

## **Tips from this Year's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) National Review Panel**

Below are observations from this year's FLP National Review Panel on the submitted project briefs. The goal of this document is to help States and their partners maximize the point potential of their project briefs. These tips are polishing remarks- suggestions to help your project shine to its fullest.

### **General Description**

- The purpose of the general description is to offer an overview that piques the interest of the reviewer and allows the reviewer to quickly recall the project at a later time. Specific information used to score the project should be repeated in the bullets under the appropriate criteria.
- It is useful to tell the reviewer in the general description whether a project is a Fee or Easement and who will be holding that land or interest in land. In addition, reviewers found it useful to capitalize FEE or EASEMENT in the general description for identification purposes.

### **Formatting and Bulleting**

- Reviewers reported that they found it helpful when the bullets were titled with the scoring sub-criteria categories for the year the project is being considered as they applied to the project. However, it is not necessary to waste your word count and label every single bullet with the appropriate sub-criteria category. Reviewers suggest labeling each bullet that begins a new sub-criteria category. Reviewers preferred it when the criteria category was in ALL CAPS. See sub-criteria categories below from the FY2015 project selection:

Criteria	Sub-Criteria
IMPORTANCE	Economic Benefits from Timber and Potential Forest Productivity - Economic Benefits from Non-timber Products - Threatened or Endangered Species Habitat - Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities Water Supply, Aquatic Habitat, and Watershed Protection - Public Access - Scenic - Historic/Cultural/Tribal –
THREATENED	Lack of Protection - Land and Landowners Circumstances - Adjacent Land Use - Ability to Develop -
STRATEGIC	Conservation Initiative, Strategy, or Plan - (Additionally identify if it is an International, National, Multi-State, State, etc. Strategy or plan) Complement Protected Lands –

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### **Content**

- Reviewers suggest familiarizing yourself with the scoring guidance early and often. Partners are a great labor source for content and review but may not understand how the information fits into the important, threatened, and strategic categories. Extraneous information or information placed in the wrong criteria may not receive points.
- Peer review for a project brief is key to ensuring the project brief is clean, clear, and concise.
- Clear content is important. If reviewers cannot understand what the bullets point is stating, then they cannot grant points.
- Err on the side of being more specific than general in your descriptions (e.g. if you project has a goat prairie habitat, explain what the habitat is and why it is rare).
- Fluff content is easy to spot and lowers your project's credibility. Be clear about what the property will accomplish. Project briefs often pull in lots of important details on the wider geographic area, but the project may not protect those important attributes.
- There is a fine line between providing supporting information and being repetitive.
  - Supporting information within a category example: make sure to support your importance bullets by highlighting how forests will protect and or enhance those items.
  - Supporting information amongst categories example: support your importance criteria by citing how the preservation of that importance criterion is critical to larger strategic initiatives in the strategic category.

### **Quantitative Data**

- Ensure that your acres in the brief add-up to what has been entered into the Forest Legacy Information System (FLIS). If your project is 2,473 acres, do not refer to it in the text as a 2,400-acre project, refer to the actual acreage.
- Data can be time sensitive. Older statistics may not be the strongest method to validate a fact, particularly in the threatened category.
- Use the appropriate quantitative analysis for the data (e.g. when citing population for a city. use a standard metric referenced by the professionals in the real estate field).
- Remember to round costs to the nearest \$5,000. When quantifying economic impact of an activity or industry in dollars, it is best to use only three significant digits.

### **Grammar, Misspellings, and Abbreviations**

- A common sentiment among all reviewers was the regret that some projects did not stand-out due to spelling and grammar mistakes. While FLIS has a user friendly spell check, it does not cover most grammar blunders. Keep on the look-out for some of the repeat offenders highlighted below:

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- Review for homophones- words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings. For example, compliment, with an "i" is a kind or flattering remark. Complement with an "e" refers to something that completes or goes well with something.
- Use "US" when referring to the United States as a noun. Use "U.S." when the United States is being used as an adjective.
- Impactful is not a word. "Impact" can be used as a noun.
- If you are using "this" as a demonstrative pronoun it must limit the meaning of a noun in that sentence.
- Do not assume that all reviewers know common acronyms. It is best to spell-out the acronym first and then use the acronym if word count is an issue. The exception might be when identifying a city in a state (e.g. Durham, NH).

### **Photos**

- Photos in the project brief should pertain to the project tracts (e.g. photos of forest on project land, photos of endangered species on project land, or photos of recreation on project land). Pictures of the project's conservation resources resonated with reviewers.
- Ensure the photos are not too dark. Photos can easily be lightened using Microsoft Picture Manager.
- For those who utilize maps as one of their photos, make sure the map is not overly detailed since the size of those maps are small.

### **Detailed Project Map**

- First impressions matter. Many reviewers indicated that map was the first item they reviewed on a project brief. If the map was difficult to read, reviewers became confused from the outset about why the project was important, threatened, or strategic.
- It is important to ensure that the project brief content and the map tell the same story and that the story is accurate (e.g. if a proposed tract is being highlighted for its public recreation amenities and none of those amenities are identified on the map, then you make it difficult for reviewers to give you full points for that attribute). Remember if the proximity of features are highlighted in the brief, make sure they also appear on the map.
- The information portrayed on map should be clear, concise, and easy to read. Some map style suggestions are below:
  - The reviewers suggest reserving bright colors for project area and other FLP areas (e.g. highlight the proposed FLP project tracts in red). Other protected lands are easy to spot as saturated earth tones (e.g. gradient shades of green to differentiate federal, state and privately conserved land). The map is easier to analyze if the base map should be light gray or a neutral color so it does not distract from the map message.
  - Do label FLP tracts on the map with the year funded, proposed, or completed.

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- Do not clutter the map with unnecessary labels (e.g. local roads that don't pertain to navigation to the property).
- Scale the project map to show how the project tracts fit into the area's conservation landscape. If the map is too localized, reviewers cannot understand how it ties to other conserved land. Conversely, if the map area is too large, it may be difficult to see what is adjacent to the proposed tracts. Reviewers state that if you are having hard time finding the map scale sweet spot, you may want to consider developing a regional inset map to show where the project area is located within the state and to highlight conserved lands nearby.

## ***Thank You Panelists!***

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This document as well as other valuable resources is available electronically at:

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