National Forest Foundation

MAP Application Tips

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

This document 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.

Character Counts

Character counts include spaces and punctuation.

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).

Location

Instruction: Describe the project location including where it is located in the National Forest System as well as the context of the surrounding communities. IF the project is on adjacent public lands, additionally describe their proximity to National Forest System lands. Consult this Forest Service brochure or this interactive Forest Service map.

Tips: Remember that MAP is a nationwide program and the people reviewing your proposal are not necessarily familiar with your state or region. If your project takes place on public lands adjacent to National Forest System lands, make sure to clearly demonstrate how the project will directly benefit the National Forests and Grasslands in later parts of the proposal.

Population(s) Targeted

Instruction: Identify the population(s) you seek to engage and/or benefit through this project, and why. Include any relevant details about the population's socio-economic status, history of access to or use of public lands, and whether you aim to particularly focus on underserved communities. If your project aims to recruit participation from the general public, describe the demographics of the location(s) from which you will be recruiting, and any specifics of how participants will be selected.

Tips: This section asks you to describe *WHO* you plan to engage in the project and *WHY* you plan to engage them. Keep in mind the proposal evaluation criteria around potential for diversifying beneficiaries when responding to this question.

History of Population(s)

Instruction: Describe your organization's past involvement with the population(s) that you seek to engage and/or benefit through this project, and how this influenced the goals, objectives, or methods you are proposing. If this proposal includes lessons learned from previous work or interaction with the population(s), describe that here. Describe any ways *the population had a leadership role in defining your objectives for this project. Mention if this population has a voice on your organization's staff, Board, advisory councils, or in development of your strategic plans.*

Tips: This section lets you describe your organization or program's expertise. Keep in mind the evaluation criteria around strength of engagement, and feasibility and strength of proposal when providing your response.

Need for Stewardship Activities

Instruction: In brief narrative form, succinctly describe the need for the stewardship activities you are proposing, and how the National Forest System will benefit from them. Indicate any relevant National Forest System management issues involved or alignment with broader-scale conservation initiatives.

Tips: This section allows you to describe how the stewardship activities you are proposing respond to natural resource needs on National Forest System lands. If you are proposing work on lands adjacent to a National Forest or Grassland, it is especially important for you to describe how work on adjacent lands will still address a need on National Forest System lands. Keep in mind the evaluation criteria around stewardship benefit when responding to this item.

Goals and Objectives

Instruction: In brief, bulleted sentences, list the specific goals and objectives the project will accomplish.

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. All evaluation criteria are relevant to this section, but you will want to especially keep in mind the criterion regarding whether goals and objectives are consistent with the identified needs – both of the populations to be engaged, and the need for stewardship activities.

Methods

Instruction: In a succinct narrative or bulleted-paragraph format, describe the specific steps you will take to accomplish the project. Describe the planning and outreach, coordination with any partner organizations, how participants will be recruited and trained, and how the stewardship work will be accomplished. Include an implementation timeline that details discrete tasks and the individuals responsible for conducting each.

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. All evaluation criteria are relevant to this section, but you will want to especially keep in mind the criteria regarding feasibility and strength of proposal.

Qualitative Outcomes

Instruction: In brief narrative format, describe both short- and long-term qualitative impacts of the proposed activities. In particular, describe how participants will benefit, be inspired to continue to engage with their public lands, and how project activities will lead to building long-term engagement of this population.

Tips: This section asks you to detail the anticipated qualitative outcomes of the project. Be specific and describe the accomplishments you expect. All evaluation criteria are relevant to this section, but you will want to especially keep in mind the criteria regarding strength of engagement, stewardship benefit, potential for diversifying beneficiaries, and potential for long-term impact.

Quantitative Outcomes

Instruction: Indicate any metrics that will help determine whether the project achieved the goals and objectives set out at the end of the proposed project period. In bulleted format, quantify expected outcomes in units. Include engagement outcomes (such as total number of participants, number of participants from targeted populations, or increase in knowledge), as well as stewardship outcomes (such as pounds of trash collected, number of miles maintained, acres improved, trees planted). Also include any metrics that indicate potential for ongoing engagement (such as number indicating they will return for similar work).

