



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Forest Landowner Support Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 1: Supporting Underserved and Small-Acreage Forest Landowner Participation in Emerging Private Markets

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service: IRA Forest Landowner Support

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title

Supporting Underserved and Small-Acreage Forest Landowner Participation in Emerging Private Markets

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-FS-2023-IRA-FLS-01 Grants.gov <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html>

Assistance Listing

This opportunity for IRA Forest Landowner Support is provided under the Assistance Listing 10.731: Inflation Reduction Act Landscape Scale Restoration.

SAM.gov Registration

All applicants must have an active registration with the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and maintain active registration throughout the life of the award. This is the government-wide web-based system that supports all contracts, grants, and the electronic payment system. This requirement for registration may be found at 2 CFR 25.200.

Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary

This NOFO is the first IRA Forest Landowner Support funding opportunity offered through the Landscape Scale Restoration Program as authorized under Section 13A of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2109a). Projects will support participation of underserved landowners and small-acreage (owning less than 2,500 acres) landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation and forest resilience. Funding is provided through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 (Public Law No: 117-169, Subtitle D, Sec. 23002 (a), Competitive Grants for Non-Federal Forest Landowners).

Key Dates

Application materials can be found by searching for this funding opportunity through Grants.gov (Opportunity Number USDA-FS-2023-IRA-FLS-01). Deadlines vary by submission Track (see details below).

For inquiries specific to the content of the NOFO requirements, contact the following shared inbox: SM.FS.LandownerIRA@usda.gov. Please limit questions to those regarding specific information contained in this NOFO (e.g., dates, page numbers, clarification of any discrepancies). Questions related to eligibility or the merits of a specific proposal will not be addressed. Information on available pre-award webinars and other supporting information for this funding opportunity will be posted at: [USDA Forest Service IRA-Forest Landowner Support website](#).

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO 1)

Supporting Underserved and Small-Acreage Forest Landowner Participation in Emerging Private Markets

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) is the first in an anticipated series of Forest Landowner Support NOFOs funded by four IRA provisions (Public Law No: 117-169, Subtitle D, Sec. 23002(a) (1), (2), (3), and (4)). These provisions encompass cost share and payment incentives for forestry practices and support participation of underserved landowners and small-acreage landowners (owning less than 2,500 acres) in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience. IRA Forest Landowner Support falls under the USDA Forest Service's existing Landscape Scale Restoration Program, as authorized under Section 13A of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2109a). This program advances the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 Initiative. Established by Executive Order 14008 on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, the Justice40 Initiative has made it a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments, such as climate, clean energy, and other areas, flow to disadvantaged communities.

This NOFO solicits proposals for two IRA provisions: Subtitle D, Sec. 23002 (a)(2) and Subtitle D, Sec. 23002 (a)(3). These provisions provide the USDA Forest Service with funding to:

- Support the participation of underserved forest landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience¹
- Support the participation of forest landowners who own less than 2,500 acres of forest land in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience²

NOFO(s) offered in subsequent cycles will support additional provisions including *cost share* to carry out climate mitigation or forest resilience practices and *payments* for implementation of practices that provide measurable increases in carbon sequestration and storage. The USDA Forest Service anticipates at least one future NOFO with eligibility limited to Federally Recognized Tribes, Tribal organizations (e.g., corporations, groups, cooperatives, partnerships, associations), and Alaska Native Corporations.³ These entities are also eligible for this NOFO.

Proposals are expected from a diversity of applicants including national, regional, local, and community-based organizations. Organizations representing underserved landowners and first-time applicants for federal funds are encouraged to apply. Multiple deadlines (or "Tracks") are available to encourage involvement from a wide variety of applicants and to capture learning for future program development. Tracks are defined by overall proposal budget size.

Track A: Proposal budgets greater than or equal to \$2 million and less than \$25 million

Track B: Proposal budgets that are less than \$2 million

Track C: Proposals to administer a national competitive regranting program may also be considered. Budgets must be greater than or equal to \$5 million, less than \$50 million, and include at least 80% sub-awards.

¹ Public Law No: 117-169, Subtitle D, Sec. 23002 (a)(2)

² Public Law No: 117-169, Subtitle D, Sec. 23002 (a)(3)

³ As defined in section 4 of the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 USC 5304).

