United States Department of Agriculture

THIS IS WHO WE ARE

Values based.

Purpose driven.

Relationship focused.

Forest Service FS-1124a March 2019

OUR MISSION:

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

For more than 100 years, the Forest Service has brought people and communities together to answer the call of conservation.

Grounded in world-class science and technology—and rooted in communities—the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service connects people to nature and to each other. As a Federal agency in service to the American people, the Forest Service cares for shared natural resources in ways that promote lasting economic, ecological, and social vitality. In doing this, the agency supports nature in sustaining life.

As the workforce of the Forest Service, we are the living embodiment of the agency and everything it stands for. When our agency's **PURPOSE** serves as our North Star, when we focus on building strong **RELATIONSHIPS** with people and communities, and when we base everything we do on our agency's shared **VALUES**, we bring our agency's mission to life.

This guide is designed to help us to be *values based*, *purpose driven*, and *relationship focused*. It has been built with significant input from thousands of people across our agency's workforce and from hundreds of partners and people representing diverse communities across the country. Their insight underscored what has always made us unique in the contributions we make to the people, the communities—including State, Tribal and local partners, and the country we serve.

Our agency's purpose and values are at the heart of this guide, along with guidance on how we can build relationships that are essential to being a good neighbor and advancing our mission. It can help each of us "show up"—both with our colleagues and out in the communities we serve—in ways that authentically and effectively reflect who we are.

In short, this guide is about **WHO WE ARE.**

OUR PURPOSE AND VALUE

Why we do what we do

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Our agency was created on the principle of managing the Nation's natural resources "for the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the longest time."

In the decades leading up to the 1905 founding of the Forest Service, rapid expansion in a Nation rich in natural resources was putting the sustainability of those resources at risk. The job of Forest Service employees in those days was clear—to provide quality water and timber for the Nation and protect local residents' access to forest resources.

Today, our job as employees is still to provide resources and protect access to them, but our country and our world have changed since 1905. America's population and the demand placed on its natural resources have grown. Forest and environmental science has evolved and become more robust and specific. Threats to natural resources—and our expertise in addressing them—have increased.

Yet, while much has changed, our **AGENCY'S MISSION** remains relevant.

MISSION

Sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

MOTTO

Caring for the Land and Serving People

At the heart of our agency's mission is **OUR PURPOSE**—the *ultimate answer to why we do what we do*. Everything we do—across our broad and diverse agency—is intended to help sustain forests and grasslands for present and future generations. Why? Because our stewardship work **SUPPORTS NATURE IN SUSTAINING LIFE**. This is the purpose that drives our agency's mission and motivates our work across the agency. It's been there from our agency's very beginning, and it still drives us.

To advance our mission and serve our purpose, **WE BALANCE THE SHORT– AND LONG–TERM NEEDS OF PEOPLE AND NATURE** by—

- Working in COLLABORATION with communities and our partners;
- Delivering world-class SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND LAND MANAGEMENT;
- Providing access to resources and experiences that promote ECONOMIC, ECOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL VITALITY; and
- CONNECTING PEOPLE to the land and one another.

This is our **VALUE**: what the Forest Service uniquely has to offer.

OUR AGENCY'S VALUES

What we believe

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As employees of the Forest Service, each of us has a set of personal values that defines who we are and how we act. We also have shared core values that define our agency.

Our agency's values reflect the proud heritage of the Forest Service, expressed in the language of today's workforce.

These values are not just "ours;" they are often shared by the people and communities we serve. They connect us to what people outside the agency also care about and can be powerful starting points for spurring dialogue, finding common ground, and building enduring relationships.

Our Forest Service values are (and should be) evident in everything we do and how we do it. By themselves, they don't tell us the solution to a problem. They guide us, telling us what to consider. In so doing, we advance our agency's mission in ways that allow us to stay true to who we are and what we believe.

AS EMPLOYEES OF THE FOREST SERVICE, WE BELIEVE IN

SERVICE.
To each other. To the American people. To the planet.

INTERDEPENDENCE.
Of all things. People and nature. Communities and colleagues. The past, present, and future.

CONSERVATION.
Protection when necessary. Preservation when appropriate. Restoration, when needed, and wise management for multiple use and enjoyment always.

DIVERSITY.
People and cultures. Perspectives and ideas. Experiences and ecosystems.

SAFETY.
In every way: physical, psychological, and social.

OUR AGENCY'S VOICE

How we are experienced

3

Organizations, like people, have personalities all their own.

