or monitoring phases of the project. If historically underserved populations will be involved in the project, describe how. Describe other interest groups involved, any volunteers involved, and the role each plays.

Tips: This section asks you to explain the role that the community plays in the implementation of your project.

- If your community includes populations that are historically under represented in conservation work in your area, how will you engage them and what roles will they play in the project?
- If your project uses volunteers, what roles will they play?
- If your project uses youth crews, what is your approach in engaging the crew, or recruiting and managing members?
- If your project involves the implementation of a project developed by a collaborative group, what was the membership of the collaborative, and what role did the collaborative play?
COVID-19 Impacts
Instruction: Describe likely impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic on the proposed work plan and timeline. Briefly describe contingency measures your organization is considering to adapt to these impacts.

Tips: Use this space to explain public health, policy, or related factors that could affect your project.

Contingency Planning
Instruction: Describe any non-COVID-19 related issues you foresee that could delay your project during your grant period, and planning or contingency measures you would put in place to deal with them.

Tips: Use this space to explain external or internal issues that could affect your project such as weather, permitting, or staffing. It is better to address potential issues directly and describe your contingencies, than to appear to have overlooked them.

Financial Plan Form
Instruction: Upload a completed NFF Financial Plan form showing the budget for the project on the top half of the form (Part 1), and sources of the funds you plan to use as match on the bottom half of the form (Part 2).

Tips: Read through the guidance on How to Complete the NFF Master Financial Plan which includes definitions of expense categories, match, and other items, and provides examples of how to fill out the form. Also, be sure you understand and follow the NFF Indirect Cost Rate Policy.

Do not re-use NFF forms saved on your computer from previous rounds as the NFF regularly updates its standard forms and may disqualify proposals that do not include all the required information on the current version of this form.

Double Check:
- Total NFF funds requested (cell B15) matches what you entered in the Amount Requested field of the online application form (noted above).
- Total of the column “(i) Non-Federal Cash Funding” (cell C15) is equal to or greater than total NFF funds requested (cell B15) – this ensures you are meeting the MAP 1:1 match requirement.
- The indirect rate is no more than 10% of the total direct charges. Or, if you have a NICRA, it should not be any greater than your approved NICRA rate.
- Individual funders or categories of donors are listed in Part II of the form with the amount of their contributions.
- The degree to which every match contribution is committed is indicated.

Expanded Budget Form
Instruction: Upload the NFF Expanded Budget form to provide detail on the budget categories from the financial plan form. Double check that category totals match your financial plan form.

Tips: It is recommended that you complete your Expanded Budget prior to your Master Financial Plan. Read through the guidance on How to Complete the NFF Master Financial Plan which includes definitions of expense categories, match, and other items, and provides examples of both the Master Financial Plan and Expanded Budget Form.
Do not use expanded budget forms from other sources, and do not re-use NFF forms saved on your computer from previous rounds as the NFF regularly updates its standard forms and may disqualify proposals that do not include all the requested information on the current version of this form.

Double Check:

☐ Make sure the grand totals of each column in your Expanded Budget match the totals in your Financial Plan Form (cells B15, C15, D15, E15 and F15).
☐ Make sure the costs included in this spreadsheet are described in your budget narrative.

Budget Narrative
Instruction: Provide a Budget Narrative that explains the need for the project costs listed in your expanded budget. You may present these in bulleted narrative form.

Tips: For each expense category, specifically describe how the project will spend NFF funds if awarded. Provide enough detail to show how the amount you are requesting relates to the project activities you describe in your narrative.

Project Area Map
Instruction: Upload a map of the project area.

Tips: The map should help reviewers locate the project area(s) within the National Forest System and identify its proximity to other relevant locations. The more detailed the map(s) the better, but we encourage you to use what you already have. If the map consists of several pages, combine them into a PDF and upload a single file.

Do not include any information other than the attachment requested. Photos, narrative, and other information submitted with your attachment will be removed from your application and discarded prior to review.

Forest Service Letter(s) of Support
Instruction: Upload a letter of support from the Forest Supervisor of each National Forest or Grassland unit included in a proposal.

Tips: Proposals that include work on more than four units of the National Forest System within a Forest Service Region may choose to obtain a letter of support from the Regional Forester rather than each Forest Supervisor.

If not uploaded with the proposal, email letters of support to grants@nationalforests.org within three days of the proposal deadline. Do not send letters of support via hard copy, fax, or any method other than direct upload or email.

Do not submit letters from Forest Service District Rangers or any additional letters of support.

Do not include any information other than the attachment requested. Photos, narrative, and other information submitted with your attachment will be removed from your application and discarded prior to review.

Safety
Instruction: The NFF is committed to working with all of our partners to complete projects in a safe manner. Please list all injuries and/or safety incidents that occurred within the last 36 months, if any. For major injuries or safety incidents, describe any changes your organization made to reduce their occurrence in the future.

Tips: We value your organization’s efforts to perform work in a manner that protects volunteers, staff, community members, agency representatives, and any others involved in the project. Be open about any at-work injuries or safety incidents that have happened over the last three years. What changes did you make to prevent something similar from happening again?