The USDA Forest Service anticipates up to \$150 million may be awarded through this opportunity under Tracks A and B.

Applying entities may submit up to three unique proposals under Track A and/or B for a maximum combined total of \$25 million. Entities that have subsidiaries and affiliates will be treated as one applicant for purposes of calculating the \$25 million cap on requests. Track C is not included in the \$25 million cap on the total amount requested.

This program emphasizes shared learning, collective action, replicability, and ability to scale. The USDA Forest Service will leverage existing opportunities and organizational structures to support practitioners, provide professional development, and support a platform for information-sharing. Extent of participation in these networks will vary with scope of award and proposed project goals and activities.

Background

Forests are critical to the wellbeing of the nation and face increasing stress. These stressors include ecological drivers exacerbated by climate change such as fire, drought, insects, and disease, as well as socioeconomic factors that accelerate conversion to other uses. While the threat of loss is real, opportunities are emerging to sustain public benefits provided by forests, retain and expand forest cover, and invest in rural communities. These opportunities include access to emerging markets and funding streams that offer the potential for additional income for forest landowners to reinvest in the sustainable management of working forests.

Forests in the United States offset nearly 15% of domestic carbon emissions⁴ and represent more than 90% of the nation's sequestration in the land sector.⁵ Privately owned and Tribal forests comprise 60% of forest cover in the United States and have the potential to play a central role in resilience strategies.⁶ Market innovations are emerging to compensate landowners for their critical contributions to ecological, social, and economic vitality. Innovations include formal markets for carbon, water quality and quantity, habitat, biodiversity, and wetland restoration, among others. Financial incentives such as payments for practices and cost share programs offer an additional pathway to help landowners develop and implement climate resilient management activities. Investments in these models can empower landowners, increase the financial viability of sustainable forestry, and help to maintain forests as forests.

In addition to market development, action is needed to address challenges faced by underserved landowners, Tribes, and small-acreage landowners. These populations encounter financial, social and/or cultural barriers including discrimination and have limited access to

⁴ USDA Forest Service [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#)

⁵ Ontl, Todd A; Janowiak, Maria K; Swanston, Christopher W; Daley, Jad; Handler, Stephen; Cornett, Meredith; Hagenbuch, Steve; Handrick, Cathy; Mccarthy, Liza; Patch, Nancy. 2019. Forest Management for Carbon Sequestration and Climate Adaptation. *Journal of Forestry*. 118(1): 86-101. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jofore/fvz062>.

⁶ USDA Forest Service, National Woodland Owner Survey, <https://www.fia.fs.usda.gov/nwos/>

capital and capacity for climate resilient forestry practices. Increasing opportunity and access to technical assistance, conservation incentives, and market opportunities for all landowners is key to achieving landscape-scale impact and supporting thriving rural economies. Targeted engagement of underserved communities and representative organizations is needed to tackle these challenges.

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Availability

The USDA Forest Service anticipates offering a series of funding opportunities under IRA Forest Landowner Support. The agency may award up to \$150 million total through this NOFO (Tracks A and B) for the following two Focus Areas:

1. Support the participation of underserved forest landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience.
2. Support the participation of forest landowners who own less than 2,500 acres of forest land in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience.

Match Contribution

There is no match requirement for proposals to be funded through this NOFO. The Landscape Scale Restoration Program authority, authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill, requires a 1:1 non-Federal match; however, the Inflation Reduction Act waives the statutory match requirement for the funding available through this NOFO. No match waiver request is required.

While match is not mandated, it is encouraged. The ability to leverage non-Federal sources to increase the overall impact of the proposed project will be considered in evaluation of proposals. Project narratives should include a written description of any non-Federal contributions secured by the applicant and provide support letters or evidence of non-Federal match, if proposed in the budget.

Project Performance Period

Recipients will be expected to implement and demonstrate measurable progress within twelve months of award. All activities and expenses must be completed within three years. Funding agreements may be extended by a year with adequate justification; agreements may not exceed a total project period of five years and all funding must be fully expended by September 30, 2031.

