
COMMUNITY CAPACITY & LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

2017 Request for Proposals

Tongass National Forest

Electronic Submission Deadline
December 12, 2016 at 9:59 pm AST

Informational Webinar
November 21, 2016 at 2:00 pm AST
Register at <http://www.nff.wildapricot.org/event-2365200>

This document contains important information about program requirements and application processes. Be sure you have reviewed in detail and fully understand it before continuing with the application process. The 2017 grant round will be especially competitive and only projects that are exceptionally aligned with programmatic criteria and very clearly defined are likely to be funded.

INTRODUCTION

The National Forest Foundation (NFF), chartered by US Congress, engages America in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System, and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the national forests. The NFF believes communities play a significant role in determining the future of our national forests and grasslands.

OVERVIEW AND GOALS

As part of a broader economic diversification strategy for Southeast Alaska communities, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies are collaborating with business leaders, state and federal agencies, and other partners to support sustainable job growth and healthy communities. Strengthening the capacity of rural communities to respond to new economic opportunities and be responsible stewards of their rich natural resources is essential to achieving these goals.

As one component of the economic diversification strategy, the Alaska Region (R10) of the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the NFF launched a program to support collaborative natural resource management, benefitting the watersheds of the Tongass National Forest. This *Community Capacity and Land Stewardship* (CCLS) grant program supports and builds the capacity of organizations that help build sustainable economic opportunities in local communities through natural resource management and watershed restoration.

The NFF offers this program with the financial support of the USFS. It provides one-year grants of up to \$24,000 to enable organizations and collaborative groups to build their capacity to convene, plan, and monitor watershed and landscape projects. Additionally, the program strives to help organizations build internal and community capacity to meet objectives associated with the creation of jobs that contribute to the economic sustainability of communities. This year, there is additional emphasis on projects that support the transition to young growth-based forest management. Work may take place off the Tongass National Forest, but there must be a clear benefit to its watersheds. Organizations are not required to match CCLS Program award funds, but are encouraged to leverage additional private and local, state, or governmental resources to illustrate broad support for the project.

DESIRED GRANT OUTCOMES

The CCLS Program seeks to fund efforts that will measurably contribute to one or both of the following outcomes:

Desired Grant Outcome 1:

Organizations are successful in coming to agreement on the design and implementation of watershed and/or landscape scale enhancement projects that benefit the Tongass National Forest.

Desired Grant Outcome 2:

Organizations accomplish activities that directly support or help advance the transition to young growth-based forest management on the Tongass National Forest.

Applicants should explain how their proposal supports one or both of the above two primary outcomes and, if successful, provide measurable results at the end of the grant period.

Additionally, applicants should consider the following outcome as an additional goal, as practicable:

Desired Grant Outcome 3:

Organizations have developed plans for facilitating job creation and retention and business development that will lead to improved watershed health or landscape-scale restoration projects that benefit the Tongass National Forest.

USE OF FUNDS

Recipients may use grant funds for the following categories of work:

- Outreach and plan development that supports a collaborative group and improves on-the-ground effectiveness;
- Workshops and training related to facilitation, contracting, and other topics that will assist groups in building their capacity to meet the program goals;
- Dissemination of best practices and tools to assist community-based nonprofit organizations and collaborative groups in project development, implementation, and monitoring;
- Organizational and staff support, including facilitation, technical assistance, networking, and peer to peer evaluations leading to shared learning;
- Travel related to collaborative group activities; and
- Development of action plans, project strategic documents, or other similar documents as a result of or necessary for collaborative processes.

Funding from grants cannot fund USDA agency personnel or resources or be directed to any other federal entity.

WHO CAN APPLY

Applications will be considered from 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations; regional, state or local governmental entities; colleges and universities; and Native American tribes implementing activities that lead to forest or watershed enhancement activities benefitting the Tongass National Forest. Organizations that are not tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code must utilize a fiscal sponsor with that status. Please contact the NFF with questions about an organization's eligibility or additional requirements if a using fiscal sponsor.

Previous CCLS grant recipients are encouraged to apply for either continuation of previous work or for new projects. Funding for continuation of previous CCLS-funded projects is contingent on demonstrated success in previous NFF-funded projects and fulfillment of all grant obligations under other NFF awards.

WHO SHOULD NOT APPLY

Ineligible applicants include:

- Federal agencies;
- For-profit organizations;
- Consultants;
- Educational and research organizations proposing work that does not advance watershed or landscape-scale improvement;
- Organizations seeking funding for litigation or advocacy;
- Organizations seeking general operating or programmatic support unrelated to the scope of this program; or
- Organizations considering submitting a proposal for work that cannot be completed within one year of award

USE OF FUNDS

The USFS Alaska Region provides program funding under the [Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Agreement Authority](#), sometimes known as the *Wyden Amendment*. As such, all awarded grants must support the protection, restoration, or enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resources on public or private land, or reduce the risk of natural disaster that upon these resources when public safety is threatened. CCLS funding is not for on-the-ground implementation. These funds cannot fund the personnel or resources of any federal entity. Further, award recipients cannot use funding from grants to lobby or influence any federal, state, or local legislative body or any federal, state, or local legislative proposal.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Evaluation occurs based on answers to the narrative questions provided below, and the extent to which the organization's work will contribute to the outcomes listed above. Reviewers use the following criteria to rank proposals:

- The extent to which the increased capacity provided through this grant is likely to result in a tangible benefit to national forests and grasslands during the short- or long-term future.
- The extent to which funds will accomplish activities that directly support or help advance the transition to young growth-based forest management on the Tongass National Forest.
- The extent to which the scope of work will likely result in job creation, business development, or workforce development benefits during the short- or long-term future.
- The extent to which the applicant fits program criteria as a community-based organization or a collaborative group with a broad base of local support.

