



MATCHING AWARDS PROGRAM 2012 Request for Proposals --Round Two--

Send Round Two proposals to be received on or before July 2, 2012.
Hard-copy submission only.
Late proposals and faxed or emailed submissions will not be considered.

Introduction

The National Forest Foundation (NFF), a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization chartered by Congress, engages America in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System, and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the National Forests. The NFF believes that communities should play a significant role in determining the future of National Forests and Grasslands.

The NFF is currently soliciting proposals for its Matching Awards Program (MAP), a grant program that provides matching funds for direct on-the-ground and citizen-based monitoring projects benefitting America's National Forests and Grasslands. By pairing federal funds—provided through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Forest Service—with non-federal dollars raised by award recipients, the resources available to nonprofit partners to implement projects are effectively doubled.

A common thread connecting NFF program areas is an interest in action-oriented projects that enhance the viability of natural resources while benefitting and directly engaging surrounding communities. The NFF will accept applications from non-governmental, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and Native American tribes working on or adjacent to National Forests and Grasslands throughout the United States. Through MAP, organizations completing on-the-ground conservation work can apply for matching funds up to twice a year, though only one MAP award may be active at any time. MAP funding is available to support specific conservation and restoration projects and does not provide general programmatic support.

Please note this distinction.

MAP projects are selected for funding through a two-stage process. Applicants must first complete an online questionnaire. Those that successfully complete the questionnaire are welcome to submit a proposal to the NFF. The proposals are evaluated, and a subset of those receives funding. The process from proposal submission to notification of funding generally takes about three months.

All MAP awards require at least a 1:1 cash match of non-federal funds. Federal funds and in-kind contributions should be noted to show leverage for a project, but cannot be matched by MAP funds. No NFF funds may be directed to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal

entity, and projects must be completed within one year of the project award date, which typically begins three to four months after the initial proposal deadline.

Programmatic Emphasis:

The NFF encourages organizations to position their proposed projects into at least one of our areas of programmatic emphasis, each with equal priority. These areas are Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Recreation, Watershed Health and Restoration, and Community-Based Forestry. Each is briefly described below.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement

The diverse habitats found within the National Forests and Grasslands support more than 3,000 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, and amphibians. For many Americans, engaging in wildlife viewing, fishing, and hunting within these habitats often serves as the primary means of connection to the outdoors, and provides important revenue for state and local economies.

The continuing growth of population centers in the United States has had a negative impact on the overall habitat of many species. The NFF is working to safeguard these threatened species and the forest lands on which they depend for survival. The NFF will make investments in projects that improve conditions for maintaining viable populations of native plants and animals, while meeting public demand for wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing, through project activities such as:

- Juniper removal to help restore sagebrush ecosystems and improve quail habitat;
- Treatments for noxious weeds and plant succession to protect crucial habitat for rare species.

Recreation

Recreation is the fastest growing use of National Forests and Grasslands. The increase in visitor usage and encroaching development result in increased human impacts to ecosystems. Maintaining the integrity of these forest and grassland resources is vital for both ecosystem viability and quality recreational experiences. Through the support of local restoration activities and citizen involvement, the NFF can help to ameliorate these pressures and ease their effects on resources on and adjacent to public lands, while still providing economic benefits to the surrounding communities.

The NFF is interested in projects that address the rising demand for outdoor recreation in National Forests and Grasslands through projects and activities such as:

- Restoration of impacts of excessive or inappropriate use in sensitive areas;
- Improvement of recreational resources through trail restoration and maintenance.

Watershed Health & Restoration

National Forest lands are the largest single source of fresh water in the United States. Waters originating on National Forest lands bring life to agricultural lands and provide clean drinking water to communities, and are conservatively estimated to be worth at least \$3.7 billion per year. Protecting these watersheds is one of the primary reasons the U.S. Forest Service was established, and maintaining and restoring these watersheds is of vital importance. The patchwork of federal and non-federal lands in many watersheds makes public-private partnerships even more crucial to ensuring clean water and vibrant ecosystems.

The NFF will support watershed restoration and enhancement projects, especially those initiatives that address critical issues such as non-point source pollution and fish habitat enhancement through project activities such as:

- Sediment reduction through slope stabilization and contouring;
- Planting of native species in damaged riparian areas;
- Removal of invasive exotic species;
- Culvert replacement to improve fish passage.