Reporting Requirements

Financial and narrative progress reports must be submitted with frequency determined by agency guidance and specified in final signed award documents, at least annually and not more frequently than quarterly. Reports are due 30 days after the end of the reporting period. Timely submittal of financial and progress reports for each award is required. Payments will be withheld until missing reports are received and approved. Progress reports should highlight direct quantitative and qualitative investment activities and outcomes and include illustrative impact stories. Geospatial data files that outline the project area and any other relevant data

will be required as part of regular reporting. Successful proposals will be outcome-oriented with well-designed indicators and clear monitoring and evaluation plans.

ELIGIBILITY

To apply for this grant program, an entity MUST have an active registration at SAM.gov at the time of application and must provide their UEI (Unique Entity Identifier) and a screen shot of their registration.

For this funding opportunity, the USDA Forest Service defines eligibility based on underlying legislative authorities of the Landscape Scale Restoration Program authorized under Section 13A of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2109a).

Who Can Apply

The following entities are eligible to submit a project proposal through Tracks A and B:

- U.S. State Governments
- U.S. Local Governments
- Tribal Governments
- Alaska Native Corporations/Villages
- Other Tribal Entities
- Education Institutions
- Non-Profit Entities
- For-Profit Entities

The following entities are eligible to submit a project proposal through Track C:

- Nonprofit organizations with a mission focused on sustainable forestry and/or forest conservation. Applicants must have demonstrated success in managing competitive subgrant programs that are regional or national in scope.

Eligible Lands

Program activities must target nonindustrial private forest land which is defined as meeting all the following criteria:

- Is rural, defined as all areas outside United States Census areas with 50,000 or more people. **Please use the [Landscape Scale Restoration Project Planning Tool](#) to confirm that the proposed project area(s) is within an eligible rural geography.**
- Has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees.
- Is owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian Tribe, other private legal entity or is Tribal land held in trust by the federal government.

Underserved Landowner Definition (applicable to Focus Area 1)

For these IRA provisions, the USDA Forest Service defines underserved as landowners from one or more of the following groups (definitions below):

1. Beginning Farmers, Ranchers, or Forest Landowners⁷;
2. Farmers, Ranchers, or Forest Landowners Living in High Poverty Areas⁸;
3. Federally Recognized Tribes⁹;
4. Limited Resource Producers¹⁰; and/or
5. Veterans.¹¹

1. Beginning Farmer, Rancher, or Forest Landowners

- Not owned/operated a farm, ranch, or non-industrial private forest land; or
- Has operated a farm, ranch, or non-industrial private forest land for not more than 10 consecutive years; and
- All members/owners individually qualify as beginning farmer, rancher, or forest landowners.

When self-determining their eligibility, landowners should consider whether:

- a. Within the last 10 years, they inherited the land from someone who died;
- b. The land was newly purchased land within the last 10 years; or
- c. They obtained a new farm number and tract number from FSA in the past 10 years.

2. Farmer, Rancher, or Forest Landowners Living in High Poverty Areas

High poverty areas are [defined by the USDA](#) as areas with a poverty rate of 20% or more in a single time period. There are multiple tools available to assist in the identification of high poverty areas listed below.

3. Federally Recognized Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations/Villages

In many geographies, Tribes and Tribal members may represent a significant proportion of underserved landowners. It is important for the USDA Forest Service to maintain a government-to-government relationship with Tribes, which is reflected in the federal Tribal process for the regularly appropriated Landscape Scale Restoration Program and will be developed for new IRA programs. To honor and build those relationships, the USDA Forest Service will continue to prioritize outreach and engagement with Tribal governments and communities. We recognize that many applicants also have robust Tribal engagement plans and strong relationships in place. The USDA Forest Service anticipates developing direct funding opportunities for Tribes to implement new programs utilizing IRA funding and authorities. More information on these opportunities will be available in the future.

4. Limited Resource Producer

⁷ [Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018](#); [From Title 7- Agriculture 7 USC 2279](#); [Inflation Reduction Act](#)

⁸ [Inflation Reduction Act](#)

⁹ [Section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act \(25 U.S.C. 5304\)](#)

¹⁰ [Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018](#); [Inflation Reduction Act](#)

¹¹ [Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018](#); [From Title 7- Agriculture 7 USC 2279](#); [Inflation Reduction Act](#)

- With direct or indirect gross farm/forest product sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
- Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.
- Landowners can voluntarily self-identify using the [Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher Self Determination Tool](#).

