

# SENTINEL LANDSCAPES



## Guidance for the 2021 Sentinel Landscape Application Process

This document provides guidance on the 2021 sentinel landscape application process, including information on eligibility, process, timeline, and evaluation criteria. Representatives from the partnership will be available to meet with prospective applicants and answer questions regarding the designation cycle on **February 3<sup>rd</sup> from 1:00 PM ET – 2:30 PM ET during a live [help session webinar](#)**. If you have additional questions or comments, please contact Jaime Simon at [jaime.e.simon.civ@mail.mil](mailto:jaime.e.simon.civ@mail.mil) or Megan Dougherty at [dougherty\\_megan@bah.com](mailto:dougherty_megan@bah.com).

### Overview:

The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership is a coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that works to advance mutually beneficial land-use goals in project areas known as sentinel landscapes. The partnership was established in 2013 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Defense (DoD), and Department of the Interior (DOI) and later affirmed in statute under the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

The partnership's mission is to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies, and increase resilience to climate change. The partnership accomplishes this by connecting private landowners around military installations with voluntary government assistance programs that offset the costs of sustainable management practices, conservation projects, or climate change adaptation measures. By aligning these programs in targeted locations and encouraging interagency collaboration, the partnership generates value beyond what USDA, DoD, and DOI can accomplish independently.

Representatives from USDA, DoD, and DOI coordinate the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership at the national level through the Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC). One of the main responsibilities of the FCC is to award sentinel landscape designations on a biennial basis. A typical sentinel landscape is anchored by at least one military installation; encompasses agricultural and forestry lands; and would significantly benefit from natural resource restoration efforts such as water quality and quantity improvement, disaster risk reduction, or wildlife habitat enhancement.

While the three founding agencies maintain oversight of the partnership, sentinel landscapes are predominantly local enterprises. Each sentinel landscape is unique in its land cover, economic drivers, cultural heritage, and natural resource challenges. Therefore, the FCC relies on a network of states, local governments, academic institutions, and private organizations to implement projects on the ground. Working throughout all tiers of government and within the private sector enables sentinel landscapes to address the needs of local communities while also advancing USDA's, DoD's, and DOI's mission priorities.

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## Benefits of Designation:

There are numerous benefits to being selected as a sentinel landscape.

1. Upon receiving a designation, sentinel landscapes receive funding from the FCC to hire a partnership coordinator. This individual serves as a liaison between local stakeholders and agency headquarters. They also work to build relationships among local defense, conservation, and agricultural partners.
2. Partner agencies at the federal and state level may choose to provide program specific funding or give priority consideration in existing funding processes to landowners within sentinel landscapes through actions that include:
  - a. Revising funding and award guidance to recognize the benefit of the sentinel landscape designation;
  - b. Providing priority consideration for landowners within sentinel landscapes under existing funding guidance; or
  - c. Encouraging landowners and other eligible entities within designated sentinel landscapes to apply for funding or technical aid from government assistance programs aligned with the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership.
3. A designation will lead to improved recognition at the local, state, and national levels for projects within the sentinel landscape. The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership provides a framework to identify and market projects using a prominent national designation;
4. A sentinel landscape designation can improve communication and coordination among government agencies, private organizations, and local communities, which can lead to greater information sharing among partners and increased landowner participation in government assistance programs. Furthermore, by representing an array of interests within a defined landscape—including national security, conservation, and agricultural interests—sentinel landscapes broaden the spectrum of willing landowners with which participating entities can engage;
5. A sentinel landscape designation provides local partnerships with an organized framework for the exchange of ideas and lessons learned with other sentinel landscapes nationwide. Local partnerships may also elevate problems that they encounter in meeting their goals to the FCC, which will support collaborative efforts within designated areas at the federal level.

## Fundamental Components

To be considered for a sentinel landscape designation, proposals must have the following components:

1. **Military Mission:** Proposals must include one or more military installations or ranges that would benefit from efforts that increase compatible land use outside their fence lines or enhance their resilience to climate change.
2. **Goals and Objectives:** Proposals must include at least three but no more than six goals and corresponding objectives that support the partnership's mission priorities listed below. Goals should read as broad statements of what partners hope to accomplish in the sentinel landscape, while objectives should read as end-products that support each goal. To the extent possible, objectives should be specific, measurable, realistic, and time framed.

