



Landowner Assistance Grant Guidance

Overview

The KFS Landowner Assistance Grant (LAG) program is funded by a USDA Forest Service grant entitled “FORESTRY GAPS ASSISTANCE: IMPLEMENTING STEWARDSHIP.”

The intent of this funding is described below:

Kansas Forest Service will leverage existing partnerships and planning processes to deliver important conservation practice assistance to landowners who may not be sufficiently served by existing, limited options.

Practice packages have been designed to address five major categories of needed assistance: Riparian Forest Buffer Establishment, Windbreak Renovation and Establishment, Conservation Tree Planting, Invasive Plants and Forest Stand Improvement Treatments, and Forest Stand Improvement and Wildfire Risk Reduction.

Practice packages within this project are designed not to just implement important planning efforts that may not receive funding from other sources, but to enhance those plans by funding projects that represent innovative conservation practice combinations that include stewardship of multiple ecosystem services.

Eligibility and Funding Availability

Only **private lands** are eligible for this program, most commonly those owned by individuals. Lands owned by LLCs, partnerships, non-profits, or NGOs *may* be eligible, but these ownership types require additional communication with KFS administrators in order to determine eligibility.

Lands owned by public entities, such as federal, state, and local governments, are not eligible for this funding program.

The Grantee for a KFS Landowner Assistance Grant (LAG) must be the deeded landowner. If there is more than one landowner, one of them must be designated as the Grantee, and that person will complete this form and associated financial documents required for enrollment and payment. All additional landowners are Participants.

This program utilizes funds that expire 12/31/2029, and all projects funded through this program must be entirely completed prior to that date. With limited funding available, it is anticipated that all funds will be expended well in advance of that 12/31/2029 deadline.

Funding for projects will be on a first-come, first-served basis for projects that meet criteria and are fully approved. Funding is limited, and projects that cannot be completed may have funds de-obligated in order to fund other pending projects. Specific terms and timelines within the Agreement will take precedence over this guidance document.

No payments can be made for work that takes place prior to the date on a fully-signed Agreement. An approved Application alone does not constitute approval to begin work – only a fully-signed Agreement can authorize work to proceed.

Funding cannot be used (“stacked”) with other Federal funds for conservation activities where those activities are substantially similar and on the same land. For instance, LAG funding cannot be used for a Forest Stand Improvement project on the same footprint of land where a recent NRCS EQIP 666 FSI project was implemented, within that practice lifespan. Where uncertainty arises, KFS can provide clarification and document a decision prior to an Agreement being signed.

Process and Timeline

The LAG Application can be completed by a landowner alone, or landowners may work with a private Consulting Forester to design practices and complete the Application, but a KFS forester must still review and sign the Application prior to further consideration by KFS. It is generally recommended that a landowner work directly with a KFS forester to design a project and complete an Application.

Following submission, the Application will be reviewed by the Kansas Forest Service Rural Forestry Program Coordinator to determine eligibility based on overall program guidelines. Approved applications will be signed and passed along to the next step of review.

Applications that are not approved will be returned to the forester and landowner with brief notes documenting the rationale for non-approval. Those applications may be adjusted and re-submitted for future consideration, if desired.

If approved, the Application will be reviewed by Kansas Forest Service administrative staff to determine eligibility based on financial information provided by applicant(s), and remaining unobligated funds in the program.

If the Application is approved, both the forester and applicant(s) will be formally notified of approval, and an Agreement will be created and signed in order to proceed with the project.

In order to create an Agreement, the landowner must be able to provide KFS administrative staff with appropriate documentation, which may include (but is not limited to) personal financial information such as a W-9, bank account information for direct deposit, documentation of legal ownership for land, or other documents as required. All documents with any sensitive, financial, or Personally Identifiable Information (PII) will be handled and secured according to KFS, Kansas State University, and/or USDA policies related to information security.

Applicants that cannot provide, or are not willing to provide, the necessary documents above will not be able to participate in this program.

Following implementation of practices, the forester will certify that all planned practices were completed successfully and sign off. Applicant(s) will be required to submit all required documentation prior to final payment being issued.

Specifics of the Application

Each section below has guidance related to that particular section of the application. Other questions related to the Application can be directed to the KFS Rural Forestry Program Coordinator, or the KFS administrative staff overseeing this program.

Some questions related to Federal program requirements may be directed to the relevant USDA Forest Service contact, as well. KFS will assist landowners in getting those questions answered.

Please read each section carefully, and fill out responses as they apply to the particular project. Some sections are required, and others are optional but helpful. Generally, the more complete information that is provided on this application, the better it can be reviewed for potential approval.