- The extent to which the grant will help the organization facilitate the completion of restoration actions and treatments, or help remove barriers to enhanced landscape or watershed restoration.
- The extent to which the scope of work will likely result in economic, social, and human capital benefits.
- The extent to which award funds are critical for organization's success in an identified program of work.
- The likelihood the applicant will complete grant activities within 12 months of award.
- The extent to which the budget is reasonable given the anticipated outcomes.
- When applicable, the extent to which the grant builds upon demonstrated success of a previously-funded CCLS Program grant.

AWARD TIMING

The NFF will announce funding decisions in early 2017. Project completion must occur within 12 months of the project award date, which typically begins within one month of award notification. Successful applicants will have the opportunity to choose from pre-selected grant start dates.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

The NFF has developed the Conservation Connect Program to provide tools needed for engaging in collaborative, community-based stewardship on national forests and grasslands. Conservation Connect follows the NFF's peer-learning philosophy of creating opportunities for practitioners to share their successes and challenges and to learn from the experiences of others. Conservation Connect hosts peer-learning teleconferences and offers mentoring, access to coaches, a resource library with best practices and tools, and a variety of information on emerging topics of interest. For more information, please visit [Conservation Connect website](#).

The Forest Service and the NFF have also jointly developed the online Partnership Resource Center, an excellent resource for community groups that focus on natural resource management issues. For more information, please visit the [Partnership Resource Center website](#).

Resources for grant seekers offering tips and best practices for writing successful proposals are widely available on the internet. The NFF has also compiled a list of [some good starting places](#).

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

The online application contains the components listed below. Greater detail on the requirements for each component is in the online application.

1. Abstract
2. Project Narrative
 - a. Context
 - b. Need
 - c. Goals
 - d. Activities
 - e. Outcomes
 - f. Grant History
3. Program Documents
 - a. Timeline
 - b. List of Participants
 - c. Budget Narrative
 - d. NFF Financial Plan form
 - e. US Forest Service District Ranger's letter of support
4. Organizational Financials

FOREST SERVICE LETTERS OF SUPPORT

All applications must include a letter of support from the Forest Supervisor of each National Forest or Grassland unit included in a proposal. Do not submit letters from Forest Service District Rangers or any additional letters of support. If not uploaded with the proposal, email letter of support to Zia Maumenee at zmaumenee@nationalforests.org or fax it to (406) 830-3383 within 3 days of the grant deadline.

TO APPLY

The NFF utilizes an online application system.

1. Visit NFF's [Online Grant System](#) and either:
 - a. Log on with an existing account; or
 - b. Click [Create New Account](#) and follow the steps to create a new account.
Tip: You are required to create a new account if you have not previously applied for an NFF grant through [this](#) online system.
2. Once you create an account and log in, click [Apply](#). When prompted for an access code, use the access code below.

Access code: **tomato**
3. Click on [2017 Community Capacity and Land Stewardship – Tongass NF](#)
4. Follow the instructions provided on the online form. Please note that if you click [Question List](#) you can download all the application questions for offline review.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

One funding round is available for the 2017 grant year. Applications are due electronically by **December 12, 2016 at 9:59 pm AST**.

PEER LEARNING SESSIONS

The NFF will hold online interactive peer learning sessions for CCLS award recipients to promote cross-learning and sharing of lessons learned. Specific topics will be determined based on a review of grants awarded and conversations with grant recipients. Attendance at relevant peer learning sessions is an expectation of all award recipients.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

The National Forest Foundation and partnering organizations and agencies will help award recipients to build capacity through ongoing communications and will facilitate idea sharing between established and emerging organizations.

The NFF has developed [Conservation Connect](#) to provide tools needed for engaging in collaborative, community-based stewardship on our National Forests and Grasslands. Conservation Connect follows the NFF's peer learning philosophy of creating opportunities for practitioners on the ground to share their successes and challenges and to learn from the experiences of others. Conservation Connect hosts peer-learning teleconferences and offers mentoring, access to coaches, a resource library with best practices and tools, and a variety of information on emerging topics of interest.

The Forest Service and the NFF have also jointly developed the online [Partnership Resource Center](#), an excellent resource for community groups that focus on natural resource management issues.

Resources for grant seekers offering tips and best practices for writing successful proposals are widely available on the internet. The NFF has compiled a list of [some good starting places](#).

NFF staff is available to respond to questions about the application process; receiving help will not affect an organization's competitiveness for the program.

The NFF offers an informational webinar on **November 21, 2016 at 2:00 pm AST**. You must register in advance at <http://www.nff.wildapricot.org/event-2365200>.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Please contact the NFF with additional questions regarding the CCLS Program or the grant application process. Seeking help will not affect an organization's competitiveness for the program.

Adam J. Liljeblad
Director, Conservation Awards
National Forest Foundation
(406) 830-3357
aliljeblad@nationalforests.org