### Mission Priorities:

- Increase military installation resilience by addressing key encroachment and natural resource challenges;
  - Maintain and improve agricultural productivity or forest health;
  - Increase the viability of threatened, endangered, and at-risk species by enhancing wildlife habitat;
  - Maintain or improve water quality and quantity;
  - Mitigate vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change;
  - Reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires; and
  - Support or expand access to public recreation opportunities.
3. **Partner Organizations and Local Coordination:** Proposals must include a well-established network of partners—including USDA, DoD, DOI, state and local governments, and private organizations—that will actively contribute to project planning and implementation within the sentinel landscape.
  4. **Implementation Plan:** Proposals must include a draft implementation plan to meet the sentinel landscape's goals that leverages federal, state, local, and private resources, including non-easement-based programs.
  5. **Geographic Focus Area:** Proposals must include a well-defined landscape boundary associated with the anchor installation(s) or range(s) that is the appropriate size and scale to address partnership objectives and that encompasses high-priority areas for USDA, DoD, and DOI.

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## Key Evaluative Criteria:

All proposals will be reviewed for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with the fundamental components outlined above. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the criteria below.

### 1. Military Mission:

- Depending on the number of military installations or ranges within the sentinel landscape's boundary, proposals should:
  - **Single Installation or Range:** Include an explanation of the anchor installation's military mission; describe how that mission supports capabilities identified in the 2018 National Defense Strategy; and carefully outline the encroachment, natural resource, and climate change challenges that the installation faces.
  - **Multiple Installations or Ranges:** Include an explanation of the installations' or ranges' military missions; describe how they support capabilities identified in the 2018 National Defense Strategy; and carefully outline the encroachment, natural resource, and climate change challenges that the installations face individually and as a group.

### 2. Goals and Objectives:

- Proposals should explain the method that partners used to develop their goals and objectives with a specific focus on how they relate to shared interests among partners.
- Proposals should include qualitative or quantitative metrics that partners will use to measure progress towards the sentinel landscape's goals.

### 3. Partner Organizations and Local Coordination:

- Proposals should demonstrate that USDA, DoD, DOI, one or more state agencies, and not-for-profit organizations will actively participate in the sentinel landscape. Participation from local and regional agencies is encouraged but not required. To be competitive, proposals must include a detailed description of what each partner's contributions to the sentinel landscape will be. Please note that letters of support will not count towards this requirement. To better understand possible state agency contributions, please reference our guide titled *How to Pursue State Engagement in Sentinel Landscapes*. Contributions made by all partners may include but are not limited to:
  - **Personnel:** Partners may decide to assign staff to participate on the local sentinel landscape's leadership team or other working groups. Personnel can also contribute technical assistance by serving as subject matter experts on agency-related topics.
  - **Legislative Recognition:** State governments may decide to draft legislation that formally recognizes the sentinel landscape in statute.
  - **Commitment of Resources:** Partners may decide to dedicate cash or in-kind contributions to the local partnership coordinator position. Agencies and partners may also decide to give priority consideration to landowners within the sentinel landscape during program funding processes.

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- Proposals should include a detailed explanation of how partners plan to coordinate efforts within the sentinel landscape, including an explanation of what each partner's roles and responsibilities would be. Most local sentinel landscape partnerships establish governance structures—typically, in the form of an executive committee, members, and working committees—that enhance communication and collaboration and lead planning and objective setting.
- To enhance coordination among defense, agricultural, and conservation stakeholders, the FCC will collaborate with local partners to hire a partnership coordinator for the sentinel landscape. The FCC will make up to \$300,000 in total funding available over a three year period to support the coordinator position. Thereafter, local partners are required to identify cash or in-kind contributions that will cover up to 50 percent of the cost of the position. The FCC expects that the coordinator role will be a full-time position, however requirements may vary depending on the sentinel landscape. Proposals should include a long-term strategy to support the coordinator position that indicates potential funding sources that would contribute to the cost-share requirement. Proposals that identify matching funding prior to the three-year timeline or exceed a 50 percent match ratio will be viewed as more competitive.
- If applicable, proposals should include an explanation as to how the proposed sentinel landscape plans to coordinate with a designated sentinel landscape that exists **in the same state**, with a specific focus on how to leverage existing relationships with state agencies.
- If applicable, proposals should include an explanation as to how the proposed sentinel landscape plans to coordinate with existing sentinel landscapes on **shared** natural resource concerns. For example, if an existing sentinel landscape encompasses a threatened or endangered species range that the proposed sentinel landscape also encompasses, then the proposal should outline how the two partnerships will coordinate on habitat restoration.

