Eastern Arizona Resource Advisory Committee

Request For Proposals

Secure Rural Schools Program Title II Funding

Open Date: October 28, 2026

Close Date: ~~November 29, 2026~~ December 6, 2026

The closing date has been extended to December 6, 2026 due to unforeseen circumstances associated with the weather we experienced in early November.



USDA Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Secure Rural Schools Program

The Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program provides critical funding for schools, roads, and other municipal services to more than 700 counties across the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

The Forest Service was established in 1905 with 56 million acres of land. By 1910, the amount of National Forest System land tripled to 172 million acres. Today, the agency manages approximately 196 million acres. Congress ratified the Act of May 23, 1908, as a measure to support rural counties whose tax base was limited by the growing amount of Federal land. A portion of Forest Service funds generated through multi-use activities, such as grazing, timber production, and special use permits, are distributed to eligible counties to help maintain local roads and schools.

By the year 2000, after decades of declining agency revenues, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act to help stabilize the funds available to rural counties.

Payments are divided into three distinct categories, or Titles: Title I for roads and schools, Title II for projects on Federal lands, and Title III for county projects.

1.2 SRS Title II Funding: Special Projects on Federal Lands

Counties typically receive 20% or less of Secure Rural Schools funds under Title II, which are used by willing Federal agencies, State and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, and landowners for protection, restoration and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat, and other natural resource objectives on Federal land and on non-Federal land where projects would benefit these resources on Federal land.

1.3 Resource Advisory Committees

Rather than being distributed to the State, Title II funds are retained by the Forest Service and are allocated to specific projects that have been reviewed and recommended by a local Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). The RAC comprises 9 to 15 non-federal-employee members with an interest in the community. RAC members represent the public in one of three categories:

Category A:
Three to five persons who represent:

- organized labor or non-timber forest product harvester groups;
- developed outdoor recreation, off-highway vehicle users, or commercial recreation activities;
- energy and mineral development, or commercial or recreational fishing interests;
- commercial timber industry; or
- Federal grazing permits or other land use permit holders or represent non-industrial private forest landowners within the area for which the committee is organized.

Category B:
Three to five persons who represent:

- nationally recognized environmental organizations;
- regionally or locally recognized environmental organizations;
- dispersed recreational activities;
- archaeological and historical interests; or
- nationally or regionally recognized wild horse and burro interest groups, wildlife or hunting organizations, or watershed associations.

Category C:
Three to five persons who represent:

- state elected office (or a designee);
- county or local elected office;
- American Indian tribes within or adjacent to the area for which the committee is organized;
- area school officials or teachers; or
- affected public-at-large.

1.4 Eastern Arizona RAC

The Eastern Arizona RAC reviews and recommends projects that occur in Eastern Arizona in Apache, Gila, Greenlee, Graham and Navajo Counties. Its members are outdoor recreation group members, non-industrial private forest landowners, commercial timber operators, watershed associations, local and state elected officials, teachers, and other interested members of the public.

In early 2027, the Eastern Arizona RAC will hold public meetings on **Thursday January 14, 2027 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm; Friday January 15, 2027 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; Thursday January 28, 2027 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm; Friday January 29, 2027 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; and Thursday February 11, 2027 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm; Friday February 12, 2027 9:00 am – 12:00 pm** to hear presentations about proposals for eligible work in Eastern Arizona. The RAC will assess projects and then recommend selected projects for final approval by the Forest Service Designated Federal Officer.

2. Eligibility and Funding Guidelines

2.1 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for RAC projects include:

- Federal agencies
- Tribal entities
- State and local governments
- Private entities

- Nonprofit entities
- Landowners

Current or planned SAM.gov registration is required to enter into an agreement with or receive a grant from the USDA Forest Service.

2.2 Eligible Activities

Projects are considered for SRS Title II funding if they make additional investments in, and create employment opportunities through:

- improvement of existing infrastructure maintenance;
- implementation of stewardship objectives that enhance forest ecosystems; and/or
- restoration and improvement of land health and water quality.

