

Questions and Answers

Establishing Large Forests – Open Application

Closes Thursday January 2, 2025 and will be posted every week on SFS Grants Management throughout the application period on the Search for Grant Opportunities page for ELF [Search for Grant Opportunities](#)

Week 1 Questions:

Question: How long do I have to complete my forest practice?

Answer: If awarded, the landowner will have two and a half to three (2.5-3) years to complete the practice and will need to sign a contract with New York State.

Week 0 Questions:

Question: What is the Establishing Large Forests (ELF) Grant?

Answer: The Establishing Large Forest [Grant Program](#) is intended to provide state financial support to establish new forested areas through reimbursement for preparation, tree planting, protection from deer, monitoring and maintenance activities on non-industrial private lands. The goal of this grant is to target large-scale, “shovel ready” tree planting projects that will help the State reach its ambitious climate change mitigation targets.

Question: Who is eligible for grant funding?

Answer: Any non-industrial landowner private landowner planning a project on 5 acres of forestland or land suitable for establishing forestland (if planting) may apply for and receive funding. Eligibility thresholds apply to a single tax parcel or multiple tax parcels which are contiguous (adjacent) to each other. The applicant must include a plan to maintain their practices in their work plan. Bidders may also be companies or organizations acting on behalf of non-industrial private landowners. Examples may include quasi-government agencies (e.g., SWCD), a private forestry business, a natural resource business focused on tree planting, and not-for-profit (NFP) corporations. Companies or organizations acting on behalf of non-industrial private landowners that submit a bid must accept full responsibility for the project, including meeting post-award requirements needed for contract execution, receiving and disbursing funds related to the

grant, and administering the requirements throughout the DEC grant process, including reporting of grant activity.

Question: What is a Fiscal Sponsor?

Answer: A fiscal sponsor is an organization including a quasi-government agency (SWCD), a private forestry business, natural resource business focused on tree planting, NFP organization that applies to DEC on behalf of individuals or unincorporated organizations or groups. For ELF, a landowner would need to provide a letter of agreement, via the Statewide Financial System, from the organization as proof that it agrees to become a landowner's fiscal sponsor. The letter of agreement will need to be uploaded to the grants gateway as part of the grant application process. Because the organization is taking on the cost of installing the practices in place of the landowner, the organization will get reimbursed instead of the landowner. Land trusts and other conservation organizations (SWCDs) that work with forest landowners may fit well as a fiscal sponsor.

Question: How can ELF help me?

Answer: The ELF grant will fully reimburse private landowners for the cost of tree planting, and any associated practices designed to establish, enhance, and protect tree plantings on their property.

Question: Do I have to pay a matching amount?

Answer: No. The ELF Grant is designed to provide the landowner with 100% of the project bid amount.

Question: Is there anything different with the Federal Funding component to the ELF Grant?

Answer: Yes! Bidders will have to complete federal requirements, including submission of a Customer Data Worksheet (AD-2047), certifying highly erodible land conservation (HEL) and wetland conservation (WC) compliance through Form AD-1026, and contact a [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\) office](#) to obtain a Farm ID, Tract ID and Field ID. After the award but before project implementation, DEC will conduct an environmental evaluation for the project (CPA-52), and highly erodible land/wetland determinations that may impact the project. Further explanation can be found under Grant Opportunity General Information and Conditions section 7, paragraph I Federal Requirements, which starts on page 18 of the RFB.

Question: What practices qualify for ELF?

Answer: An ELF project must be an afforestation project (planting project). There are a variety of practices available to aid in the planting project's success including site preparation, competing vegetation control, and deer exclosures (including slash walls). Practice details can be found at the DEC [ELF website](#) and in the [Request for Applications](#). **All applicants must have a tree planting centric practice.**

Question: How do I get started?

Answer: Potential applicants can search and view grant opportunities by visiting [SFS Public Portal Homepage](#) or go to sfs.ny.gov/Search for grant opportunities then search the list for "ELF". To apply, applicants must first register for access to the Statewide Financial System. To register please follow the directions at [Register Your Organization in SFS | Grants Management \(ny.gov\)](#). **It can take a few weeks to receive access.** Once you receive a username and pin/password you are eligible to login to begin the application process. It is recommended that your forester assist you with the project details, but the landowner must be the person who starts and submits the application.

