



USDA Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

Fiscal Year 2025 Request for Applications

Submit proposals to applicable State Foresters or equivalent Tribal officials by **January 13, 2025**.

Summary Information

Federal Awarding Agency Name

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service

Opportunity Title

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

Opportunity Number

USDA-FS-2025-CFP

SAM.gov Registration

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

Opportunity Summary

Awards will support the fee simple acquisition of private forest land that is threatened by conversion and that provides community benefits including economic, environmental, educational, and recreational benefits.

Key Submission Dates

- **January 13, 2025:** Final applications must be submitted to either the State Forester or equivalent official of Indian Tribes where the property is located.
 - **Note:** All applicants must also send an e-mail to SM.FS.CFP@usda.gov to confirm that their application has been submitted.
- **February 10, 2025:** State Foresters or Tribal government officials must forward submitted applications to the appropriate Forest Service Regional office or International Institute of Tropical Forestry.

Details on informational webinars and other supporting information for this funding opportunity will be posted to the Forest Service Community Forest Program website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>.

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Program Description

The USDA Forest Service, State, Private & Tribal Forestry is requesting applications for the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program or CFP), authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill. 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.

Eligibility

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.

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 land¹. Individuals are not eligible to receive funds through this program.

Eligible Land

Eligible land for grants funded under this program is private forest land 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;

¹ Defined in the Community Forest Program final rule as any organization that is described in Section 170(h)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 170(h)(3)) and operates in accordance with one or more of the conservation purposes specified in Section 170(h)(4)(A) of that Code (26 U.S.C. 170(h)(4)(A)). See the CFP final rule for further information.

- Not held in trust by the United States on behalf of any Indian Tribe and not Tribal allotment lands²;
- 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

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

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

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)

How to Apply

Submission Dates for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025

- **All applications must be received by State Foresters or Tribal governments by January 13, 2025.**
- State Foresters or Tribal government officials must forward applications to the appropriate Forest Service Regional office or International Institute of Tropical Forestry **by February 10, 2025.**

Award Amounts

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.

² Lands acquired by Tribes through the Community Forest Program cannot be added into trust.

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 donations³, 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](#).

Application Development

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 and available on the [Forest Service Regional Contacts](#) website.

Application Submission

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/>.

³Cost share contributions may include the purchase or donation of other lands located within the community forest as long as it is provided by an eligible entity and legally dedicated to perpetual land conservation consistent with Community Forest Program and community forest objectives; such donations need to meet the acquisition requirements specified under § 230.8(a)(1)(ii) of the Community Forest Program final rule.

Informational Webinar

Details on informational webinars and other supporting information for this funding opportunity will be posted to the Forest Service Community Forest Program website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>.

Application Requirements

Application Materials

The following documents must be submitted with the application:

1. **Application Narrative** (8 pages maximum)
2. **Two project maps**
3. **Eligibility verification**

The application narrative, including the project budget, shall not exceed eight pages (sized at 8.5 by 11 inches). In addition to the 8-page application, verification of applicant's eligibility and two maps must be submitted with the application. Other letters of support may accompany the application but are not required.

The application should clearly describe the land to be acquired with CFP funds. If the proposed project is an expansion of existing conserved lands (including a phase or addition to an existing community forest) or part of a larger land acquisition effort occurring at the site, the application should be specific to the community forest portion of the effort proposed for funding.

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

Application Narrative (8 pages maximum)

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).

The following information must be included in the application narrative:

About the proposed community forest

- 1) Contact information for the project lead (name, title, phone number, email).
- 2) A description of how the land proposed for acquisition meets the eligibility requirements of the program (see §230.2 of the final rule).
 - 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) Detailed information about the property proposed for acquisition:
 - A description of the property, including acreage and county location;
 - A description of current land uses, including improvements and plans for utilization or demolition of existing structures;
 - A description of forest type and vegetative cover;
 - A description of applicable zoning and other land use regulations affecting the property;
- 4) A description of the type and the extent of community benefits that the property will provide, including to disadvantaged communities, in the following categories:

- Economic benefits, such as timber and non-timber products resulting from sustainable forest management, recreation, and tourism
 - Environmental benefits, such as clean air and water, stormwater management, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources.
 - Recreational benefits, such as hiking, hunting, and fishing secured through public access.
 - Educational benefits, such as K-12 conservation education programs, vocational forestry/environmental science education programs, replicable models of effective forest stewardship for private landowners, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and connection to other environmental, cultural, or historical education learning opportunities.
 - Description of the planned public access and any limitations to public access on the property. If limitations to public access exist or will be proposed to protect cultural or natural resources, or public health and safety, provide an explanation.
- 5) 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
- 6) A description of any threats of conversion to non-forest uses, including any encumbrances on the property that prevent conversion to non-forest uses.