Funds may be used for projects that have broad-based support and with objectives that include but are not limited to:

- road, trail, and infrastructure maintenance or obliteration;
- soil productivity improvement;
- forest ecosystem health improvements;
- watershed restoration and maintenance;
- wildlife and fish habitat restoration, maintenance, and improvement;
- noxious and exotic weeds control; and/or
- native species re-establishment.

At least 50% of all project funds must be used for projects that are primarily dedicated to road maintenance, decommissioning, or obliteration; or to restoration of streams and watersheds. This requirement does not necessarily need to be met by each individual project and the RAC may be able to average expenditures across all selected projects.

Projects must occur on or demonstrate benefit to National Forest System lands.

Planning and implementation of projects should improve cooperative relationships among the people that use and care for Federal land and the agencies that manage the Federal land.

2.3 Recommended award request

The Eastern Arizona RAC may choose to issue awards in a small grants category and a large grants category. The small grants category may include project awards between $20,000 and $75,000. The large grants category may include project awards of $75,000 and above. Awards may be issued across categories. The number of awards may change based on proposals received and final RAC budget determination. We encourage applicants to note if their project can be scaled up or down to accommodate funding availability.

Information on available funding for the SRS Title II funding can be found at:
https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/secure-rural-schools/payments

2.4 Funding timelines

Funds must be obligated to the project in an executed agreement with the Forest Service within one year of award. The Forest Service prefers that funds are expended within three years, but the project funding period can be extended to five years.

2.5 Funding match

SRS Title II funding does not require a funding match by the applicant unless the proposal is to be funded with a Participating Agreement, in which case a minimum 20% match is required. Proposals with a match recorded on an agreement's financial plan must be honored as recorded and matching funds may be contributed by the proponent or third parties.

3. Required Conditions and Scoring

3.1 Conditions

3.1.1 The proposed project must lie within the geographical boundaries of Eastern Arizona.

- In rare cases, an exception may be made if the project directly benefits National Forest System Lands and the RAC agrees to fund projects typically covered by another County's RAC. An example would be a project in Coconino County but on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

3.1.2 The project must be located on, or adjacent to, or demonstrate a benefit to National Forest lands.

3.1.3 The project must comply with applicable Federal laws and regulations.

3.1.4 The project must be consistent with applicable resource management and watershed management plans.

3.1.5 Because the project awards come from federal funding, and/or when ground-disturbing activities occur on NFS land, the proposed projects must, in order of preference,

- already have a signed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision;
- qualify for a Categorical Exemption from NEPA; or
- be eligible for a Determination of NEPA Adequacy.

3.1.6 Applicants must obtain a letter of support/commitment from the District Ranger or Forest Supervisor responsible for the portion of National Forest System Land the project is proposed on. The District Ranger or Forest Supervisor should review the project and assess whether the Forest has the capacity to support the project.

- Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
  - Forest Supervisor: Josh Miller, Joshua.Miller2@usda.gov
  - Black Mesa District Ranger: Matthew Bullmore, matthew.bullmore@usda.gov
  - Lakeside District Ranger: Charlie Denton, charles.denton@usda.gov
  - Alpine/Springerville District Ranger: Mandy Scott, amanda.scott@usda.gov

  - Clifton District Ranger: Rico Sanchez, Enriques.Sanchez@usda.gov
- Coronado National Forest
  - Forest Supervisor: Kerwin Dewberry, kerwin.dewberry@usda.gov
  - Safford District Ranger: Vince Voelker, vincent.voelker@usda.gov
- Tonto National Forest
  - Forest Supervisor: Erica Luna, ericka.luna@usda.gov
  - Payson District Ranger: Matthew Paciorek, matthew.paciorek@usda.gov
  - Tonto Basin District Ranger: Ricardo Leon, ricardo.leon@usda.gov

3.1.7 The proposed project should align with existing National Forest management priorities (mitigation of catastrophic wildfire, disaster recovery, and public access), local Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and/or other local land management priorities.