Tips: If you are tracking something easily countable, like number of participants, number of participants targeted from populations, or increased knowledge, put in a bulleted list or in brief bulleted sentences, and be sure to include numbers to indicate the what you expect to achieve. These should correlate to the qualitative impacts you hope to achieve.

Evaluation

Instruction: In brief narrative format, describe how your organization will determine whether the project achieved the outcomes described above. Provide details about who is responsible for monitoring the outcomes during the project, and how they will determine success. Describe how evaluation results will be incorporated into planning or design of future activities beyond the project period.

Tips: This section asks you to identify how you will know that you had an impact and accomplished your goals. All evaluation criteria are relevant to this section, but you will want to especially keep in mind the criteria around potential for long-term benefit when responding to this question.

- How will you determine whether the goals and objectives were completed, and how will you assess the quality of the work? How will this be incorporated in the future beyond the project?
- Clearly identify or describe who is responsible for monitoring the outcomes throughout the project.
- The NFF is interested in four primary types of monitoring in this context: baseline, implementation, effectiveness, and post-implementation. Describe how your project utilizes any or all of these.

Dissemination

Instruction: In brief narrative format, describe how the organization will externally communicate the project successes, challenges, and lessons learned once activities are completed. Describe the potential this information has to be incorporated into broader activities and strategies beyond your organization, and after the project period.

Tips: This section asks you to identify how you will share your successes and lessons learned. Describe how you will communicate the project outcomes externally. Are you only posting a photo on Facebook, or are you also presenting at a workshop or preparing an instructional handbook? How will this be incorporated into broader activities or strategies beyond your organization and into the community? All evaluation criteria are relevant to this section, but you will want to especially keep in mind the criteria around potential for long-term benefit when responding to this question.

Contingency Planning

Instruction: Describe any 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. All evaluation criteria are relevant to this section, but you will want to especially keep in mind the criteria around feasibility when responding to this question.

Budget Narrative

Instruction: Provide a Budget Narrative that explains the need for the project costs listed in your expanded budget. This description should be detailed enough to communicate how anticipated expenditures are cost-effective, and supportive of equitable and sustainable organizational practice.

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. All evaluation criteria are relevant to this section, but you will want to especially keep in mind the criteria around feasibility when responding to this question.

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.

Project Area Map

Instruction: Upload a map of the project area.

Tips: The map should help reviewers who are not necessarily familiar with your state or region 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 District Ranger or Forest Supervisor of each National Forest or Grassland unit included in your proposal.

Tips: Read through the Obtaining a Letter of Support document, which includes an example letter of support from the Forest Service.

- Proposals that include work on multiple districts on one National Forest System unit may choose to obtain a single letter of support from the Forest Supervisor rather than a letter from each District Ranger. Similarly, proposals that include work on or multiple National Forest System units within any Forest Service Region may choose to obtain a letter of support from the Regional Forester rather than each Forest Supervisor.
- Tribal entities may submit a letter of partnership rather than a letter of support and are encouraged to contact the NFF to discuss alternate options.
- If not uploaded with the proposal, email letters of support to grants@nationalforests.org within a week 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 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?

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

Instruction: State whether your organization has received a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). If selected for MAP funding, the applicant must have or be able to obtain a UEI before completing a grant agreement.

- *If your organization already has a UEI, add it to your organization's application profile by clicking your organization's name at the top of this form.*
- *If your organization does NOT yet have a UEI, you are strongly encouraged to begin the process at SAM.gov immediately. Normally you can quickly obtain one, but sometimes the process can be lengthy.*

Tips: A Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is a government-issued identification number that is required for organizations receiving federal funds (including MAP funds). If your organization previously had a DUNS number, it has been automatically assigned a UEI. Visit SAM.gov to receive or retrieve your organization's UEI number.

The process of obtaining a UEI is **free** and is generally quick, however if your organization does not already have a current UEI number, NFF recommends that you start the process immediately, as it can sometimes be lengthy. Follow the Get Started instructions on SAM.gov. To receive MAP funds, follow the instructions "Get a Unique Entity ID Only" (a full registration on SAM.gov is not required for MAP grantees).