SEFS 2027 Request for Proposals
McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Program

Overview

The McIntire-Stennis (MS) Cooperative Forestry Research Program awards federal funding for forestry research and graduate education programs at State-certified schools of forestry and Land-Grant Institutions in the United States. The original legislation that provided this funding, a bipartisan initiative of Congressman Clifford McIntire (R) of Maine and Senator John Stennis (D) of Mississippi, was signed by President Kennedy in 1962. MS Program funds are distributed to each state based on a formula that considers the non-federal commercial forestland area, the annual timber harvest volume, and total non-federal forestry research expenditures. Funds are administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

The University of Washington has received MS funding since the first year of this program. SEFS distributes the award via an annual internal RFP process. The goals of the MS program align with the SEFS vision to provide world-class, internationally-recognized knowledge and leadership for environmental and natural resource issues by providing support for faculty-led forestry research and graduate student training.

Purpose

The purpose of the MS Program is to:

1. Increase forestry research on forest productivity, utilization, and protection;
2. Train future forestry scientists; and
3. Involve other disciplines in forestry research.

Eligibility

All proposed MS projects must fall into one or more of seven legislatively mandated forestry research areas:

1. Reforestation and management of land for the production of crops of timber and other related products of the forest;
2. Management of forest and related watershed lands to improve conditions of water flow and to protect resources against floods and erosion;
3. Management of forest and related rangeland for production of forage for domestic livestock and game and improvement of food and habitat for wildlife; management of forest lands for outdoor recreation;
4. Protection of forest land and resources against fire, insects, diseases, or other destructive agents;
5. Utilization of wood and other forest products;
6. Development of sound policies for the management of forest lands and the harvesting and marketing of forest products; and

7. Other studies as may be necessary to obtain the fullest and most effective use of forest resources.

In addition, proposed projects should address one or more of the three critical goals as described in the current MS Strategic Plan:

1. Create the future generation of forestry educators, scientists, and practitioners through graduate education;
2. Build and sustain strategic relationships that enhance overall program effectiveness and support; and
3. Communicate and educate the importance, impact, and successes of the McIntire-Stennis Program.

SEFS MS Program Guidelines

SEFS MS program awards are dependent upon available NIFA funding.

SEFS encourages PIs to use MS funding to support graduate students during the quarters of their choosing over the project period (March 29th, 2027 – September 15th, 2028). Faculty who are awarded funds may begin spending in the Spring quarter. Faculty are encouraged to use funds for students at any level of their graduate education. Priority is given to current SEFS students.

Faculty who serve as PI for a McIntire Stennis funded proposal are excluded from the competition for the next 2 years after the conclusion of their project. However, these faculty can serve as co-PIs for new projects.

One UW Worktag will be used for the entire award period. Purchases of supplies or equipment must be conducted before the end of the award period, and materials must be received in time for legitimate use on the project.

Due to USDA-NIFA policies, any foreign travel for MS projects must receive prior approval from the sponsor, and MS funds may not be subcontracted to non-UW entities.

SEFS 2027 MS RFP Deadlines

Submissions are due by end of day on Friday, November 6, 2026.

Awards will be announced by December 18, 2026.

All internally selected projects must submit a formal proposal to USDA-NIFA 8 weeks before the start date of their projects. If you plan to begin in Spring 2027, your project initiation must be submitted by January 8th, 2027. Further details and the required template will be provided to award recipients upon signing.

Research cannot begin until it has been formally approved by NIFA.

Application Instructions

1. **Complete the SEFS MS Cover Sheet (form included at the bottom of this PDF).**

2. **Prepare a White Paper** no longer than 4 pages, single-spaced, 11pt font minimum, that meets the following requirements:

    a. Provides a summary of the scientific project, including objectives and methods, as well as expected results. Addresses the program criteria listed above in the "Eligibility" section. (2 pages maximum)
    b. Includes a budget justification. (1 page maximum)
    c. Includes References Cited as needed. (1 page maximum)

3. **Draft a Project Budget** using the McIntire Stennis Budget Template that meets the following requirements:

    a. Includes the level of funding for the type of graduate student you anticipate hiring. You may budget up to $100,000 in student support, using the support in any quarter desired.
    b. Includes any required project essentials such as supplies and travel costs, not to exceed $5,000 per proposal.
    c. Per USDA-NIFA requirements, indirect costs and direct tuition are not allowed in the budget. Use Schedule 3 payments for graduate student funding.
    d. Describes how you will meet the 1:1 cost sharing obligation. For every dollar in award funds, one dollar in cost sharing is required using non-federal funds. Refer to the SEFS Cost Share Policy for additional information.

4. Submit your proposal packet via email by **Friday, November 6, 2026** to SEFS Budget/Fiscal Analyst Lead **Tricia O'Hara** (tjohara@uw.edu).

Please note: Letters of support and/or collaboration, CVs, survey instruments, etc. will not be evaluated and should not be included as supplements to the proposal.

Questions about the application? Email Tricia (tjohara@uw.edu) and/or join her Zoom office hours at the times below

- **October 14th, 20th, 28th**
- 10:30-11:30am
- Zoom link

Proposal Review Process

The SEFS Research Committee, which includes faculty and student representatives, serves as the evaluation panel for each internal SEFS MS Program RFP review process. Ad-hoc evaluators are invited if the panel requires additional expertise in determining scientific merit. Committee members with a conflict of interest (for example, those who are PI or co-PI on current submissions) are excluded from the review process. Each reviewer on the panel is assigned an anonymous username and enters their scores in an online worksheet for each proposal.