Question: I have a Forest Stewardship Plan for part of my property, is that enough?

Answer: No. While a Forest Stewardship Plan is a sound beginning for planning forestry practices, a Practice Template form and a work plan must be developed through the Grants Gateway by the landowner working closely with a consulting forester or natural resource professional (for planting projects only).

Question: What are the elements of a work plan?

Answer: A work plan is developed by the landowner and consulting forester. Basic information such as the initial condition of your project area, the desired future condition, and the methods you will use to meet the desired future condition. Other elements may be required depending on the practice and are explained further in the standards and specifications of each approved practice. A robust summary of the project is needed, as the Work Plan becomes part of the final contract, and subsequent progress reporting. This can be achieved by compiling all the answers for the scored questions and then adding items such as property history. See section 7. Grant Opportunity General Information and Conditions, part e) Work Plan and section 8. Bid Evaluation and Scoring Criteria, Step 2: Project Evaluation, Scoring and Selection in the RFB, for more information. Additionally, APPENDIX 6 – Sample Work Plan & Objective Worksheet can be used for to gather information prior to entering into SFS Grant Management.

Question: Is there a limit to the amount of funds I can receive?

Answer: Kind of. Minimum grant amount per project is \$30,000; Maximum grant amount per project is \$750,000. For further explanation please check section 2. Grant Information, c) Minimum and Maximum Award Amounts and Bid Limits, on page 4 of the RFB.

Question: Do I need to hire a private forester or natural resource professional to qualify for an ELF grant?

Answer: Yes. To be eligible for funding, a landowner needs to hire a private forester or a natural resource professional. Foresters can be hired to complete the project planning, administration, and operations-related forestry services which are reimbursable under the program. A qualified natural resources professional can be used for planning and implementing tree planting projects.

Question: Can the landowner complete some of the work on the project?

Answer: Yes. The landowner can perform some work and get reimbursed as part of the grant. Details are available in the ELF Request For Bids.

Question: Where can I go to hire a forester or other contractor?

Answer: There are several options. First, visit the [DEC Cooperating Forester Directory](#). Cornell Cooperative Extension also provides information on [working with foresters](#). Recommendations for other contractors can be made through your forester, neighbors, or others.

Question: How long will it take until I receive my cost-share payment?

Answer: As part of the contracting process, the grantees will supply a W-9 tax form to facilitate payments from New York State. Once you complete the practices, you must submit documentation of the actual costs (paid invoices, canceled checks, receipts, landowner work log, etc.) of installing the practices. The DEC will authorize the cost share payment within 30 days of receiving all of the required documentation from the applicant. It may take an additional 30 days for the State to issue the reimbursement payment. A field inspection by DEC may be needed prior to payment.

Question: What are the tax implications of cost-share payments?

Answer: Landowners must consult with a tax professional to determine their own tax liability.

Question: If a property is owned by a municipality but a non-profit organization has a legally binding agreement to maintain, manage and operate the property is the property eligible?

Answer: No, the property is not eligible due to the property being owned by a municipality.

Question: Why am I unable to view the grant opportunity when signed into SFS.

Answer: Please ensure your roles are correct in SFS Grants Management (you may need to request these from the SFS help desk by emailing sfs.sm.HelpDesk@sfs.ny.gov). If you don't have the proper grant management roles you will not be able to view or start an application. You can view the grant opportunity without logging in to SFS Grants Management at sfs.ny.gov then go to Vendor, Search for Grant Opportunities then scroll down the list until you see "ELF".

Question: I have a current Regenerate NY grant at the moment. Is this something I can work in concert with my current Regenerate plan?

Answer: No, this grant would need to be for a separate piece of land, as you cannot have two **current** grants on the same property. Do you have a minimum of 5 open acres that you would like to plant? Have you recently closed out a RNY project that treated a site and is now ready to be reforested quickly or had a harvest 10-20 years ago, with a subsequent regeneration failure? If so, go ahead and apply.