



USDA Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Applications

Submit proposals to applicable State Foresters or equivalent Tribal officials by **January 12, 2024**.

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Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, State, Private & Tribal Forestry, is requesting applications for the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program or CFP). CFP is a competitive grant program that provides financial assistance to Indian Tribes, local governments, and qualified conservation non-profit organizations to establish community forests through the fee simple acquisition of private forest land.

The purpose of the program is to establish community forests by protecting forestland from conversion to non-forest uses and provide community benefits including public recreation, environmental and economic benefits, and forest-based educational programs. Public access is required for all projects.

To apply, interested local government and nonprofit applicants must submit applications to the State Forester where the property is located. Tribal applicants must submit applications to equivalent Tribal government officials. **All applications must be received by State Foresters or Tribal governments by January 12th, 2024.**

State Foresters or Tribal government officials must forward applications to the appropriate Forest Service Regional office or International Institute of Tropical Forestry by **February 9th, 2024**.

Legislative Authority

Projects must conform to laws and authorities in Section 7A of the [Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act](#) ([16 U.S.C. 2103d] Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program) as amended.

Eligibility

Who Can Apply:

Federally Recognized Indian Tribes (including Alaska Native Corporations), local governmental entities, or qualified nonprofit organizations that are qualified to acquire and manage land. Individuals are not eligible to receive funds through this program.

Eligible Land:

Eligible land for grants funded under this program are private forest that provides defined community benefits under CFP and is:

- At least five acres in size;
- Suitable to sustain natural vegetation;
- At least 75 percent forested;
- Threatened by conversion to non-forest uses;
- Not held in trust by the United States on behalf of any Indian Tribe and not Tribal allotment lands;
- Offered for sale by a willing seller.

Public access is required for all CFP projects. A proposed project cannot be submitted for funding consideration simultaneously for both the Community Forest Program and the Forest Legacy Program.

Eligible Uses of Funding:

Allowable project costs include the purchase price for the property as well as transactional costs related to its acquisition. This includes:

1. Appraisals and appraisal reviews;
2. Land surveys;
3. Legal and closing costs;
4. Development of the Community Forest Plan;
5. Title examination

Project costs cannot include:

1. Long-term operations, maintenance, and management of the land;
2. Construction of buildings or recreational facilities;
3. Research;
4. Existing liens or taxes owed;
5. Costs associated with preparing this application (except for any of the allowable project costs specified above)

Costs must conform to 2 CFR 200 [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).

Application Requirements

The following section outlines grant application requirements. To assist applicants, a number of resources can be found on the CFP website, including: application guidance (with suggested template), scoring guidance, a Community Forest Road Map, map recommendations, and more. The CFP website is located at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>. See [‘Resources’](#) section of this document.

Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to contact and work with the appropriate Forest Service Region/Institute contact during the application process before submission.

- 1) The application must be no more than eight pages long, plus up to two maps. Each map should fit within a single page (eight and half inches by eleven inches in size).

- 2) Documentation verifying that the applicant is an eligible entity and that the land proposed for acquisition is eligible (see §230.2 of the final rule).
 - a) Eligible Entities include local governmental entities, federally recognized Indian Tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations.
 - b) Eligible lands are private forest lands that are threatened by conversion to non-forest use; not held in trust by the United States; provide defined community benefits; and are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested.
- 3) Contact information for the project lead (name, title, phone number, email).
- 4) Applications must include the following, regarding the property proposed for acquisition:
 - a) A description of the property, including acreage and county location;
 - b) A description of current land uses, including improvements and plans for utilization or demolition of existing structures;
 - c) A description of forest type and vegetative cover;
 - d) A map of sufficient scale to show the location of the property in relation to roads and other improvements as well as parks, refuges, green/open space, urban natural areas, or other protected lands in the vicinity;
 - e) A description of applicable zoning and other land use regulations affecting the property;
 - f) A description of the type and the extent of community benefits that the property will provide, including to underserved communities (see Project Selection Criteria);
 - g) A description of the relationship of the property within and its contributions to landscape conservation initiatives, as well as any environmental justice initiatives, if applicable; and
 - h) A description of any threats of conversion to non-forest uses, including any encumbrances on the property that prevent conversion to non-forest uses.
- 5) Information regarding the proposed establishment of a community forest, including:
 - a) A description of the benefiting community, including:
 - i) Demographics, such as race or socioeconomic status;
 - ii) Availability of and access to green spaces, and other vulnerabilities including health, economic, environmental and climate impacts faced by the community;
 - iii) A description of how the project benefits the community and the associated benefits.
 - b) A description of community involvement, including underrepresented communities, to-date in the planning of the community forest acquisition, including determining access and use of the forest, and the participation of different community groups anticipated in long-term management.
 - c) An identification of persons and organizations that support the project, a description of how they represent the greater population of the community benefiting from the establishment and management of the community forest, their specific role in establishing and managing the community forest;
 - d) A description of the resources that will be used to maintain and manage the property as a community forest in perpetuity; and
- 6) Information regarding the proposed land acquisition, including:
 - a) A proposed project budget not exceeding \$600,000 and technical assistance needs as coordinated with the State Forester or equivalent Tribal government official (section §230.6 of the final program rule);
 - b) The status of due diligence, including signed option or purchase and sale agreement, title search, minerals determination, and appraisal;
 - c) Description and status of cost share (secure, pending, commitment letter, etc.) (section §230.6 of the final rule);

- d) The status of negotiations with participating landowner(s) including purchase options, contracts, and other terms and conditions of sale;
- e) The proposed timeline for completing the acquisition and establishing the community forest; and
- f) Long term management costs and funding source(s).