Evaluation Criteria

1. **MS Goals and Priority Areas (20% of final score):** The 250-word statement on the SEFS MS Cover Sheet must clearly address the criteria listed above in the "Eligibility" section. Failure to do so will disqualify the proposal. Quality and relevance of connections to these criteria are also evaluated.

2. **Scientific Merit (50% of final score):** The scientific merit of the proposed research is the fundamental criterion upon which proposals will be evaluated. The proposal should clearly articulate what you consider to be the scientific merit and this should be evident within the first section of the proposal. The committee will also evaluate the likelihood that the research will lead to new discoveries or fundamental advances within that field, or have substantial impact on progress in that field or in other fields.

3. **Research Feasibility (10% of final score):** The Research Committee will evaluate the capability of the investigator(s), technical soundness of the proposed approach, and adequacy of the resources available.

4. **SEFS Goals (20% of final score):** In addition to the above core criteria, the Research Committee will evaluate whether or not the project is likely to achieve the following:

    a. Forges new collaborations among SEFS faculty, or among SEFS faculty and the wider community of scholars and practitioners (+1 point)
    b. Provides bridge support for faculty with a proven history of funding (+1 point)
    c. Broadens participation in forestry research and engages student groups or external communities who may have not been included in the past. (+2 points)

    Remember that faculty whose proposals were selected in 2025 or 2026 may still serve as co-PIs for new projects.

Scoring

Criteria 1-3 will be scored using a 5-point system based on the UW Royalty Research Fund (RRF) program, as summarized below:

5.0 Excellent	You expect that this proposal would be in the top 5% of proposals in this disciplinary area (top of the first quartile); highest priority for support. This category should be used only for truly outstanding proposals.
4.0 Very Good	You expect that this proposal would not be in the top 5%, but in the next 20% of proposals in this disciplinary area (within the first quartile); should be supported.
3.0 Good	You expect that this proposal would not be in the top 25%, but in the top 50% of proposals in this disciplinary area (within the second quartile); worthy of consideration for support.
2.0 Fair	You expect that this proposal would be in the bottom 50% of proposals in this disciplinary area.
1.0 Poor	This proposal has serious deficiencies; should not be supported.

Evaluation Equation

Weighted Summary Score = (Criterion 1*0.2) + (Criterion 2*0.5) + (Criterion 3*0.1) + (Criterion 4*0.2)

Where Criteria 1 to 3 are 1 to 5 points, and Criterion 4 is 0 to 4 points

Cost sharing is excluded from the evaluation, and proposed budget amount is not part of the selection criteria.

SEFS 2027 McIntire-Stennis RFP
Cover Sheet

Please complete this two-page form and include it with your White Paper submission.

PI: Name(s) Rank, and Affiliations:

A. How many years of funding are you applying for? ☐ 1 Year ☐ 2 Years

B. What percentage of your Project Budget is Graduate Student Support? _____

C. How many quarters (at 20 hours/week) is the student funded for? _____

D. Did the lead PI(s) receive MS funding in the 2025 or 2026 competitions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please specify the project title(s): _____

Lead PIs that received MS awards in the 2025 and 2026 competitions are excluded from the competition for two consecutive years. However, they may serve as co-PIs for new projects.

E. Did the lead PI(s) submit interim and final reports for past MS projects on time? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Past due reports will disqualify the proposal.

F. Does your proposal forge new collaborations among SEFS faculty, and or among SEFS faculty and the wider community of scholars and practitioners? *These collaborations should be clearly identified in the proposal text* ☐ Yes ☐ No

G. Does your proposal provide bridge support for faculty with a proven history of funding? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, provide an additional one-page justification.

H. Does the White Paper integrate SEFS Goals (outlined in the evaluation criteria section) into the project? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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Explain how you will support your graduate student in quarters not supported (or not fully supported) by McIntire Stennis? (600 character limit, approximately 100 words):

MS Goals and Priority Areas

For eligibility, all proposed MS projects must fall into one or more of seven legislatively mandated forestry research areas listed in **NIFA's 2026 MS RFP** Check all that apply:

- ☐ Reforestation and management of land for the production of crops of timber and other related products of the forest;
- ☐ Management of forest and related watershed lands to improve conditions of water flow and to protect resources against floods and erosion;
- ☐ Management of forest and related rangeland for production of forage for domestic livestock and game and improvement of food and habitat for wildlife; management of forest lands for outdoor recreation;
- ☐ Protection of forest land and resources against fire, insects, diseases, or other destructive agents;
- ☐ Utilization of wood and other forest products;
- ☐ Development of sound policies for the management of forest lands and the harvesting and marketing of forest products; and
- ☐ Other studies as may be necessary to obtain the fullest and most effective use of forest resources.

In addition, proposed projects should address three critical goals as described in NIFA's current MS Strategic Plan. Check all that apply:

- ☐ Create the future generation of forestry educators, scientists, and practitioners through graduate education;
- ☐ Build and sustain strategic relationships that enhance overall program effectiveness and support; and
- ☐ Communicate and educate the importance, impact, and successes of the McIntire-Stennis Program.

Explain the relevance of your project to the research area(s) and goal(s) you checked above (1250 character limit, approximately 250 words):