## 4. Implementation Plan

- Proposals should include a summary of an implementation plan that outlines how partners will achieve the sentinel landscape's goals. While implementation plans submitted during the application process will almost certainly be in draft form, sentinel landscapes are expected to have a completed version within one year of designation. Implementation plans should include but are not limited to the following components:
  - An explanation of the activities that partners will carry out to achieve the sentinel landscape's goals, including estimated completion dates;
  - A description of the government and private landowner assistance programs that partners will use to execute the activities listed (competitive proposals will include tools and opportunities beyond easement-based programs);
  - An explanation of the strategies that partners will use to encourage private landowners within the sentinel landscape to participate in said programs; and
  - An explanation of any historical examples of partners collaborating on projects related to the sentinel landscape's goals.

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## 5. Geographic Focus Area:

- Proposals should include a strong justification for why the sentinel landscape boundary was selected, including why the size and scale of the sentinel landscape are appropriate to address the partnership's goals and objectives. The sentinel landscape boundary should encompass locations where partners are committed to engage and action is reasonably anticipated within the next three to five years. The landscape boundary may include non-contiguous areas, if appropriate. The FCC will consider future expansions of the geographic focus area if partners present compelling evidence of relevant actions in the proposed expansion area.
- If the sentinel landscape's boundary encompasses more than one military installation or range, the proposal should include an explanation of priority focus areas within the larger landscape.
- Proposals should include a description of the current land use, land cover, and land ownership status within the landscape's boundary, using quantitative descriptions if possible.
- Proposals should include a GIS map that delineates the boundary of the proposed sentinel landscape. If the data are available, the proposal should also include the following map layers:
  - The installation's or installations' operational footprint(s);
  - The priority area for each federal, state, local, regional, and private partner, including priority areas that may extend beyond the boundary of the sentinel landscape; and/or the areas where partners plan to target their activities over the next five years.

## **Eligibility:**

Any entity whose mission aligns with or otherwise supports the goals of the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership is eligible to apply. Examples of eligible entities include but are not limited to: federal agencies; state and local governments; federally-recognized American Indian tribes; for-profit and not-for-profit organizations or associations with conservation, agricultural, or silvicultural missions; municipal water treatment entities; water irrigation districts; and soil conservation districts.

## **Process and Timeline:**

All parties interested in applying for a sentinel landscape designation must complete a pre-proposal form and submit the document by 8:00 PM ET on March 29, 2021. Pre-proposals should be submitted electronically through the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership's website. All applicants will be notified regarding the status of their pre-proposal within 60 business days of submission. Those applicants that submit the most promising pre-proposals will be invited to complete a full proposal. Applicants will then have at least 60 business days to write their full proposals. The partnership will announce final designations by December 2021.

## **Contact:**

If you have any questions regarding your application, please reach out to Jaime Simon at [jaime.e.simon.civ@mail.mil](mailto:jaime.e.simon.civ@mail.mil) or Megan Dougherty at [dougherty\\_megan@bah.com](mailto:dougherty_megan@bah.com).

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## Resources:

- [Sentinel Landscapes Application Help Session](#): February 3<sup>rd</sup> from 1:00 PM ET – 2:30 PM ET.
- [Sentinel Landscapes Website](#)
- [2018 National Defense Strategy](#)
- How to Pursue State Engagement in Sentinel Landscapes
- Sentinel Landscape Federal Agency Partners