Applications must comply with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards also referred to as the Omni Circular (2 CFR part 200).

Letters of support may accompany the application but are not required.

Program Requirements

Amount of Awards:

Individual grant applications may not exceed \$600,000 in requested federal funding, which does not include technical assistance requests. Grant applications must also include at least 50 percent non-federal cost share.

No legal liability on the part of the Government shall be incurred until funds are obligated by the grant officer for this program to the applicant in writing. The initial grant period shall be for two years, and acquisition of lands should occur within that timeframe. Lands acquired prior to the grant award are not eligible for CFP funding. The grant may be reasonably extended by the Forest Service when necessary to accommodate unforeseen circumstances in the land acquisition process.

As funding allows, applications submitted through this request may be funded in future years, subject to the availability of funds and the continued feasibility and viability of the project. If an application is successful, it may be shared as a replicable model with future interested applicants.

The Federal Government's obligation under this program is contingent upon the availability of funds.

Technical Assistance:

If technical assistance will be requested as part of the application, applicants must consult with the State Forester or equivalent Tribal government official and confirm that they are willing to provide that assistance **before** the application is submitted. If awarded, technical assistance funds are allocated to State Foresters or equivalent officials of Indian Tribes. The State Forester's member roster may be found on <https://www.stateforesters.org/who-we-are/our-membership/>.

Match:

All applicants must demonstrate a 50 percent cost share of the total project cost or greater. The cost share can include cash, in-kind services, or donations, which must be from a non-Federal source.

A non-Federal entity's in-kind match must meet the following criteria:

- Verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records
- Not included as contributions for any other Federal award.
- Necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives.
- Allowable under subpart E of 2 CFR 200. 6 04.12.2023
- Not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs.
- Provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and

- Conform to other provisions of 2 CFR 200, as applicable.

For additional information, please see [36 C.F.R. §230.6 Project costs and cost share requirements](#).

Grant Requirements:

- 1) Once an application is selected, funding will be obligated to the grant recipient through a grant adhering to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards also referred to as the Omni Circular (2 CFR part 200).
- 2) Forest Service must approve any amendments to a proposal or request to reallocate funding within a grant proposal. If negotiations on a selected project fail, the applicant cannot substitute an alternative site.
- 3) The grant recipient must comply with the requirements in section § 230.8 in the final rule before funds will be released.
- 4) After the project has closed, as a requirement of the grant, grant recipients will be required to provide the Forest Service with a Geographic Information System (GIS) shapefile: a digital, vector-based storage format for storing geometric location and associated attribute information, of CFP project tracts and cost share tracts, if applicable.
- 5) Any funds not expended within the grant period must be de-obligated and revert to the Forest Service.
- 6) All media, press, signage, and other documents discussing the creation of the community forest must reference the partnership and financial assistance by the Forest Service through the CFP.

Grant Reporting Requirements:

Written annual financial performance reports and project performance reports will be required and submitted to the appropriate grant officer.

Additional Information

Detailed information regarding what to include in the application, definitions of terms, eligibility, and necessary prerequisites for consideration can be found in the final program rule, published April 2, 2021 (86 FR 17302), which is available at the [Forest Service Community Forest Program Website](#). See list of [Forest Service Regional Contacts](#).

Key Submission Dates for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024:

- Final applications must be submitted to either the State Forester or equivalent official of Indian Tribes where the property is located by **January 12, 2024**.
- All applicants must also send an e-mail to SM.FS.CFP@usda.gov for confirmation that an application has been submitted to the State Forester or equivalent Tribal official for funding consideration.
- State Foresters or Tribal government officials must forward applications to the appropriate Forest Service Regional office or International Institute of Tropical Forestry by **February 9th, 2024**.

Assistance Listing

This program is listed in the Assistance Listings on [SAM.gov](#) under 10.689 Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program.

Registration in System for Award Management (SAM):

All applicants shall be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to award, during performance, and through final payment of any grant resulting from this solicitation. A registered unique entity identifier (UEI) is also required. Further information regarding SAM and UEI registration can be found at: <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

For assistance, contact the Federal Service Desk at 866-606-8220. Please allow at least two (2) weeks to process a new registration or renew an existing registration in SAM.

Informational Webinar:

The Forest Service will host an upcoming informational webinar on Wednesday, September 20th. Please visit the [Forest Service Community Forest Program Website](#) for more details.