Community-Based Forestry

The NFF believes that communities can work to improve natural resources while providing local economic and social benefits. The aim of community-based forestry is to empower those who work, live and recreate in the woods to work together and strive toward common goals.

The NFF will make investments in community-based forestry projects, particularly those that focus on forest health and restoration. Projects should address the need for greater collaboration in community-based forestry projects. Local constituencies should be included in the decision making process. Potential avenues include ecological restoration activities, action-oriented training, and/or conservation and restoration projects that support project activities such as:

- Implementation or monitoring of collaboratively developed fuel reduction projects;
- Fire recovery efforts, involving re-seeding, erosion control, and/or riparian restoration;
- Citizen-based monitoring and/or fuels reduction efforts, including where National Forest System lands benefit in the wildland/urban interface.

Civic Engagement and Community Involvement

In addition to focusing on the above four veins of stewardship, the NFF requires projects to show a strong commitment to civic engagement and community involvement through the direct involvement of the public in on-the-ground conservation, restoration, and citizen-based monitoring projects. Different types of projects provide different opportunities for the engagement of communities. These opportunities typically include, but are not limited to:

- Providing input and developing projects as part of a collaborative group or effort;
- Collecting baseline data or data for pre-project monitoring;
- Engaging volunteers in the various phases of project implementation; and
- Post-project effectiveness monitoring.

In order for a project to be considered for funding by the NFF, it must have significant, legitimate community involvement or civic engagement in the pre-implementation, implementation, and/or post-implementation phases. Typically, this involves the use of volunteers in project implementation or monitoring, or the implementation of projects selected as an outcome of a formal collaborative-planning process. The community engagement portion of the project does not necessarily have to occur in the portion of the project for which NFF funding is sought, but must be clearly described in the proposal narrative.

Citizen-Based Monitoring

For some projects, citizen-based monitoring provides an experiential opportunity for volunteers from diverse backgrounds to become involved in conservation work through data collection surrounding the implementation of a project. While citizen-based monitoring can provide a wide variety of project data, the NFF will only support data collection to inform specific Forest Service information needs and the Forest Service must show a commitment to using the data in management decisions once collected. Examples of eligible monitoring include: long-term monitoring of the impacts of a vegetative treatment, tracking changes in an ecosystem over time to plan possible future treatments, cataloging the locations of nonnative invasive species, or monitoring remotely-triggered cameras in wildlife corridors. Data must be collected using replicable, standardized methods, and reporting formats must be coordinated with Forest Service managers to ensure data transferability.

Who Should Apply?

Applications will be considered from non-federal partners, community-based organizations, Native American tribes and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations implementing action-oriented on-the-ground conservation and citizen-based monitoring projects on or around National Forests or Grasslands.

Who Should Not Apply?

Applications will not be considered from:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal agencies; • Regional, state or local governmental entities; • For-profit organizations; • Consultants; • Educational and research organizations proposing projects that | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not show tangible, on-the-ground benefit; • Organizations seeking general operating or programmatic support; • Organizations seeking funding for litigation or advocacy; |
|---|---|

- Organizations that cannot produce a 1:1 cash match of non-federal, project-directed funds.
- Organizations considering submitting a proposal for a project that cannot be completed within one year of award.

Selection Criteria

Successful projects will support the major strategic initiatives and current priorities of the NFF and the U.S. Forest Service. Priority will be given to action-oriented projects that proactively address at least one of the programmatic emphasis areas through on-the-ground conservation projects or citizen-based monitoring. Projects must have significant community involvement or civic engagement in the pre-implementation, implementation, or post-implementation phases. Environmental education, kiosks and signage are not program priorities and will only be considered as minor, critical components of larger projects.