We experience people not just through their actions, but also through the personality they embody while engaged in those actions. The neighbor who greets you with a cheery "hello" whenever she sees you. The colleague who senses that you're stressed and asks discreetly how he can help. It's not just what they're doing, but how. And it tells you something about who these people are and what they value.

The same is true of organizations. The organization's actions—both what it does and how it does it—often speak louder than words.

That's true of the Forest Service, as well. As employees, our voice reflects what's important to the agency, provides clues to its values, and sets the stage for how others experience the agency.

THE STORY OF CONSERVATION

And our place in it

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Conservation depends on all of us doing our part.

Being a good neighbor and building relationships with the people and communities we serve as employees of the Forest Service is most effective when we can explain what we do in the context of what *they* care about. As we engage with people all over the country, we hear time and again that they care about nature and recognize the many ways in which it serves their needs and enriches their lives.

We hear some consistency in how people in communities across the Nation define conservation, but we hear much less clarity in how they describe what the Forest Service does and why. Even among the people and partners who know the agency well, there is often little understanding about the breadth and depth of the agency's work beyond their own particular area of interest. That means we have a real opportunity to tell our story about what we do in the context of what *they* care about.

Ultimately, this story is a contemporary articulation of what Gifford Pinchot wrote more than a century ago, told in a way that resonates with people in today's world. It anchors to what we hear people say *they* care about—nature—and why it matters to them.

NATURE MATTERS...

Whether it's a forest, a family farm, or a tree on the corner, we are drawn to nature, and nature is part of all of us. It connects us to each other and to the bigger world around us.

...AND, NATURE PROVIDES.

Our country's natural resources have always been a source of strength, enjoyment, and pride. Every living thing relies on nature. But our natural resources are not unlimited, and they face significant challenges that affect all of us.

WE CAN MAKE IT LAST FOR EVERYONE IN THE LONG RUN...

It's important to take care of our shared natural resources by using, protecting, and restoring them today to ensure they'll still be here to provide for tomorrow. That's what conservation is all about.

...IF WE TAKE CARE OF IT TOGETHER.

Conservation depends on all of us seeing and doing our part. It's about diverse groups of people coming together, learning from each other, and finding common ground. Together, we can take care of nature as nature takes care of us.

OUR PLACE IN THE STORY OF CONSERVATION

For more than 100 years, the Forest Service has brought people and communities together to answer the call of conservation. Grounded in world-class science and technology—and rooted in communities—the Forest Service connects people to nature and each other. As a Federal agency in service to the American people, the Forest Service cares for shared natural resources in ways that promote lasting economic, ecological, and social vitality. In doing this, the agency supports nature in sustaining life.

OUR DYNAMIC TENSIONS

Inherent assets to leverage in pursuit of our agency's mission

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Woven through the culture of the Forest Service is a set of dynamic tensions that make the agency unique.

Each set of tensions represents different "ways of being" that complement other, equally valuable, ways of being. Neither is "good" or "bad," and both exist for logical reasons. These tensions energize our thinking as employees and open new possibilities for adaptation and innovation.

The more we notice and understand these dynamic tensions—and rely on the foundation of our values to balance them—the more they can serve as assets, helping to harness the power of our culture and our workforce to advance the agency's mission.

LAND/PEOPLE

We recognize that people and nature are inseparable and highly interdependent. We help people and communities live off the land in ways that improve the health of the land.

DOING/BEING

We get the job done. But people also align with us because of who we are. How we "show up," as reflected in our agency's character or "voice" and manifested in our Leader's Stance and Habits, affects how we cultivate and nurture the relationships that make our work possible.

CENTRALIZED/AUTONOMOUS

The Forest Service is unique in having a centralized global mission, as well as systems and supports that create reliability and consistency across the agency. Our culture also empowers individuals to make choices and decisions based on what they know about the places and communities in their care.

WORLDVIEW/ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

People expect us to be embedded and invested in their communities with an understanding of their needs and concerns. At the same time, they appreciate our big-picture perspective, which is informed by our experience across the country and around the world.

HUMBLE/EXPERT

We make unparalleled contributions to the advancement of ecological science and education. But we don't know everything, and we don't have all the answers. When we are humble in bringing our experience and expertise to the table, we invite—and are able to consider and celebrate—the perspective, expertise, and experience of others.

STANCE AND HABITS

Being a leader in everything we do

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Every one of us is a leader.

