2016 ATFS Grant Program

The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) invites all state Tree Farm committees to submit proposals to fund projects to be completed in 2016.

When the ATFS program began in 1941, many Americans doubted whether our forests and their resources could meet the burgeoning needs of society. Throughout its history, ATFS has proved that well-managed family-owned forests can meet this country’s need for wood and wood fiber, as well as wildlife habitat, clean water and air, and recreational opportunities. Today, faced with rapid changes in land ownership as well as the global business environment, we must push forward and meet these new challenges if we are to continue to reap these immense benefits of forests. As we mark our 75th Anniversary in 2016, now is the time to evolve and strengthen ATFS, and prove that woodland owners still have the passion and the willpower to ensure our forests remain as forests.

Stepping forward in 2016, we hope to build a stronger ATFS program, one that will support state committees to empower current and future woodland owners to meet the demands of forest stewardship. We seek a greater impact on restoring and enhancing critical forest lands through strategic marketing campaigns. And we hope to prepare the next generation of land owners. We encourage committees to create grant proposals that address these themes. As partners, we can all step forward and ensure the future of ATFS is as fertile as the past.

The ATFS Grant Program Guidelines

To apply for an ATFS Grant, state committees may choose from a selection of projects that address current opportunities and needs facing the program nationally. Committees are encouraged to create new and innovative ways – thinking outside the box – to accomplish their selected project(s). All projects should address an annual or strategic goal identified by the state Tree Farm committee’s 3-5 year strategic plan.

Committees may apply for up to the maximum level of funding identified per project.

Tree Farm committees are required to provide a 50% match for their project. Examples of match contributions include cost sharing, matching funds, third party donations/sponsorships, cash, in kind, and overhead. Identify the third party or co-sponsor if they are providing matching funds or support.

Committees may apply for no more than two projects. Each project must be submitted using its own application.

Projects may require a prerequisite and/or assistance from ATFS staff.

ATFS will not award partial funding.
*Note: The ATFS Grant Program will no longer include travel assistance to attend the National Leadership Conference. NLC Travel assistance will be provided through a separate reimbursement process.

General Grant Information

Applicant Eligibility
Eligible applicants are state Tree Farm committees. The current Tree Farm Chair, Vice or Co-Chair must approve all grant proposals. Since proposals are submitted electronically, an e-mail from the Chair, Vice or Co-Chair stating approval of the proposal is sufficient. To be eligible for funding, Committees must be up-to-date on all annual program, financial, and previous grant reporting.

Grant Term
Proposals for continuing projects and multi-year projects must be submitted annually and for a one year grant term. Funding cannot be guaranteed beyond one year of a proposed multi-year project. New projects will generally be favored over continuing projects, unless extraordinary success has been demonstrated.

Grant Acknowledgement
All final project materials and events should clearly state that “Funding from the American Tree Farm System®, a program of the American Forest Foundation, helped make the project possible.”

Grant Reporting – Please Read Carefully

In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the ATFS Grant program and to ensure future support for these funding opportunities, we must have a record of measurable outcomes, successful projects and an understanding of lessons learned and best practices.

Therefore, a requirement for all approved projects is a summary report (using the template provided) to be due March 15 of the year immediately following the project year. The report must include detailed and measurable results as well as a record of expenditures. Any unused portion of the grant must accompany the report. States may be asked to share reports at the National Leadership Conference and other venues.

Please Note: If there are any special circumstances that require deviation from the schedule of funds distribution and project completion/reporting, it is imperative that the Committee contact the national office in a timely manner before any reporting deadlines. ATFS will withhold new funding for states that have received grant funds in previous years but have not provided a full report on said projects.
Deadlines and Important Dates

Participate in the ATFS Grants Program webinar on **August 12, 2015 at 12:00 p.m.** to have your questions answered and hear ideas from committees and staff.

Complete and submit the online project application forms for 2016 ATFS Grant projects by **September 9, 2015.**

You will be notified in November whether or not your project will receive funding.

Pending submission of completed annual roster, program, financial and any previous grant reports, state committees may begin receiving grant funds as early as mid-February 2016. Committees that do not turn in all required reporting by March 15, 2016 will forfeit their grant funds. Forfeited funds will be returned to the ATFS Grant account and may be made available to committees throughout the year for special projects.

Implementation of the project should be completed by December 31, 2016.

A final report must be submitted using the online template provided no later than March 15, 2017. Required reporting templates will be distributed and posted to Leaders Only.

ATFS Grant Projects

1. Develop and implement solutions to recruit, foster and retain a diverse and engaged network of state leaders and volunteers. **($10,000 max)**

2. Implement a continuous improvement project to address nonconformities or opportunities for improvement identified by recent state or regional assessment findings. **($10,000 max)**

3. Create and test a financially sustainable model for landowner events that increases traditional attendance levels, can be replicated in other states or regions, and demonstrates impact on attendee’s stewardship actions. **($10,000 max)**

4. Implement a project that addresses a priority identified in your state program’s strategic plan (for projects that do not fall within options 1-3). **($10,000 max)**
   - Prerequisite: Must submit copy of strategic plan with grant proposal.

5. 75th Anniversary ATFS Internship Program Pilot: Cultivate rising talent and bring disciplinary diversity to your committee by retaining a paid intern to support the function of your committee and state program. **($3,000 max)**
   - Required: Proposal must include travel and participation in either the 2016 or 2017 National Leadership Conference.
Best Practices for Developing Proposals and Reports

The following are recommendations for developing proposals and reports:

1. **Your project proposal should include a written process outlining how you plan to evaluate the outcomes/outputs in a measurable and quantifiable way.** If your proposal is accepted, your report will need to include the results of your initial and final evaluations. Results should include actual data, not just summary information.

2. **Your project proposal needs to include an element of on-the-ground follow-up, and if accepted, your project report must reflect the effort made during this follow-up.** Examples of on-the-ground follow-up include: if hosting a workshop, a plan to continue to engage participants after the workshop; if sending a mailing, a plan to follow up with those who responded to the mailing; if developing a brochure, including a website or contact information and ensuring that there is a process to follow up with interested people.

3. **If your project involves hosting an event, document the event and include any photos or video in the submitted report.** In your proposal, include future plans to use the photos and videos to share your state’s Tree Farm story. Please also include how you will incorporate the ATFS values and messages found in the ATFS Brand Book.

4. **Your proposal must include an accurate and reasonable estimate for the project’s budget and timeline.** Develop a system to track your project’s budget and timeline and include this information, as well as any deviations, in your project’s final report.

5. **Negative outcomes are just as important as positive outcomes.** You will not be penalized if your project fails to achieve its goals. In your report, include why you think the outcome was negative, lessons learned from the project and some ideas for improving the project in the future. These lessons learned will be particularly helpful for other committees as they work to develop future proposals.