Evaluation will be based on the extent to which a proposed project:

1. Improves the conditions of National Forests and Grasslands in a measurable, hands-on way.
2. Obtains eligible non-federal matching funds at a ratio of at least 1:1.
3. Involves on-the-ground conservation, restoration or citizen-based monitoring as its primary component.
4. Directly addresses at least one of the four program areas: community-based forestry; watershed restoration; wildlife habitat improvement; or recreation.
5. Incorporates community engagement in the pre-implementation, implementation, or post-implementation phases of the project.
6. Enhances local understanding of the issue(s) and increase local capacity for participation and engagement in conservation projects to address them.
7. Is applicable to other areas through transferable practices and shares lessons learned.
8. Requests an amount of funding from the NFF that is appropriate, cost-effective and commensurate with project needs.
9. Can reasonably be accomplished within one year.
10. Measures results in a manner that is defined and appropriate for the stated project goals and shares lessons learned
11. Provides sufficient detail to enable the evaluation of the following:
 - Project design;
 - Specific project activities;
 - Anticipated results of the project;
 - Methods for evaluation of effectiveness;
 - Qualifications of the project manager;
 - The ability of the organization to complete the project and match and expend funds as described.

Funding Requirements

NFF funds awarded through this program are federal and can be disbursed only as a match to cash contributions from a non-federal source. Both NFF and matching funds:

- Must be used for completing the same project.
- Cannot be used for general administrative purposes.
- Cannot be used for litigation or advocacy.
- Cannot be directed to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal entity.

Upon selection for funding, award recipients must *physically* submit non-federal matching funds and documentation of their origin to the NFF to release the award funds. The matching funds can be submitted incrementally or all at once. However, NFF funds will only be released on a 1:1 basis as non-federal matching funds are submitted.

Project Timing

Selected projects must be completed within one year of award. Foreseeable delays, such as those related to NEPA and other environmental compliance work must have already been taken into account before applying. **Proposals will not be approved for funding unless all environmental compliance work is complete. No Exceptions.** If you are not confident that the project can be completed within the time period specified above, please contact the NFF well in advance of the deadline to discuss your options.

Proposal Criteria

Proposals should mirror the components described below. The page limits listed are suggested maximums—more is not always better. You are welcome to provide less if you are able to clearly communicate the requested information. The main body of your proposal (parts A through H below) should not exceed eight (8) pages total.

Proposal Narrative Components:

The below components should be prepared and assembled in the order in which they appear. *Please do not send any information that is not specifically requested.*

1. PROPOSAL COVERSHEET

Download the coversheet form at

http://www.nationalforests.org/consERVE/grantprograms/ontheground/map/preliminary_application

2. PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

The proposal narrative should contain the below components. There is no need to begin each section on a new page.

A. Executive Summary (1/2 page maximum)

This stand-alone summary is an abridged version of the below narrative. Nothing should be included in the executive summary that is not in the rest of the proposal.

B. Project Goals and Objectives (2 page maximum)

What are you proposing to do with the MAP and matching funds? Provide the project description, clearly laying out specific goals and objectives regarding the use of the award funds. This section should include:

- Justification of need for the project;
- Demonstrable benefits the project will have on the National Forest System lands and surrounding communities;
- How you will involve the community in the planning and/or implementation of the project;
- What long-term benefits the community will gain from this project;
- How the project fits in to larger conservation projects or goals, if applicable;
- How the results of this project will be shared and/or replicated elsewhere.

C. Methods to Achieve Objectives (2 page maximum)

How do you propose to meet the goals you have set out? Include responses to the following:

- Describe how you will achieve the goals and objectives laid out above. Provide specific steps that you will take.
- Provide details of the tasks and include an implementation timetable with a description of the activities, the people be responsible for conducting the activities, and anticipated start and completion dates. *Keep in mind that all NFF-funded activities and project expenditures must be completed within one-year of the award date.*
- Describe how you will work with other partner organizations on this project.

D. Expected Results (1 page maximum)

Discuss what your organization expects to achieve through this project. At a minimum, consider the following points:

- What are the anticipated results of the project?
- Quantify the projected outcomes of this project, i.e. the number of volunteers involved, the number of acres treated, miles restored, etc., as applicable.
- What benefit will be brought to the lands, waters and wildlife of the National Forest System?

E. Community Involvement (1 page maximum)

Describe the nature and extent of the community involvement and/or civic engagement in the project pre-implementation, implementation, and/or post-implementation phases, as applicable. Address the following points:

- How are you involving communities in the planning, implementation and/or monitoring phases of the project?
- What role do volunteers play in the project, if any?
- What interest groups are you involving? Why? How?
- What interest groups are you excluding? Why?

F. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Dissemination (1/2 page maximum)

Discuss the indicators and measurements that will be used to evaluate the success or failure of the project, help determine whether goals and objectives were achieved, and how these lessons will be shared. Please consider the following:

- How will you monitor and demonstrate the effectiveness of the project?
- How will you share these results with the community?
- If this is an ongoing project, how will results from monitoring be incorporated into the project's continuing implementation?
- How will successes and lessons learned be shared with the public and other organizations?

G. Environmental Compliance (1/2 page maximum)

Please address whether the proposed project requires any type of environmental permitting, including NEPA compliance. If so, has all required compliance been achieved? *Please note that proposals will be rejected if compliance work is not complete at time of application.*

H. Organizational Background (1/2 page maximum)

Please provide information on the history, mission and goals of your organization. What are the program priorities of your organization and the constituency and geographic area that you serve?

I. Youth Corps Summary (Up to 1 additional page maximum)

[Required only if requesting funding for conservation corps or youth employment programs]

Please respond to the following questions:

- What is the primary purpose of your organization (conservation, education, job training, etc.)?
- How are youth paid (hourly wage, privately-funded stipends, Americorps, etc.)?
- What is the primary youth demographic audience you engage?
- How do you monitor the long-term social impacts of your program?
- What are your primary funding sources?
- What is your organization's overall budget size?
- If your organization is chartered-by, housed-within or hosted-by a governmental entity, please describe the extent of that relationship and the financial or in-kind financial support you receive from them.

J. A biographical sketch of professional staff involved in the project.

K. A brief list of the membership of your board of directors.

L. Financial Plan (download at

<http://nationalforests.org/conserve/grantprograms/ontheground/map/application>)

The [Financial Plan form](#) is a central reference point in a project proposal, combining budget and contributor information in a single table. Budgetary information is condensed into categories and represented in the horizontal rows, and attributed to various funding sources in the vertical columns. Use the provided categories for classifying expenditures, wherever possible. The NFF and the private matching funds columns do not need to match line-by-line, but must sum to a ratio of at least 1:1. Definitions of funding sources and expense categories are provided the [appendix](#) to this document.

M. **Budget Narrative** (Up to 1 additional page maximum)

Briefly summarize your project financial plan (described above) in bulleted narrative form. For each expense category, specifically describe and how NFF funds would be spent if the project is funded and justify their expense. Typically, two or three sentences for each expense category should be sufficient.

3. **BASIC MAP**

Provide a map that effectively and accurately shows the location of the proposed project.

4. **U.S. FOREST SERVICE SUPERVISOR'S LETTER OF SUPPORT**

Provide a Letter of Support from the relevant USFS Forest Supervisor(s) stating approval and support of the project. *Please read the below note on letters of support.*

5. **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

The additional documents are required and should be sent hard-copy with the proposal.

- A. Your organization's **tax-exempt eligibility letter** from the IRS, indicating that your organization is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of IRS Code. If your organization does not have 501(c) (3) status or will utilize a fiscal sponsor, contact the NFF for specific requirements.
- B. Most recent **audited financial statement**. If you do not have audited financials, please send an unaudited accounting of finances. Typically, this includes a recent profit/loss statement and recent budget-to-actual statement. Please do not send a copy of your IRS form 990 unless specifically requested to do so.

Proposal Formatting and Assembly

The following are the formatting requirements for proposals:

- A. **Fonts and Margins:** Proposals must be typed in a standard font, no smaller than 12 point, with margins of no less than 3/4" on all sides.
- B. **Header and Footer:** Include page numbers on the bottom of each page of the proposal narrative and your organization name and project title as a header at the top of each page.

- C. **Printing:** Only print single-sided for proposal Components 1-4. Supporting documents (Component 5) may be printed double sided should you so desire.
- D. **Assembly:** Paper clip the documents of Components 1-4 together as one ordered package and paper clip the documents of Component 5 together as one ordered package. The two packages should be held together with another paper clip, binder clip, rubber band or similar. Do not bind proposals or any components with staples or a spiral or comb binder

Submitting Your Proposal

Proposals are only accepted hard-copy and must be **received on or before July 2, 2012.** Hard-copy submission only. Late proposals and faxed or emailed submissions will not be considered. Send completed proposals to:

**National Forest Foundation
Matching Awards Program
Building 27, Suite 3 Fort Missoula Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804**

Due to the volume of proposals received, we cannot confirm the arrival of individual proposals. If you would like confirmation of a proposal's arrival, please use a shipping method that provides delivery confirmation. If any components are incomplete or missing, we will notify you, otherwise no news is good news.

Questions

Please contact Adam Liljeblad, Director of Conservation Awards at (406) 830-3357 or aliljeblad@nationalforests.org. Fax: (406) 830-3382.

Note on Letters of Support

To be considered official, a letter of support must be either:

- a) Electronically signed by the Forest Supervisor or their delegate, and sent directly to aliljeblad@nationalforests.org from the Forest's Electronic Records Database, usually operated by the Forest's mailroom.
- b) Hand signed by the Forest Supervisor or their delegate, and sent hard-copy with your other supporting documents.
- c) Hand signed and faxed directly to the NFF at (406) 830-3382.

An *electronically-signed* letter of support may be submitted with your proposal, but should be followed by an official letter. Please only send official letters of support via one of the above transmittal methods. There is no need to send the same official letter via multiple formats. A delayed letter of support **will not** disqualify your proposal from review, although one should follow in no more than 1-2 days after the proposal due date.

Do not send any additional letters of support unless specifically requested to do so.

Appendix: Definitions of Funding Sources and Expense Categories listed on the Financial Plan form.

Funding Sources: Use the following categories to classify sources of revenue in the Financial Plan.

[Column (a)] **Matching Funds Requested from NFF:** Federal funds awarded by the NFF to the partner organization. These must be matched 1:1 with non-federal donor funds, and cannot be directed to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal entity.

[Column (b)] **Non-Federal Donor Funds:** Cash contributions by the partner from private, non-federal entities, equal to or greater than the NFF award, to be matched with NFF award funds at a ratio of 1:1 or greater and directed towards project implementation. These funds cannot be directed to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal entity.

[Column (c)] **Private In-kind Donations:** Goods and services, such as volunteer labor or donated materials and equipment provided by a non-federal entity. When applicable, these funds should always be documented to show project leverage.

[Column (d)] **Other Federal Funds:** Cash and in-kind contributions from federal sources other than the NFF. These funds are not eligible to serve as a match to NFF funds; however, they should always be documented to show additional project leverage.

[Column (e)] **Total Category Value:** The sum of columns (a) through (d) for each category.

Expense Categories: Please use the provided expense categories for classifying expenditures in the Financial Plan

Salaries & Benefits: Wages and benefits for direct project work by employees of your organization. These can include project administration, project implementation, or similar expenses. Volunteer time should typically be included here as a private in-kind donation. Visit http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html for the current value of volunteer time in your area.

Consultants/Contractors: Any specialists hired to do specific project-directed work that are neither employees of your organization nor the federal government, and are not volunteers.

Stipends: Generally, compensation for volunteers, conservation corps members or similar that are rated on daily or monthly basis, rather than hourly. In many cases, youth corps crew payments will be classified here.

Office Expenses: Postage, printing, communications or similar expenses directly related to project administration and implementation.

Publications/Outreach Materials: Expenses related to the recruitment of project participants or promotion of project results.

Supplies: Materials used or consumed in direct project implementation such as gloves, fencing, shovels, lumber, straw bales, or other similar materials. This includes tools with a per unit value of less than \$100.00.

Equipment/Rental: Expenditures related to the purchase or rental of tools or other durable goods used in direct project implementation. This includes tools with a per-unit value of \$100.00 or more. There may be certain restrictions on the use of NFF funds for the purchase of equipment valued at more than \$5,000.00. Please contact the NFF for more information if you believe this to be an issue.

Travel: Expenses related to official project travel. Current federal standard mileage rates can be found at <http://www.irs.gov>.

Other: Any project-directed expense not included in any of the above categories. Please only create additional categories after carefully reviewing the above definitions.