Proposal Submission and Review:

All local government and qualified nonprofit organization applications must be submitted to the State Forester of the State where the property is located. All Tribal applications must be submitted to the equivalent Tribal government official. All applicants must also send an e-mail to SM.FS.CFP@usda.gov for confirmation that an application has been submitted to the State Forester or equivalent Tribal official for funding consideration.

Applications may be submitted either electronically (preferred) or in hardcopy to the appropriate official. The State Forester's contact information may be found at: <https://www.stateforesters.org/who-we-are/our-membership/>.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact and work with a Forest Service Region/Institute during the application process and before submission. Regional staff can assist with navigating program requirements, determining eligibility, providing guidance on allowable costs and cost-sharing, and other questions. A list of Forest Service regional staff is included below under Contact for Further Information.

To ensure the application review process is transparent and fair, the Forest Service will establish a national review panel that consists of Forest Service representatives from the Washington Office and the Regions.

Proposal Evaluation:

The Forest Service will give priority to applications that maximize the delivery of community benefits, as defined in the final rule (see section §230.2 of the final rule) and will evaluate all applications based on the following criteria:

- 1) Type and extent of community benefits provided, including to disadvantaged communities.
Community benefits are defined in the final program rule as:
 - a) Economic benefits, such as timber and non-timber products resulting from sustainable forest management, recreation and tourism;
 - b) Environmental benefits, including clean air and water, stormwater management, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources.
 - c) Benefits from forest-based experiential learning, including K-12 conservation education programs; vocational education programs in disciplines such as forestry and environmental science; Traditional Ecological Knowledge; and environmental education through individual study or voluntary participation in programs offered by organizations such as 4-H, Boy or Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, etc.;

- d) Benefits from serving as replicable models of effective forest stewardship for private landowners; and
- e) Recreational benefits such as hiking, hunting, and fishing secured through public access.
- 2) Extent and nature of community engagement, including participation by disadvantaged communities, in the establishment and long-term management of the community forest;
- 3) Amount of other funds leveraged;
- 4) Costs to the Federal Government;
- 5) Extent to which the community forest contributes to any landscape conservation initiatives, as well as any applicable environmental justice initiatives;
- 6) Extent of due diligence completed on the project, including cost share committed and status of appraisal and other due diligence costs;
- 7) Likelihood that, unprotected, the property would be converted to non-forest uses.

Resources

- [USDA Forest Service Community Forest Program Website](#): home to many resources for applicants, including:
 - [Community Forest Program Application Guidance](#)
 - [Community Forest Program Scoring Guidance](#): The scoring instructions provided to national panel members who review and rank submitted CFP applications.
 - [Community Forest Program Roadmap](#): Provides an overview of the Community Forest Program, including information about eligibility and the application process.
 - [Map recommendations and examples](#): Guidance for applicants regarding maps submitted as part of a CFP application.
- [Contact information for State Foresters \(National Association of State Foresters\)](#)
- [Contact information for Community Forest Program Regional Coordinators \(Forest Service\)](#)
- [The Principal Laws Relating to USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry Programs](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations Part 200—Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)

Contact for Further Information

National CFP Email Inbox: SM.FS.CFP@usda.gov

For questions regarding the grant application or administrative regulations, contact Scott Stewart, 202-465-5038, scott.stewart@usda.gov or Margee Haines 202-384-7192, margaret.haines@usda.gov. Additional information about the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program may be obtained at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact and work with the appropriate Forest Service Region/Institute contact during the application process before submission. Please contact the appropriate Forest Service Region/Institute if you would like review and feedback on your application and maps before submitting the final application. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call their state's telecommunications relay service (TRS) by dialing 711.

The final application is due to State Foresters or equivalent official of Tribal governments by **January 12th, 2024**.

The Forest Service will host an informational webinar about the program and how to apply. For more information, please see the national webpage at the link above.

Community Forest Program – Regional CFP Managers

Eastern Region (CT, DC, DE, IA, IL, IN, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WI, WV)

- Neal Bungard: neal.bungard@usda.gov, 603-833-3287

Northern (MT, ND) and Intermountain Regions (ID, NV, UT)

- Kris Tempel: kris.tempel@usda.gov, 406-210-1412

Rocky Mountain Region (CO, KS, NE, SD, WY)

- Amy Anderson: amy.anderson@usda.gov, 307-209-0675

Southwestern Region (AZ, NM)

- Kathy Moore: kathleen.moore@usda.gov, 970-732-1734

Pacific Southwest Region (CA, HI)

- Dana Walsh (CA): dana.walsh@usda.gov, 530-450-5555
- Katie Friday (HI): Kathleen.Friday@usda.gov, 808-785-5197

Pacific Northwest (OR, WA) and Alaska (AK) Regions

- Candice Polisky: candice.polisky@usda.gov, 971-710-2346

Southern Region (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA)

- Susan Granbery: susan.granbery@usda.gov, 770-883-8925

International Institute of Tropical Forestry (PR, VI)

- Magaly Figueroa: magaly.figueroa@usda.gov, 787-309-9565