5. Veterans

A veteran has served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof; was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable; and:

- Has not owned land for more than 10 years; or
- Who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

Screening Tool and Data for Geographic Prioritization

Applicants should use the screening tool and data sets described below to identify target geographies. If not applying the references below, please describe in your proposal the tools and/or data sets used to identify target geographies.

[Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

The White House Council on Environmental Quality's [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST) identifies disadvantaged communities using indicators of burden. Communities that are at or above the threshold for one or more environmental, climate, or other burdens and at or above the threshold for an associated socio-economic burden are identified as disadvantaged. The tool also identifies communities as disadvantaged if they are on land within the boundaries of Federally Recognized Tribes. Applicants and project implementers should use CEJST to identify areas of geographic prioritization for outreach, technical assistance, and program implementation.¹² The additional data sets listed below may also be utilized as complementary reference.

[USDA Economic Research Service \(ERS\) Poverty Area Measures](#)

The [USDA Economic Research Service \(ERS\) Poverty Area Measures](#) identify counties and census tracts with high (20.0 percent or more) and extreme (40.0 percent or more) poverty rates over various timeframes in the period from 1960 to 2019. This information is used to derive persistent and enduring poverty area measures for the same levels of geography. Forest landowners located within these tracts meet the USDA definition of forest landowners living in high poverty areas.

¹² For more information, see OMB, CEQ, & CPO, [M-23-09, Memorandum Re: Addendum to the Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative, M-21-28, on using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(Jan. 27, 2023\)](#)

U.S. Counties with continuous high poverty, 1960 - 2019

As of 2019, there were 304 counties—13 percent of the counties with high poverty in 1960—that consistently had poverty rates of 20 percent or more over the last 60 years (see chart [here](#)). The majority—264 counties—are rural counties and are clustered in the Appalachian States; the Black Belt in the South; the Mississippi Delta; the Ozarks region of Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and southeast Kansas; the Southwest; and in counties with large American Indian and Alaska Native populations.

GAO Report to Congressional Addressees on Targeting Federal Funds: Information on Funding to Areas with Persistent or High Poverty

The Government Accountability Office was asked to review federal funding allocated to persistent-poverty counties and high-poverty areas. This [report](#) examines (1) characteristics of areas with persistent or high poverty. As of 2017, persistent-poverty counties were predominantly rural and more frequently located in the South than in other regions. GAO identified 409 persistent-poverty counties (13 percent of all counties), roughly 50 percent of which were rural. In contrast, high-poverty census tracts—which represented 28 percent of all census tracts—were frequently urban (74 percent).

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- Basic research as defined in 2CFR 422.1, “systematic study directed toward fuller knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and of observable facts without specific applications towards processes or products in mind”.
 - *Note:* Technical transfer, education, and outreach activities associated with [applying research](#) can be included in the application.
- Construction and capital improvements including facilities, infrastructure, roads, new buildings, culverts, and boardwalks.
- Land acquisition (conservation easement and fee simple) projects.
- Small business start-up funding.
- Equipment purchases are rarely approved and will be reviewed prior to grant award. Equipment rental should be considered as an alternative. Equipment is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit.
- Lobbying, litigation, or political advocacy.
- Initial resources to capitalize a revolving fund, defined as a pool of capital that can be loaned and replenished as a borrower pays back a lender.
- Cost-share, reimbursement, and other types of payment provided directly to private landowners. However, funding (and match) may be used to perform work on private lands; for example, a Tribe or Tribal organization could pay for consulting services or treatment activities to be performed on private lands with permission of the landowner.
- Profit. Profit is not an allowable expense as specified in the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200), with which all grant recipients must comply.

PROGRAM CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Supporting Underserved and Small-Acreage Forest Landowner Participation in Emerging Private Markets is the first NOFO under IRA Forest Landowner Support programming. Market opportunities for climate mitigation and forest resilience include those related to carbon, water quality and quantity, habitat, biodiversity, and wetland restoration, among others.

NOTE: This NOFO is not intended for wood innovations (mass timber, renewable wood energy and related technologies). Please consult the [USDA Forest Service Wood Innovations program website](#) for upcoming funding opportunities.

