

Community Forest Program Panel Review Guidance

Rank each proposal based on the following four criteria. If there are additional notes or justifications for your score specific to the project (some piece stands apart as key to your score), please include that feedback on each criterion, or the project as a whole, in your score sheet/notes. Our intent is to share general and specific feedback with applicants to develop interest and the size and quality of the future applicant pool. Additional resources, including a sample application, can be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>. Comments regarding the process should be directed to Scott Stewart at 202-205-1618.

- 1) Use a score of 0-20 to rate **community benefits**, where 20 is reserved for projects that have all attributes (economic, environmental, educational, recreational) and have exceptional benefits that are specific and/or planned in each attribute. It may be easier to think of the scale as 0-5 for each of the suggested benefit attributes of a community forest including, but not limited to:
 - a) Economic benefits
 - i) Timber
 - ii) Non-timber forest products resulting from sustainable forest management.
 - iii) Other economic benefits such as recreation, tourism, cultural resources, and public health
 - b) Environmental benefits
 - i) Clean air and water
 - ii) Stormwater management
 - iii) Wildlife habitat including for threatened and endangered species
 - iv) Protection of culturally important plants and wildlife
 - c) Forest-based learning
 - i) K-12 conservation education programs
 - ii) Vocational forestry/environmental science education programs
 - iii) Connection to other environmental or cultural/historic education programs or experiential learning opportunities
 - iv) Replicable model of effective forest stewardship for private landowners
 - d) Recreational benefits through public access
 - i) Hiking
 - ii) Fishing
 - iii) Hunting
 - iv) Enhanced recreational opportunities through connection to other publicly accessible conserved lands
- 2) Use a scale of 0-5 to rate the **public participation** currently being undertaken and planned for the life of the community forest. Use the [Spectrum of Public Participation](#) where the most participatory is "Empowered," followed by collaboration, involvement and consultation as lesser forms of participation, and the least participatory is "Informed," which is telling the public what was decided. Engagement may include planning the project, management of the project, and/or determining access and use of the forest. Of particular interest is capturing the meaningful participation of marginalized communities and underserved populations in the planning and management of the forest.
- 3) Use a score of 0-5 to rate the community forest's **strategic contribution and connection** to broader landscape initiative(s), which may include
 - a) Being an integral part of a comprehensive management plan at the locality, state, tribal or regional level
 - b) Identifying connections to landscape conservation initiatives as well as environmental justice initiatives such as creating access to green/open space where there is none, providing critical green infrastructure or contributing to local food production.
- 4) On a scale of 0-5, rate the **threat** or likelihood that the project land would be subdivided or converted to non-forest use, where five is exceptionally threatened and 0 is no threat/impossible.