Contact Information

This section is required, and duplicates of this page can be included in the Application package if needed, depending on ownership organization/type.

Landowner Information

Answering “no” to the question in this section does NOT result in ineligibility. No preference is given to applicants based on responses to this question.

For a USDA tool that can be used to self-determine as a member of one of the USDA-defined groups, see <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

Project Property Information

Questions 1-5 in this section are used only to describe the project. In some cases, responses to these questions may be used to document that the project is a priority for funding, in alignment with overall funding source goals.

A “NO” answer does *not* necessarily disqualify a project from consideration for approval.

Answers to question 4 are based on the Kansas WRAP tool: <https://kansaswildfirerisk.org/>

Response to question 6 may be used to prioritize projects that have longer-term stewardship commitments.

Question 7 relates to eligibility, and should be answered carefully and further details provided if needed.

Location

This section is required, and location provided can be in several formats (PLSS, lat/long, address), depending on the project design and details.

Other Information

One category of project should be selected. Complex projects that include multiple practices, or occur in multiple phases, should be submitted separately.

- Riparian Forest Buffer Establishment
- Windbreak Renovation and Establishment
- Conservation Tree Planting
- Forest Management and Invasive Plants
- Forest Management and Wildfire Risk

Projects should generally be completed within one year of start.

Note: All projects must be completed and fully certified and reimbursed prior to Sep. 30, 2029, or reimbursement may not be available.

A detailed practice plan and schedule of practices must be attached to the Application package. Examples of acceptable formats may include, but are not limited to, Forest Stewardship Plans, NRCS forms such as ECS-5 or ECS-666, or forester-prepared practice plans.

Map(s) showing property boundary and proposed treatment areas must be attached. GIS shapefiles are preferred, but other formats (pdf, paper scans) are acceptable.

Project Details

Forest Stewardship Plans (FSP) are *not* required to participate in this program. If desired by the landowner, a FSP may be developed by the forester at no cost to the landowner, supported by other USDA FS funding.

Previous applications for financial assistance do not necessarily disqualify a project from approval. (Important: See note under “Eligibility” about stacking Federal funds.)

Landowner objectives and practices are descriptive, and are not used as approval criteria. These help with reporting requirements, and use USDA FS language provided.

Forest Management Practices

These questions are primarily for “Forest Management & Invasive Plants” and “Forest Management & Wildfire” and are descriptive, not eligibility criteria. Please fill out as many as are applicable. For projects that include Wildfire, a consultation/review with an appropriate KFS Fire program specialist should be documented and attached.

Riparian Forest Buffer Establishment Practices

These questions are primarily for “Riparian Forest Buffer” practices and are descriptive, not eligibility criteria. Please fill out as many as are applicable.

Windbreak Renovation and Establishment Practices

These questions are primarily for “Windbreak Renovation and Establishment” practices and are descriptive, not eligibility criteria. Please fill out as many as are applicable.

Conservation Tree Planting Practices

These questions are primarily for “Conservation Tree Planting” practices and are descriptive, not eligibility criteria. Please fill out as many as are applicable.

Budget

Practice payment rates are designed at an average, flat, per-acre rate that *may not fully cover all actual costs incurred*. The budget worksheet is designed to generate a project funding request amount, in the interest of clear communication between KFS and the landowner.

If Application is approved, an Agreement will be executed between KFS and the applicant, which will outline specific terms and funding amounts. No work should occur prior to agreement being fully executed by all parties. No payments will be approved prior to full project completion and certification.

At time of certification, a request may be made for an adjusted payment rate, with documentation/justification and approval by KFS staff. An adjusted (high) rate would only be considered in cases where documented costs exceeded the approved per-acre rate by 50% or more.

The table provided is intended only to generate a project budget **estimate**. Acres treated should reflect the forester's best estimate of actual project area. Adjustments in acreage must be pre-approved by KFS prior to implementation, or they may not be eligible for additional funding. Payment will be based on final treated and approved area at time of certification.

Application Approvals

Signature sections are listed in the order they will be processed.

Signatures can be via digital (pdf) or "wet" ink signatures on printed copies of this complete application. Digital signatures on a pdf are preferred whenever possible.

Copies of the fully signed application will be provided to the landowner.

Certification

This section is included on the Application for reference, and eventual certification. It does not need to be completed until the landowner notifies the forester of project completion after an Agreement is in place.

If the project is unable to be completed, after an Agreement is in place, the terms in the Agreement will determine payment status and/or de-obligation of funds. This section is only to link those situations to the original application, for record-keeping purposes.