Supporting Underserved and Small-Acreage Forest Landowner Participation in Emerging Private Markets includes two Focus Areas and three submission Tracks, which are defined by overall proposal budget. Proposals are encouraged from a diversity of entities including national, regional, local, Tribal, and community-based organizations. Project goals can include large scale impact and/or replicable activities to demonstrate proof of concept.

Proposals may incorporate some or all of the following elements:

- Promoting equitable opportunities for participation in emerging markets for climate mitigation and forest resilience;
- Establishing proof of concept for new climate-resilient forestry programs with potential for replicability;
- Using partnerships and networks to leverage impact;
- Emphasizing learning and informing future program development; and/or
- Including appropriately-designed monitoring and evaluation plans to track learning and progress.

Proposed activities will align to guiding principles established in consultation with the USDA Forest Service Office of Sustainability and Climate:

- Forest management practices must emphasize ecosystem resilience rather than maximization of any single benefit to the detriment of ecosystem function.
- Forest management practices should measurably demonstrate “net positive” outcomes (additionality) over time for multiple public and ecosystem benefits including, but not limited to, carbon sequestration, biodiversity/habitat restoration, sustainably managed forest products and/or improved water quantity or quality.
- Activities and practices should incorporate consideration of risk, including disturbance and future climate conditions, and contribute to forest resilience.
- Activities and practices must be designed for site-specific conditions (e.g., forest type; climate change impacts and vulnerability; and relevant laws, regulations, and policies).
- Emerging private markets that support these practices should optimize direct benefits to landowners while limiting their financial risk.

Focus Areas

Projects should focus on increasing participation of underserved (Focus Area 1) and/or small-acreage landowners (landowners owning less than 2,500 acres, Focus Area 2) in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience. These markets apply economic incentives for environmental conservation on private lands on a regulatory or voluntary basis. Current active and pilot markets exist for carbon, water quality, water quantity, wetlands, and biodiversity/habitats, among others.

All proposed activities should support participation of underserved and/or small-acreage landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience. Project activities may include, but are not limited to, the activities listed below:

- Practice development and the installation of practices on private forest land (with technical caveat that direct payments to landowners are not an eligible expenditure under this NOFO).
- Science synthesis and technical support to assist project implementers and inform program development;
- Assessment of barriers to participation in markets and proposed strategies for addressing those barriers;
- Targeted outreach, education, and/or communication tool development to increase awareness and help landowners navigate market opportunities;
- Facilitation of access to markets and/or certification systems;
- Development of innovative tools or strategies for lowering transaction costs and/or managing risk;
- Technical assistance for development of forest management plans and/or implementation of applicable forest management activities;
- Training for foresters and technical assistance providers;
- Innovation for quantification, data collection, and monitoring; and
- Hiring of staff or contractors to provide support services.

Proposals may address one or both Focus Areas (underserved landowners and/or landowners owning less than 2,500 acres) Proposals that address both should include a Project Narrative that distinguishes between activities for each Focus Area and include separate budgets for Focus Area 1 and 2, as well as one consolidated summary budget.

Applying entities may submit up to three unique proposals under Track A and/or B for a maximum combined total of \$25 million. Entities that have subsidiaries and affiliates will be treated as one applicant for purposes of calculating the \$25 million cap on requests. Track C will not be included in the \$25 million cap on total amount requested.

Tracks

Proposals are expected from a diversity of entities including national, regional, local, and community-based organizations. Entities representing underserved landowners are particularly

encouraged to apply. Project goals can include large scale impact and/or targeted but replicable activities to demonstrate proof of concept.

Three “Tracks” with distinct deadlines are offered to encourage participation by applicants that have a breadth of experience, expertise, and geographic scale. Tracks are defined by overall proposed budget. Each proposal must clearly identify ONE Track:

- Track A: Proposal budgets greater than or equal to \$2 million and less than \$25 million are due by October 21, 2023, 60 days following publication.
- Track B: Proposal budgets less than \$2 million will be considered for funding on a quarterly basis beginning at least 60 days following publication.
- Track C: Proposals to administer a national competitive regrating program may also be considered. Budgets must be greater than or equal to \$5 million, less than \$50 million, and include at least 80% sub-awards. Proposals will be considered on a rolling basis and reviewed at least quarterly. *NOTE*: These programs will include substantive involvement by the USDA Forest Service and be best suited for cooperative agreements rather than grants (see more below).

