2017 ATFS Grant Program

The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) invites all state Tree Farm committees in good standing to submit proposals to fund projects to be completed in 2017.

ATFS is a program that seeks to engage family woodland owners in forest stewardship that results in meaningful and measurable impacts through a robust and healthy network of state committees and volunteers. Implementation of the State’s Voice, State’s Choice initiative was an essential step in achieving our mission of impact. By asking Tree Farm committees to select the pathway most suitable to their state program and establishing strategic plans, MOUs and annual benchmarks, we have taken important steps toward strengthening the credibility and sustainability of our program for the future.

The goal of the 2017 ATFS Grant Program is to support the ongoing strategic efforts that Tree Farm committees have already begun while also prioritizing support to proposals that demonstrate a commitment to:

- Ensuring the credibility of ATFS by addressing nonconformities or opportunities for improvement identified by recent state or regional assessment findings;
- Establishing a sustainable committee and volunteer structure that includes strategies around leadership development, volunteer recruitment & engagement, as well as financial viability at the grassroots level.
- Where available, working collaboratively with members of AFF’s regional conservation staff to utilize strategic marketing and landowner outreach techniques that may result in impacts on sustainable fiber delivery, water protection and wildlife habitat in critical areas, as identified in AFF’s regional assessments.

ATFS Grant Project Options

1. Implement a project that addresses a priority identified in your state program’s strategic plan. ($20,000 max)
   - Prerequisite: Must submit copy of strategic plan with grant proposal.

2. 75th Anniversary ATFS Internship Program Pilot (Year Two): 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. ($3,500 max)
   - Required: Proposal must include travel and participation in either the 2017 or 2018 National Leadership Conference.
The ATFS Grant Program Guidelines

All proposals must address an annual or strategic goal identified by the state Tree Farm committee’s 3-5 year strategic plan, and proposals should demonstrate how the project clearly addresses the strategic goal.

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

Committees may submit up to two projects. Each proposal must be submitted using its own application.

The maximum amount of grant funding that any committee can receive, regardless of the number of proposals submitted, is $20,000. For example, you may choose to submit one proposal for $20,000 total, or two proposals at $15,000 and $5,000.

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.

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 3, 2016 at noon EDT to have your questions answered and hear ideas from committees and staff.

Complete and submit the online project application forms for 2017 ATFS Grant projects by September 30, 2016.

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 2017. Committees that do not turn in all required reporting by March 15, 2017 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, 2017.

A final report must be submitted using the online template provided no later than March 15, 2018. Required reporting templates will be distributed and posted to Leaders Only.
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.