3.2 Scoring criteria

A weighted scoring approach will be used to fairly evaluate projects. Project proposals will be scored by evaluating the following elements:

- Community benefit/support - 30%
- NEPA readiness - 25%
- Alignment with existing management priorities - 15%
- Applicant/grantee/cooperator capacity – 15%
- Efficient and effective execution plan -15%

These scoring criteria will be used to guide project review by the RAC but will not be the only consideration in the granting of project awards. RAC members will also bring their personal expertise and knowledge of community concerns to the decision process and will recommend project awards through transparent discussion of project merits.

4. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

4.1 Project Proposal Components

4.1.1 A **Project Submission Form** (FS-1800-030) must be submitted with every RAC award application. A fillable PDF version of the form, detailed instructions for filling out the form, and a Project Submission Checklist are included as Attachment A.

4.1.2 A **Project Narrative** is encouraged to supplement the information in the Project Submission Form. The Project Narrative may be used to elaborate on the Project Description, to describe the project monitoring plan, or to provide any additional information that may aid the RAC in its review.

4.1.3 A **letter of support/commitment** from the applicable District Ranger or Forest Supervisor must be included (see Section 3.1.6).

4.1.4 A **map** showing the location of the project should be submitted. Additional instructions for the map can be found in the Project Submission Form instructions, Item 8 (Attachment A).

4.1.5 A **financial plan** is recommended to be submitted to supplement the information in the Project Submission Form. The financial plan will assist in the timely implementation of the project should an agreement be needed to implement the project. The financial plan is also an opportunity to highlight the opportunity for scaled funding should the RAC decide to not fully fund the project and only partially fund it.

4.2 Proposal Due Date

The Project Proposal Components outlined in Section 4.1 must be delivered to Paul Hancock, Eastern Arizona RAC Coordinator, by email at paul.hancock@usda.gov by 11:59 pm AZT on ~~November 29, 2026~~ December 6, 2026, or hand-delivered to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Supervisor's Office ATTN: Paul Hancock at 30 S. Chiricahua Dr., Springerville, AZ 85938 by 4:30 pm AZT on ~~November 29, 2026~~ December 6, 2026.

4.3 Project Proposal Presentation

Project proponents will be scheduled to give a short presentation about the project proposal to the RAC during public meetings on:

- Thursday January 14, 2027 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm
- Friday January 15, 2027 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Thursday January 28, 2027 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm
- Friday January 29, 2027 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Thursday February 11, 2027 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm
- Friday February 12, 2027 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

The meetings will be a hybrid format (i.e., in-person and virtual options are available). In-person attendees can join the meetings at the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Supervisor's Office at

30 S. Chiricahua Dr., Springerville, AZ 85938. Draft agendas for the meetings can be found as Attachment B.

Presentations will be **no longer than 5 minutes** (the RAC will review full project proposals before the meetings). A 10-minute question-and-answer period will follow each presentation. The presentation schedule will be strictly followed; please arrive on time and ensure the presentation is no longer than 5 minutes.

Contact Paul Hancock Eastern Arizona RAC Coordinator at paul.hancock@usda.gov to schedule a presentation slot and receive a Teams meeting link if planning to present virtually. If a digital presentation medium will be used (e.g. PowerPoint), please coordinate with Paul prior to the meeting to ensure a smooth use of technology.

5. Award Timeline

Mid-February 2027: Eastern Arizona RAC votes on recommended project awards at public meetings

Early March 2027: Award letters sent out

May 2027: Deadline to submit agreements for work to be completed in FY28.

6. Contact Information

For more information, please contact Eastern Arizona RAC Coordinator Paul Hancock at paul.hancock@usda.gov or 928-333-6340, or Eastern Arizona RAC Designated Federal Officer Josh Miller at Joshua.Miller2@usda.gov.

Attachment A

SRS Title II Project Submission Form

SRS Title II Project Submission Form Instructions

SRS Title II Project Submission Checklist

Attachment B

Draft Public Meeting Agendas