Track C Sub-Awards

Track C proposals are expected to emphasize a competitive sub-award component to expedite funding delivery, increase opportunities for capacity-constrained organizations, and/or facilitate access for eligible entities that address the needs of underserved landowners or small-acreage landowners. These efforts will include substantive involvement by the USDA Forest Service.

Applicants for Track C are expected to:

1. Consult with the USDA Forest Service on program design.
2. Develop outreach plans to reach targeted beneficiaries.
3. Develop a competitive subaward process that ensures efficient and effective fund dispersal within a 1-year period. All subaward projects must be completed within the five-year, Pass-Through Entity grant performance period.
4. Create a transparent progress, financial tracking, and accomplishment reporting system.
5. Manage the application in-take processes, evaluations, subawards process, and project risk through ongoing monitoring.
6. Assist sub-awardees with development and distribution of communications and educational materials that support the program of work and appropriately recognize federal funding source(s).
7. Engage in program evaluation and continuous learning in partnership with the USDA Forest Service and forest sector partners.

FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Proposals may address one or both Focus Areas. Proposals that address both should include a Project Narrative that distinguishes between activities for each Focus Area and include separate

budgets for Focus Area 1 and 2, as well as one consolidated summary budget. Each proposal must clearly identify ONE Track (A, B, or C).

Required Proposal Documents

The USDA Forest Service may choose not to consider applications that fail to comply with the required content, format, and page limits, or those that are incomplete. All required forms are standard and may be accessed through Grants.gov. For other application elements, guidance is provided below for suggested content. Each page must be numbered and have one-inch margins. The text of the project narrative must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri) with no smaller than 12-point font. To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain the following required documents:

1. Cover Page
2. Project Narrative
3. Detailed Budget
4. Budget Narrative
5. Financial Statements (Track A and C only)
6. Letter(s) of Collaboration (if applicable)
7. Match Verification (if applicable)
8. SF-424 (standard form)
9. SF-424A (standard form)
10. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Assessment (if applicable)

The following standard forms are included in Financial Assistance assurances associated with SAM.gov registration: SF-424B, AD-1047, AD-1049, AD-3030 (if applicable), FS-1500-35 (if applicable)

Cover Page

The proposal cover page should include the following:

- **Project Title:** Provide a uniquely descriptive title for this project. Use this full title consistently on all submission communications and supplemental documents, including letter(s) of collaboration, until an official application number is assigned by the USDA Forest Service.
- **Project Applicant:** Provide the name of the organization applying for Federal funding. If a parent company, please list subsidiaries/affiliates (and vice versa).
- **Contact Information:** Provide the name, title, address, phone number, and email address for the person leading the project or program.
- **Project Focus Area and Track:** Indicate the Focus Area(s) (1 and/or 2) your project intends to address, as well as the appropriate Track (A, B, or C) for your proposal.

Project Proposal: Narrative

The project narrative should not exceed ten pages (excluding budget) and should include the below-listed components. **Proposals may address more than one Focus Area but should**

include a Project Narrative that distinguishes between activities addressing each Focus Area and include separate budgets as well as one consolidated summary budget.

