

Agreement instruments

An agreement defines how partners will work together and how to manage and provide project resources, clearly defining who will be responsible for what, who will report to whom, how services will be provided, how decisions will be made, and how any possible funding will be allocated. Often the specifics of an agreement are guided by the partners' shared vision, which facilitates the development of reasonable goals, specific targets, and plans. This vision also plays an important role in bridging any differences between partners' organizational cultures. Partnership agreements are governed by numerous Federal laws and regulations, and Local or State regulations, mission statements, bylaws, and good business practices supplement this guidance. An overview of partnering documents that may be used follows.

Challenge Cost-Share Agreements are available on a year-to-year basis and require recipients to match Federal money with non-Federal funds, labor, materials, equipment, or land and water. These agreements generally result in direct benefit to the Forest Service versus public benefit.

Collection Agreements are used to collect cash contributions to perform specific tasks authorized by law that benefit partners on either NFS land or land adjacent to or with direct impact to NFS land. Partner financial contributions may cover all or part of the work costs. The Forest Service does not use these agreements to receive gifts or charitable contributions.

Cooperative Agreements are used to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to an outside group for a project of mutual interest and with public interest. Substantial agency involvement is anticipated.

Grants are used to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to an outside group for a project of mutual interest where substantial Forest Service involvement is not anticipated. Some of the Forest Service's closest partners also award their own grants from funding the agency has provided them, and bring non-Federal match to increase the overall value of the work being performed.

Interagency and Intra-agency Agreements are used when one agency is providing payments, goods, or services to another agency or when internal Forest Service programs collaborate.

Memorandums of Understanding, often referred to as MOUs, are most commonly used to establish partnerships and document specific responsibilities and/or coordinate efforts among parties, with each partner carrying out its separate activities. Partners agree to work toward mutual goals, perform joint work, or share research results, but no funding is involved.

Participating Agreements are used when the Forest Service and its partners wish to perform work from which they will accrue non-monetary mutual benefit. Activities in these agreements are generally limited to forest history materials publication; forest protection; interpretive

associations; manpower/job training; prescribed fire; pollution abatement; Resource Advisory Committee support; and watershed restoration and enhancement.

Joint Venture Agreements pool resources in support of agricultural research activities of mutual interest. Parties must share costs.

Stewardship Agreements and Stewardship Contracts are used to achieve mutual objectives and land management goals on the national forests that meet local and rural community needs. Designed to promote closer working relationships with local communities in a broad range of activities that improve land conditions, these instruments allow Federal agencies to contribute to sustainable rural community development and restore and maintain healthy forest ecosystems.

Volunteer Agreements are used to secure services of individuals or groups without compensation although some incidental expenses may be reimbursed. Volunteer agreements are separate from the grants and agreements process within the Forest Service.