Establishing the community forest

- 7) Objectives of the community forest.
- 8) A description of the benefiting community, including:
- Demographics, such as race or socioeconomic status;
 - Availability and access to green spaces, and other vulnerabilities including health, economic, environmental and climate impacts faced by the community;
 - A description of how the project benefits the community and the associated benefits.
- 9) A description of community engagement in the proposed community forest acquisition, including outreach to disadvantaged communities.
- Identify the engagement that has occurred, what is planned, who has been engaged, and strategies used to engage the community.
- 10) Identify the people and organizations that support the project, describe their specific role in acquiring the land and establishing and managing the community forest.
- 11) A description of the resources that will be used to maintain and manage the property as a community forest in perpetuity.

Acquiring the community forest

- 12) 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).
- 13) The status of due diligence, including signed option or purchase and sale agreement, title search, minerals determination, and appraisal.
- 14) Description and status of cost share (secure, pending, commitment letter, etc.) (section §230.6 of the final rule).
- 15) The status of negotiations with participating landowner(s) including purchase options, contracts, and other terms and conditions of sale.
- 16) The proposed timeline for completing the acquisition and establishing the community forest.
- 17) Long term management costs and funding source(s) – **See Appendix A for sample budget table.**

Project Maps

Two maps displaying the project area must be submitted with the application. The maps must be of sufficient scale showing the location of the property in relation to roads and other improvements as well as parks, refuges, or other protected lands in the vicinity. Each map should fit within a single page (eight and ½ inches by eleven inches in size).

Eligibility Verification

Applicant Eligibility

A written description or documentation verifying that the applicant is an eligible entity (see §230.2 of the final rule) must be submitted with the application. Eligible Entities include local governmental entities, federally recognized Indian Tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations.

Federal Lands Verification

A letter of support is required from the Federal land manager if the property is located within the designated boundary of a Federal land management unit⁴. Reach out to your regional CFP program manager prior to submission if you are unsure whether the property is located within the boundary of a Federal land management unit or how to secure the letter.

Application Resources

Review section 230.4 of the Final Community Forest Program Rule and Section 4 of the current Request for Applications for additional information regarding application requirements. To assist applicants, a number of resources can be found on the CFP website, including: 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.

Application Evaluation

Proposal Evaluation

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. 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). Applications will be evaluated and assigned scores out of a maximum of 40 points based on the criteria described below:

- 1) **Type and extent of community benefits provided, including to disadvantaged communities (up to 20 points).** 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

⁴ Examples of federal land management units include National Forest system lands, National Park Service lands, Bureau of Land Management lands, and others.

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;
 - e) Recreational benefits such as hiking, hunting, and fishing secured through public access.
- 2) **Community Engagement (up to 10 points)**. Extent and nature of community engagement, including participation by disadvantaged communities, in the establishment and long-term management of the community forest;
 - 3) **Strategic Contribution and Connection (up to 5 points)**. Extent to which the community forest contributes to any landscape conservation initiatives, as well as any applicable environmental justice initiatives;
 - 4) **Threat (up to 5 points)**. Likelihood that, unprotected, the property would be converted to non-forest uses.

Other factors that will be considered by the review panel include:

- 1) Amount of other funds leveraged;
- 2) Costs to the Federal Government;
- 3) Extent of due diligence completed on the project, including cost share committed and status of appraisal and other due diligence costs;
- 4) Benefits to disadvantaged communities and climate resiliency as identified through mapping tools such as the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool or The Nature Conservancy's Resilient Land Mapping Tool.

The complete scoring guidance document that will be used by the national review panel to evaluate and score applications is available to review as an attachment to the RFA on Grants.gov.

Federal Award Information

Funding Availability

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

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.

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.

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 Time Frame

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.

Grant Reporting Requirements

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

Assistance Listing

This program is listed in the Assistance Listings on [SAM.gov](https://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.

Resources

- [Grants.gov](https://www.usda.gov/grants) (Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-2025-CFP)
 - **FY25 Request for Applications**
 - **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.
- [USDA Forest Service Community Forest Program Website:](https://www.usda.gov/forestservice/community-forest-program) home to many resources for applicants, including:
 - **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 \(National Association of State Foresters\)](https://www.naforesters.org/)
- [Contact information for Community Forest Program Regional Coordinators \(Forest Service\)](https://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/programs/communityforest/)
- [The Principal Laws Relating to USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry Programs](https://www.usda.gov/forestservice/private-forestry/)

- [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 13, 2025**.

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)

- Laura Wagner: laura.wagner@usda.gov, 970-295-5849

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 Washington: candice.washington@usda.gov, 971-710-2346

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

- Michael Middlebrook: michael.middlebrook@usda.gov, 470-426-0697

International Institute of Tropical Forestry (PR, VI)

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

Appendix A – Sample Budget Table

Cost Classification	Total Cost	CFP Cost (Federal)	CFP Cost (Non-Federal)
Land Cost	0	0	0
Land Surveys	0	0	0
Appraisals and appraisal reviews	0	0	0
Legal and closing costs	0	0	0
Development of the Community Forest Plan	0	0	0
Title examination	0	0	0
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$0	\$0	\$0