In the course of a day, a week, or a year (or a career!), as Forest Service employees, we often play different roles. Some of us take on formal leadership responsibilities. Others lead on a specific project or for a particular meeting. Still others lead by example and strength of character, regardless of their job title.

In the early days of the Forest Service, leadership was guided by the maxims of our agency's founder, Gifford Pinchot. Today, we have a contemporary expression of what it means to be a leader, in terms of both the qualities that leaders bring to the table (their "stance") and the behaviors they embrace and model in their everyday work (their "habits").

Observing where leaders within the agency are most effective and successful helped identify these qualities and habits.

LEADER'S STANCE

A leader in the Forest Service—

STEWARDS THE WHOLE PLACE

by recognizing that the whole is always more than the sum of its parts and that the higher purpose of the agency transcends any one part or program.

SEES OPPORTUNITY

in everything, imagining what the Forest Service "can be" as much as what it "can do" and recognizing that the experiences and relationships we create are as important as what we accomplish.

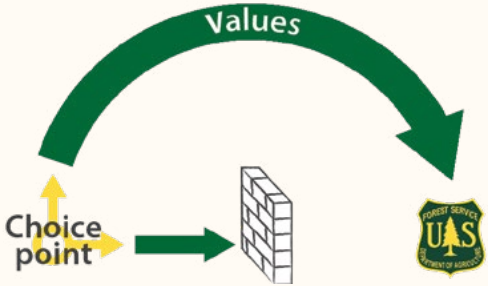
SHARES LEADERSHIP

by striving to strike the right balance between exhibiting courageous leadership and actively listening for where and how to grow other leaders inside and outside the agency.

BUILDS COMMUNITY

by being inclusive, welcoming new voices and diverse perspectives into the conversation, and creating an environment where everyone feels cared for, is treated equitably, and is valued.

LEADER'S HABITS



COMMUNICATE THE BIG WHY

Tell a purposeful story that connects to people's values (what they stand for, their dreams) and put our actions in the larger context of why the Forest Service's mission and values cause us to take a stand. In other words, convey with context and transparency why we do something.

FIND THE "MISSING MIDDLE"

Find new people to talk to and ask them what we're missing in order to obtain fresh perspectives. Learn what others know and get beyond polarized conversation. Reaching and serving more of our public creates opportunities for solutions that draw more people into conservation.

NURTURE THE RELATIONSHIP LOOP

Invest in relationships, both to get work done and to do it in a way that improves people's lives. Get to know people (their values, history, needs, resources, etc.) as a core approach to shape our programs and do our work.

EXPLORE, INTERCONNECT, EXPRESS

Be a curious learner who begins dialogue by asking rather than telling. Explore what matters to the people and communities you seek to engage. Help people interconnect what they care about with what nature provides.

EXPLORE, INTERCONNECT, AND EXPRESS

Engaging in dialogue about conservation

Dialogue grounded in shared values is central to the achievement of the Forest Service mission.

Talk might be cheap, as the old saying goes, but dialogue represents an investment. Dialogue is a conversation between people that is grounded in mutual respect and reflects their deeply held values. It involves connecting with other people and understanding where they're coming from, what they care about, and why. So, listening is a key ingredient in dialogue.

When we as Forest Service employees engage in dialogue grounded in our shared agency values—and reflecting our agency's voice—we create and sustain the relationships we need to be our best selves and do our best work.

Dialogue can happen in any setting: across a kitchen or conference table, on a street corner, or on a hiking trail.

EXPLORE

GREATEST NEEDS OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

What matters to you and your community?

INTERCONNECT

NATURE CONNECTS WITH WHAT MATTERS TO PEOPLE

In what ways does nature provide something that you value? How does this connect to what matters to you?

EXPRESS

HOW WE ARE EXPERIENCED

How would we at the Forest Service need to "show up" in a way that connects with your values and welcomes you to engage with us.

CODE AND COMMITMENTS

How we build trust

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Trust is central to the Forest Service mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

As employees of the Forest Service, we must be trusted to **"do right"** in how we treat each other as colleagues and how we engage with the people and communities we serve. When we do, we increase trust and inspire others to engage with us in caring for the land and serving people.

OUR CODE
is grounded in
OUR CORE VALUES
and we live them by:

TREATING EVERYONE WITH RESPECT.

EMPOWERING ONE ANOTHER.

INVESTING IN RELATIONSHIPS.

MODELING INTEGRITY.

PROTECTING ONE ANOTHER.

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES.

OUR UNIFORM

Wearing it well

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When we put on the Forest Service uniform as agency employees, we represent something bigger than ourselves.

By wearing the uniform, we represent the agency's rich heritage of conservation and the USDA's legacy of—and commitment to—service. And while many of the reasons we wear the uniform are deeply personal—and inspire both pride and confidence—we also wear the uniform to advance the agency's mission.

WHEN TO WEAR THE UNIFORM

The Forest Service uniform is a symbol of our agency's core values:

- Wearing the uniform is a reminder to others—and to ourselves—of the proud tradition of public SERVICE of which we are part.
- When we wear the uniform, we invite others to engage and learn with us, reflecting our recognition of the INTERDEPENDENCE at the heart of our collaborative efforts to steward the whole.
- The Forest Service uniform has always been—and always will be—a symbol, inviting people to join us in answering the call of CONSERVATION.
- When others see the diversity of people who wear the same Forest Service uniform, they see a reflection of our respect for DIVERSITY in all things.
- Our uniform can be a trusted beacon to help ensure the SAFETY of those who engage with and rely on our national forests and grasslands.

BECOMING MORE VISIBLE IS THE FIRST STEP IN ENGAGING PEOPLE AS PARTNERS IN STEWARDING THE WHOLE, FOR THE BENEFIT OF US ALL.

PHOTO CAPTIONS & CREDITS

Front Cover: Employees at the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 2-3: A group of four examines algae at a lake shore. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 5: 1. A group of smiling employees in Forest Service polo uniform shirts. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. A uniformed employee bends down to show a flower on a guided hike. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 6-7: A uniformed Forest Service employee follows a group on a guided hike. Credit: Darrah Isaacson, USDA Forest Service.

Page 8: 1. A uniformed Forest Service employee measures a tree. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. An historic photo of a uniformed Forest Service employee measuring a tree. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 10-11: Two uniformed Forest Service employees carry supplies and materials for a trail project. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 13: 1. Male sage grouse standing in the snow. Credit: iStockphotos.com. 2. Young boy drinking from a public drinking fountain. Credit: iStockphotos.com. 3. Volunteers install a wilderness trail sign. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 14-15: A uniformed Forest Service employee talks to two visitors at an overlook. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 16: 1. A uniformed Forest Service employee in a yellow hardhat works with a trail volunteer. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. A uniformed employee leads a group of youth on a hike. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 3. Two uniformed Forest Service employees smile in the rain at the cutting of the 2018 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree on the Willamette National Forest. Credit: Kevin Beasley, USDA Forest Service.

Page 18-19: An employee plants a small conifer tree in freshly dug soil. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 21: 1. Two employees help youth plant native plants in a newly opened Children's Garden. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. An historic photo of a Forest Service employee displaying the trunk of a small tree to two men. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 22-23: Snow capped Mt. Hood stands in the background of an old wooden barn and fields of grain. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 25: 1. A young child smiles while dressed up in USDA Forest Service fire gear. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. Fire crew monitor a prescribed burn. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 27: 1. A man in camouflage looks through binoculars. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. Two Forest Service employees show a map to a visitor on the side of a vehicle. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 28-29: A uniformed Forest Service employee helps a young girl thread a fishing line. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 30: 1. A uniformed Forest Service employee engaging in dialogue with the community at a picnic area. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. A uniformed Forest Service employee speaks with a community member at a public meeting. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 35 & 37: 1. Three uniformed Forest Service employees carrying flags ride in a town parade. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. A uniformed Forest Service employee bends down to examine a mossy rock near a stream. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 3. A uniformed Forest Service employee shows a map to two visitors. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 38-39: A uniformed Forest Service employee points out something in the distance to a group of youth on a guided hike. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 41: 1. Two Forest Service employees talk outside a vehicle. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. A uniformed employee sits on a rock wall talking to a man on an accessible trail. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 3. Three smiling uniformed employees pose for a selfie. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 42-43: A uniformed Forest Service wilderness ranger with a large backpack smiles at an overlook. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

Page 45: 1. A uniformed Forest Service employee engaging with a member of the public at an outdoor event. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 2. A uniformed Forest Service employee in hardhat examines a tree. Credit: USDA Forest Service. 3. A group of four employees staffs a table at a community event. Credit: USDA Forest Service.

THIS IS WHO WE ARE
USDA FOREST SERVICE

EXPANDED CONTENT COMING SOON!
Check *fs.fed.us/about-agency/this-is-who-we-are*
frequently for updates and information.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.