1. **Project Problem Statement:** In fewer than 100 words, provide a summary of the project that includes the challenge to be addressed, scope, location, key partners, and expected accomplishments.
2. **Program Alignment:** Describe how the project will align with the goals and guiding principles defined in this NOFO.
3. **Organizational Alignment:** Explain how the project aligns with your organization's mission and strategic priorities.
4. **Project Partners:** Provide the name(s) of partner organizations and briefly describe their involvement and contributions to the project. Concisely describe the rationale for engaging identified partners in program delivery, including key qualifications of each organization and personnel as they relate to their roles in project implementation, monitoring, and/or assessment of outcomes. Note that signed letters of collaboration are required for each partner that will be actively involved in delivery of proposed project activities.
5. **Strategic Geographic Focus:** Describe the geography (or geographies) impacted and how the project aligns to strategic conservation priorities, such as [State Forest Action Plans](#), landscape scale conservation initiatives, the USDA Forest Service [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#), or other relevant strategies reflecting diverse stakeholder input and coordinated partner collaboration.
6. **Implementation Strategy/Methodology/Timeline:** Provide a detailed explanation of the proposed approach, methodology, and project schedule/timeline with goals/milestones, and expected accomplishments.
7. **Strategies for Addressing Barriers/Challenges to Underserved Landowners:** If applicable, explain how your project will address barriers to participation for underserved landowners. These may be financial, social, or cultural barriers faced by targeted groups.
8. **Match:** There is no match requirement for proposals to be funded through this NOFO. The Landscape Scale Restoration Program authority requires a 1:1 non-Federal match; however, the IRA waives this match requirement for the funding available through this NOFO. While match is not mandated, proposals are encouraged to maximize grant funding by using it to leverage contributions from non-Federal entities (such as private capital, corporate funding, and philanthropy) as well as partner or network resources. Program recipients (underserved landowners and landowners owning less than 2,500 acres) should not be the primary source of voluntary match (if match is proposed in the budget). Please include a written description of any non-Federal contributions and signed support letters (or other form of verification).
9. **Measurable Outcomes and Impact:** Describe how impact will be measured; explain the metrics and processes to determine economic, environmental and/or social outcomes for proposed activities. If aligning with an existing strategy or action plan, indicate how relevant metrics will be used and modeled.
10. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Explain how your project will track success and

adaptively address new challenges and opportunities as they arise.

11. **Capability and Capacity:** Describe how capacity exists or will be developed for program delivery and financial oversight. If submitting a Track C proposal, include details for how subawards will be managed and supported; describe existing infrastructure, financial oversight capabilities and experience with subawards and managing a competitive grant award process.

Project Proposal: Budget

Detailed Budget

Each proposal should include a detailed budget. **Proposals that include activities related to more than one Focus Area should include separate budgets for each Focus Area as well as one consolidated summary budget.** Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished and all requested funds are spent. Budget categories include the following:

- Personnel (actual cost). *NOTE:* Fringe benefits should be identified separately from salary and that no other expenses (e.g., fees, benefits) can be included in “Personnel” beyond direct compensation to individuals for time worked.
- Fringe benefits
- Travel
- Equipment (cost of purchase, not rental). *NOTE:* The definition of equipment is tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost of at least \$5,000. Equipment purchase is highly discouraged. Consider equipment rental instead.)
- Supplies (tangible personal property other than equipment--includes tree purchase not completed under a contract for service)
- Contractual (e.g., contract for service, equipment rental)
- Other
- Indirect costs

Indirect Costs

The applicant may elect to assess indirect costs against this award following the direction at 2 CFR 200.414. If the applicant has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), the NICRA rate can be used and a copy of the NICRA submitted with the proposal. In the absence of a NICRA, an applicant may elect to use the de minimis rate of 10% applied to modified total direct costs (see details below).

- **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA):** May be used, if established.
- **De Minimis Rate:** Any non-Federal entity (except state and local governments that receive more than \$35 million per year in Federal funding) that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect rate (NICRA) may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in 2 CFR 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen,

this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

- **Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC):** MTDC includes all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

Budget Narrative

Explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. List in detail how the totals on the budget were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency's approval and estimate its cost.¹³

Other Required Supporting Documents

Financial Documents

For Track A and C proposals, applicants should include the entity's most recent audited financial statement and, for tax-exempt organizations, the entity's most recent 990 form.

Letters of Collaboration

Include signed letters from each collaborating partner that will be actively involved in delivery of proposed project activities, including descriptions of intent and capacity to fulfill intended roles and responsibilities.

Match Verification

If non-Federal match is proposed in the budget, include signed support letter(s) or other form of verification.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with USDA Forest Service policies. Proposals will then be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet all of the following criteria:

- Alignment with program and Focus Area priorities (see Program Content and Structure);
- Technical merit (proposal is technically sound and feasible with a well-crafted workplan and achievable timeline);
- Organizational capability and capacity, including skills and experiences of key personnel (administrative infrastructure, subject matter expertise and relationships required to

¹³ 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200?toc=1>

- achieve intended results);
- Appropriate measurement and monitoring of outcomes, including ability to adapt activities as needed;
- Budget cost-effectiveness, including description of any non-Federal funds contributed (proposed budget is appropriate to scale and scope of program of work);
- Optimization of benefits to landowners;
- Partner commitment and coordination (as appropriate);
- Strategic programmatic contribution; potential to replicate or amplify impact.

The agency will also account for program portfolio balance (e.g., geographic location, entity type, scope of activities, and program beneficiaries) in determining awards to be funded.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Applications are to be submitted through Grants.gov by searching grant opportunity number USDA-FS-2023-IRA-FLS-01. See “Tracks” section above for details on submission deadlines.

Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide sufficient time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission. Please see the Appendix for detailed instructions on *Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures*.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For inquiries specific to the content of the NOFO requirements, contact the following shared inbox: SM.FS.LandownerIRA@usda.gov. Please limit questions to those regarding specific information contained in this NOFO (such as dates, page numbers, clarification of discrepancies, etc.). Questions related to eligibility, or the merits of a specific proposal will not be addressed. The USDA Forest Service will provide two (2) Application Assistance Webinars within 15 business days of publication of this NOFO to assist with specific questions and inquiries. If you would like to receive a direct invitation for these sessions, please send an email to the program inbox: SM.FS.LandownerIRA@usda.gov.

APPENDIX

Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures

Please read the registration instructions carefully and prepare the information requested **well in advance of the application deadline**.

Organizations must have an active System for Award Management (SAM) registration which provides a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and a Grants.gov account to apply for grants. Creating a Grants.gov account can be completed online in minutes, but **SAM registration may take several weeks**. Therefore, an organization's registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact the entity's ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

How to Register to Apply through Grants.gov

1) Register with SAM: All organizations (entities) applying online through Grants.gov must register with the System for Award Management (SAM). Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually. For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

2) Create a Grants.gov Account: The next step is to register an account with Grants.gov. Follow the on-screen instructions provided on the registration page.

3) Add a Profile to a Grants.gov Account: A profile in Grants.gov corresponds to a single applicant organization the user represents (i.e., an applicant) or an individual applicant submitting on their own behalf. If you work for or consult with multiple organizations, you can have a profile for each organization under one Grants.gov account. In such cases, you may log in to one Grants.gov account to access all your grant profiles. To add an organizational profile to your Grants.gov account, enter the UEI (Unique Entity Identifier) for the organization in the UEI field. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/add-profile.html>

4) EBiz POC Authorized Profile Roles: After you register with Grants.gov and create an Organization Applicant Profile, the applicant's request for Grants.gov roles and access is sent to the EBiz POC. The EBiz POC is then expected to log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been assigned the AOR role. For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/authorize-roles.html>

5) Track Role Status: To track your role request, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration/track-role-status.html>

6) **Electronic Signature:** When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization applicant with the AOR role that submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC of the organization must authorize people who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as a user with the AOR role; **this step is often missed and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov

Grants.gov applicants can apply online using Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), you can create individual instances of a Workspace.

For an overview of applying on Grants.gov using Workspaces, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

1) **Create a Workspace:** Add participants to a Workspace to complete all the required forms online or by downloading PDF versions, and check for errors before submission. The Workspace progress bar will display the state of your application process as you apply. As you apply using Workspace, you may click the blue question mark icon near the upper-right corner of each page to access context-sensitive help.

a. *Adobe Reader:* If you decide not to apply by filling out webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>

b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* In the forms, you will note fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color. These fields are mandatory fields that must be completed to successfully submit your application.

c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First:* These forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and SAM UEI. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

2) **Submit a Workspace:** An application may be submitted through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. **Grants.gov**

recommends submitting your application package at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

4) Track a Workspace Submission: After successfully submitting a Workspace application, a Grants.gov Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) is automatically assigned to the application. The number will be listed on the Confirmation page that is generated after submission. Using the tracking number, access the Track My Application page under the Applicants tab or the Details tab in the submitted Workspace.

For additional training resources, including video tutorials, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html>

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov.

Timely Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission

The applicant with the AOR role who submitted the application will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. This applicant with the AOR role will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When the USDA Forest Service successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt of the application to the email address of the AOR representative. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding.