



Partnerships on Every Forest Resource Guide

**Created by the National Forest Foundation in partnership with
the U.S. Forest Service National Partnership Office
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Partnerships on Every Forest Program Overview

[Partnerships on Every Forest \(PEF\)](#) is a jointly managed program between the National Partnership Office (NPO) and the National Forest Foundation (NFF). The NPO and the NFF are working with forests across the country to help build partnership strategies that increase stewardship capacity and create more inclusive land management approaches. PEF work assesses challenges, opportunities, and needs experienced by Forest Service units in their work to partner with community and interest-based organizations, local and state governments, and Tribes. This work is being conducted with the goal of helping to develop partnership strategies that support the units' and partners' preferred projects and outcomes. The PEF team will document and share learning around partnership challenges, lessons, and opportunities to create a national network of shared resources.

Using the Resource Guide

This resource guide contains descriptions of various tools and resources that pertain to partnering with the Forest Service. It was compiled by the National Forest Foundation with support from Forest Service staff and partners.

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The National Forest Foundation (NFF)

Mission and Values

The National Forest Foundation is the Congressionally chartered nonprofit partner of the U.S. Forest Service. The NFF engages Americans 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.

Working on behalf of the American public, the NFF leads forest conservation efforts and promotes responsible recreation. We believe these lands, and all they provide, are an American treasure and are vital to the health of our communities.

Our National Forests and Grasslands are at the core of America's natural riches, and yet, today these treasures are threatened by unprecedented challenges. Working with the U.S. Forest Service and partners, the NFF's goal is to leverage our best thinking, conservation capacity, and community action to measurably improve the health of our National Forests and Grasslands.

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NFF Programs

Field Programs

The NFF field programs connect Americans to their National Forests across the country and foster on-the-ground restoration projects. NFF field staff act as project managers to engage communities, develop strategies, and enter into agreements with local Forest Service units to respond to immediate needs and add capacity for projects. Field staff also play an important role in raising and managing funds for projects. [Explore the work of NFF Regional Offices.](#)

Tree Planting

Natural disturbances such as wildfire, insects, and disease outbreaks are threatening forest health and resulting in an increasing need for restoration. In 2018 the NFF launched *50 Million for Our Forests* to address reforestation needs, raise awareness, and foster connections to our National Forests. The process for tree planting projects starts with the Forest Service Washington Office putting out a request for proposals, and silviculturists identify planting needs. The NFF acts as a reforestation partner and pays for seedling costs through corporate partners, small business partners, individual donors, tribute gifts, and fundraisers. The NFF has planted more than 27 million trees since starting this program! [Learn more here.](#)

Conservation Awards

Through its on-the-ground conservation programs, the NFF supports action-oriented projects that directly enhance the health of America's National Forests and Grasslands and engage the public in stewardship. Nonprofit organizations dedicated to addressing natural resource issues on National Forests and Grasslands can apply for support to complete projects through [three distinct grant programs](#). Additionally, the NFF provides funding opportunities that address specific strategic initiatives aligned with our mission and goals.

Conservation Connect

Conservation Connect is a learning network that serves community-based groups and Forest Service employees involved in collaborative stewardship on National Forest System lands. Conservation Connect's objectives are to foster peer-to-peer and community-to-agency connections, support exchange of knowledge, share tools and best practices, identify common challenges and move to team problem-solving, promote the development of new understandings around the ecological, social, and economic objectives of collaborative forest stewardship, and build the organizational capacity of collaborative groups. [Search Conservation Connect's Collaboration Toolbox.](#)

Helpful links and resources

[Your National Forest Magazine](#)

[Get Involved—Ways to Give](#)

[Treasured Landscapes, Unforgettable Experiences](#)

[Corporate Partnerships](#)

[Annual Reports](#)

The National Partnership Office (NPO)

Purpose

Partnerships across the Forest Service allow the agency to better fulfill its mission and provide inclusive service to the American people and the planet. The National Partnership Office (NPO), a small team based out of the Washington Office, facilitates partnership development across the Forest Service. The NPO is driven by its commitment to the agency's core values of conservation, diversity, interdependence, safety, and service. Underlying all areas, the NPO's work is driven by the need to scout opportunity, innovate, and think long-term about leveraging new and existing opportunities through partnership.

The National Partnership Office (NPO) facilitates the development of meaningful collaboration across all levels and deputy areas of the Forest Service using the following approaches:

Sharing partnership guidance

The NPO provides national-level guidance on partnership development and implementation by leading communities of practice like the Partnership Core Group and the Conservation Finance Community. The NPO develops trainings and presentations for practitioners focused on grants and agreements; creative financing; diversity, equity, and inclusion; corporate sustainability; and other partnership essentials.

Encouraging a culture of partnership

The NPO encourages an agency-wide culture of partnership through sharing successes and engaging leadership. The NPO advances partnership-driven work by identifying barriers and opportunities for partnership success and by embedding partnership thinking into national initiatives and processes.

Providing project support

The NPO provides support to partnership-driven projects and on-site and remote consultations to build partnership strategies and develop financing strategies that leverage non-traditional sources of capital to support priority projects.

Leading national partnerships

The NPO manages several agency-wide partnerships that impact multiple regions, including a partnership with the National Forest Foundation (NFF), the congressionally designated partner of the Forest Service. The NPO also manages national programs, such as the Innovative Finance for National Forests (IFNF) Grant Program and the Forest Service's participation in the Every Kid Outdoors Program.

Helpful links and resources

[Forest Service Partnerships](#)

[Partnerships 101](#)

[Partnership Contacts](#)

[Successful Forest Service Partnerships](#)

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Office of Tribal Relations (OTR)

Overview

The Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) serves as a single point of contact for Tribal issues and works to ensure that relevant programs and policies are efficient, easy to understand, accessible, and developed in consultation with the American Indian and Alaska Native constituents they impact. OTR leads the intergovernmental role for the Department with tribes. Efforts through consultation, coordination, and collaboration support the preservation of the government-to-government relationship and enhance access to USDA's various programs and services for Tribes, Tribal organizations, and citizens.

Office of Tribal Relations Roles Serving Indian Country

All executive departments and agencies are charged with engaging in regular, meaningful, and robust consultation with Tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have Tribal implications. OTR has specific roles serving Indian Country, including:

Intergovernmental Relations

OTR leads the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Department) vision to support and enhance government-to-government relations between the Department and Federally recognized Tribal governments.

Advisor to the Secretary

OTR provides counsel to the U.S. Agriculture Secretary on policies related to or impacting Indian Tribes.

Facilitator

OTR enables Tribes, Tribal governments, Tribal organizations, and individuals to access programs and services within the USDA and throughout federal agencies.

Catalyst

OTR streamlines processes and develops opportunities to address policy and program complexities related to programs and services that support the needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Consultation, Coordination, and Collaboration Lead

OTR directs the USDA for the implementation of Executive Order 13175, "Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments," including the continual refinement of the consultation process to ensure robust partnerships that will respect and preserve Tribal sovereignty and result in high-quality service for farmers, ranchers, consumers, and other constituents. You can find more information about Tribal consultations [here](#).

Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs

OTR supports Tribal interests by coordinating with other federal agencies and the Administration to support the goals of the Tribes. Further, OTR reviews regulations for potential Tribal implications.

Helpful links and resources

[Office of Tribal Relations](#)

[Sign up for OTR news](#)

[InterTribal Technical Assistance Network](#)

[2018 USDA Tribal Youth Resource Guide](#)

[USDA Programs and Services](#)

Building and Maintaining Meaningful Partnerships

Overview

The Forest Service works closely with partners including land management agencies across all levels of government, nonprofit and for-profit entities, Tribal entities, and communities. Since the agency's founding in 1905, partnerships have made significant contributions to our nation's natural resource management.

In October 2021, the National Forest Foundation hosted a discussion-based peer learning session that focused on the challenges of partnerships and best practices for building and maintaining partnerships. This document is a summary of those discussions.

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Best Practices for Sustaining Meaningful Partnerships:

- Establish consistent and open communication. A great way to develop lines of communication is by establishing regular meetings.
- Establish shared objectives between partners and the agency.
- Create trust between partners that there is leadership intent to ensure the project(s) come to completion.
- Commit to the partnership long term, beyond just fiscal year to fiscal year.
- Take time to build relationships.
- Use field trips to meet in person and make personal connections.
- Rely on the expertise of long-term partners to help solve capacity challenges.
- Create a network among your partners so they are connected to one another.
- Utilize a partner organization to coordinate partners and volunteers. Having that coordination role outside of the agency helps to create a consistent point of contact when there is turnover at the agency.
- Have conversations around capacity when entering a partnership: Who is available to do what tasks? Where are your capacity limitations?

Challenges in Creating and Maintaining Meaningful Partnerships:

- Communication difficulties stemming from staff turnover, government bureaucracy, and capacity limitations.
- A lack of capacity and/or personnel to manage partnerships on the ground. A common reason for this is that wildfires demand that many personnel temporarily leave their regular duties.
- Difficulty in scaling up on-the-ground partnerships to a forest level.
- Not clearly identifying roles and responsibilities. This is particularly challenging with administrative and fundraising tasks when information can't be collected in a timely manner.
- The time needed to cultivate and maintain relationships with partners.
- Difficulties in getting partnership agreements executed in a timely manner.

Helpful links and resources

[Forest Service Partnerships Home Page](#)

[Partnerships on Every Forest](#)

[U.S. Forest Service Vision for Partnerships in the 21st century Peer Learning Session](#)

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Justice (DEIAJ) Partnerships

Mission and Values

Diversity is a core value to the U.S. Forest Service along with interdependence, service, conservation, and safety. The National Partnership Office (NPO) is developing innovative partnerships to serve diverse communities and promote equity, access, and inclusion. These partnerships embrace differences and foster a true sense of belonging. The future of conservation depends on diverse, dynamic, and informed constituents ready and willing to act on behalf of natural and cultural resources. Building this constituency will take a concerted effort from the Forest Service, nonprofits, other land management agencies, the private sector, and other conservation community leaders.

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Benefits of DEIAJ Partnerships:

- Allow for a variety of perspectives
- Lead to higher innovation
- Increase creativity
- Aid in breaking barriers
- Reach broader audiences
- Lead to better decision making
- Increase effectiveness of outcomes
- Improve engagement
- Result in a better reputation
- Allow people to feel safer, respected, and connected

How to Support DEIAJ Partnerships:

- Focus initially on building relationships
- Leverage relationships to reach new partners
- Provide guidance and training to help diverse partners get acclimated to the Forest Service
- Embrace differences

Executive Orders Supporting DEIAJ:

Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government (2021)

EO 13985 directs the federal government to pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity, civil rights, criminal justice, and equal opportunity for all people. It also directs executive departments to readdress inequities in policy and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity.

Executive Order 14035: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in the Federal Workforce (2021)

EO 14035 establishes a government-wide initiative to promote diversity and inclusion in the federal workforce and expand its scope to specifically include equity and accessibility. It also provides agencies with information, resources, and methodology to assess the current state of their federal workforce.

Helpful links and resources

[Diversity and Inclusiveness at the U.S. Forest Service](#)

[Partnering to Achieve Success in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Justice Webinar](#)

Stewardship Contracting and Agreements

7 Land Management Goals of Stewardship:

1. Road and trail maintenance, or decommissioning, to restore or maintain water quality
2. Soil productivity, habitat for wildlife and fisheries, or other resource values
3. Setting of prescribed fires to improve the composition, structure, condition, and health of forest stands or improve wildlife habitat.
4. Removing vegetation, or other activities to promote healthy forests, reduce fire hazards, or achieve other land management objectives
5. Watershed restoration and maintenance projects
6. Restoration and maintenance of wildlife and fish habitat projects
7. Control of noxious weeds and exotic weeds, and re-establishment of native plant species

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Partnering through Stewardship Contracts

The general purpose of stewardship contracts and agreements is to achieve land management goals for National Forest System lands while meeting local and rural community needs. Stewardship contracts and agreements are typically used for restoration projects, specifically those that meet at least one of the seven land management goals outlined to the left. Stewardship agreements are voluntary and flexible, can be modified at any time, and are cost neutral. The U.S. Forest Service may enter into stewardship agreements with any entity that can either perform the work or contract it out. This can include federally recognized Tribes, state and local governments, and nonprofit organizations. Stewardship agreements are used when there is opportunity for mutual benefit between the participating parties, the Forest Service will have ongoing involvement in the activities, and the project encompasses cost-sharing principles.

Stewardship Agreement Types

Master Stewardship Agreements

- Typically executed on a large scale
- Outline the type of work to be included
- Do not obligate funds or identify work items

Supplemental Project Agreements

- Tiered to a Master Agreement and contain all project work and funding details

Stand-Alone Stewardship Agreements

- Combine provisions of Master and Supplemental Project Agreements into one document
- Used when projects being considered were not included in the Master
- Used when work will extend beyond the Master's termination date or if no longer-term relationship is envisioned with partners

Key Takeaways

- Stewardship agreements are a tool to strengthen partnerships and accelerate restoration across boundaries.
- Projects must fit the seven land management goals.
- Collaboration is necessary to address land management challenges and ensure successful outcomes in the local community.
- Stewardship agreements give the Forest Service and partners the ability to leverage resources to increase capacity to accomplish work on National Forest System lands.

Helpful links and resources

[Forest Service Stewardship Contracting](#)

[Basic Principles of Stewardship Contracting](#)

[Successful Partnerships of the Last Decade Peer Learning Session](#)

Master Agreements

Summary

The Forest Service and its partners have a variety of agreement instruments to formalize their work together depending on the purpose and objectives of the partnership. Knowing the basics of Master Agreements, Stand-Alone Agreements, and Supplemental Project Agreements will help with deciding how to set up and maintain partnerships. Deciding which agreement to use and at what level involves an assessment of the kind of partnership, duration, funding strategies, project scoping, resource allocation, and type of work to be undertaken.

Key Definitions

Master Agreement – An agreement executed between the Forest Service and a cooperator that establishes a framework for completion of separate but related projects. Master Agreements may be national, regional, or local in scope.

Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA) – An instrument executed under the umbrella of a Master Agreement that addresses individual projects tied to the Master Agreement.

Agreement Instrument – A document or formalized arrangement used to accomplish a specific type of work and define the rights, duties, entitlements and/or liabilities between the Forest Service and a partner.

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Executing Master Agreements

Types of Agreements

The most common types of Master Agreements are Challenge Cost Share, Participating, and Stewardship Agreements. Other types of agreements that can be set up as Master Agreements are Good Neighbor, Collection, Interagency, Road, Law Enforcement, and Fire. Master Agreements may be executed at any administrative level of the agency.

National Master Agreements are executed at the Washington Office (WO) and generally cover the entire agency or cross regional boundaries. The responsibility for negotiating, executing, and managing national Master Agreements also rests with the WO. Once a National Master Agreement is in place, Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs) can be implemented at the regional or unit level in any area covered by the agreement.

Region/Forest/Station/Institute Master Agreements are executed at the corresponding level and generally cover the area within that unit's purview. The responsibility for negotiating, executing, and managing Master Agreements at this level rests with the unit that initiated, negotiated, and signed the master. SPAs are implemented only within that unit's area of responsibility.

When to employ a Master Agreement

- When the Forest Service and the partner anticipate working together over a long period of time
- If work can be broken out in time, boundary, or other administratively based segments
- If the Forest Service plans to fund an agreement in multiple phases
- To implement national or regional strategies with similar objectives across a broad area

When to employ Stand-Alone Agreements

- On projects that can be covered under one scope of work and financial plan
- When the project is for a non-severable purpose
- When the Forest Service can fully fund a project in the first year
- When the project impacts only one administrative area of the agency and can be managed at that level

Helpful links and resources

[Forest Service Partnerships 101](#)

[Forest Service Funding Resources](#)

[Leveraging Master Agreements Peer Learning Session](#)

Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (TFPA)

Tribal Sovereignty and the National Forest System

Per Policy 1563.03, all Forest Service personnel shall respect and uphold the sovereignty of all federally-recognized Tribal governments.

Forest Service offices, units, and staff shall:

- A. Implement Forest Service programs and activities consistent with and respecting Indian treaty and other reserved rights and fulfilling the Federal Government's legally mandated trust responsibility with Tribes.
- B. Manage Forest Service administered lands and resources on which Tribal treaty rights exist in consultation with Indian Tribes.
- C. Coordinate Forest Service land and resource management plans and actions with Tribal land and resource management plans and actions to achieve shared stewardship and promote the health of ecosystems.
- D. Administer programs and activities in a manner that is sensitive to traditional American Indian and Alaska Native spiritual beliefs and practices and assist Tribal members in securing ceremonial and medicinal plants, animals, and the use of specific geographic places to the greatest extent practicable, and permitted by law.

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History of TFPA

The Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA), Public Law 108-278, was passed in July 2004 in response to devastating wildfires that crossed from federal land onto Tribal land the previous summer. The Act provides a tool for Tribes to propose work and enter into contracts and agreements with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to reduce threats from federal lands adjacent to Tribal trust land and communities. The USFS and BLM coordinated to develop policy and implement the Act.

TFPA Key Elements

- Emphasizes the government-to-government relationship between the federal government and Tribes
- Sets forth the goal for protection of trust lands
- Acknowledges Tribes' historic and cultural interests
- Recognizes relevant Tribal knowledge and skills

TFPA Proposals

Tribal proposals must 1) focus on USFS lands that pose a fire, disease, or other threat to the Indian trust land or community, or is in need of restoration; 2) not be subject to some other conflicting agreement or contract; AND 3) involve a feature or circumstance unique to the proposing Tribe (such as legal, cultural, archaeological, historical, or biological).

To qualify, the Indian land must 1) border or be adjacent to USFS administered lands; 2) be in trust or restricted status; 3) be forested or have grass, brush, or other vegetative cover; and 4) if previously burned, be capable of regenerating vegetative cover.

To initiate a project, a Tribal government submits a request to the Forest Supervisor or District Ranger, and then recommendations are forwarded to the Regional Forester. Within 120 days of the submission, the Regional Forester may issue a public notice of either a) initiation of any necessary environmental review, b) potential for entering into an agreement or contract with the Tribe, or c) notice of denial to the Tribe.

Helpful links and resources

[USDA Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations](#)

[Intertribal Timber Council TFPA Reports](#)

Tribes should contact ITC directly at itc1@teleport.com

[Forest Service Best Practices Guide for 638 and TFPA](#)

638 Agreements

638 Overview

Public Law 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), has a very particular orientation and intent: to promote the self-determination and self-governance of sovereign nations in their relationships with the federal government, and in the services and programs delivered to Tribes. Key to Congressional intent was redressing the lack of an Indian “voice in the planning and implementation of programs for the benefit of Indians which are responsive to the true needs of Indian communities.” While the original 1975 Act focused heavily on Indian education, amendments have significantly expanded the scope of ISDEAA to all Department of Interior bureaus and the Indian Health Service – and now to the Forest Service.

Using 638 Agreements to Implement the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA)

Tribes and the Forest Service have a number of ways to partner, but 638 Agreements offer an expanded degree of meaningful collaboration and add another tool to carry out work under the TFPA. It is important to note that the current Forest Service 638 authority is limited to work under the TFPA.

Key Elements of a 638 Agreement:

- Scope of work outlines objectives and standards
- Budget or financial plan displays anticipated costs by category
- Performance is the responsibility of the Tribal cooperator
- Forest Service will provide technical assistance when requested
- Tribal cooperators may give preference to Tribal subcontractors

Allowable Activities

Tribes may propose a TFPA project on agency-managed land that borders or is adjacent to Indian trust land and:

- Poses a fire, disease, or other threat to the trust land or community,
- Is in need of restoration,
- Is not subject to some other conflicting agreement or contract, and
- Involves a feature or circumstance unique to the proposing Tribe (i.e., legal, cultural, archaeological, historic, or biological).

Example Project

A formal 638 Agreement between the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and the Tulalip Tribes is expanding the agency’s ability to foster shared stewardship with Tribes for forest management activities. The Forest’s agreement with the Tulalip Tribes focuses on watershed restoration through efforts to capture, relocate, and monitor beavers in the South Fork Stillaguamish watershed in Washington State, and provides a model for other National Forests to follow.

Helpful links and resources

[USDA Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations](#)

[Intertribal Timber Council TFPA Reports](#)

Tribes should contact ITC directly at itc1@teleport.com

[Forest Service Best Practices Guide for 638 and TFPA](#)

Conservation Finance at the U.S. Forest Service

Overview

Conservation Finance is the practice of raising, managing, and deploying capital for conservation outcomes. The U.S. Forest Service conservation finance program positions the agency to leverage sources of capital beyond appropriations to support agency priorities. Conservation finance brings new tools to address funding challenges, engages new sources of capital to grow the total available resources, accelerates the pace and scale of on-the-ground work, and promotes shared stewardship across diverse stakeholders.

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Opportunities to Leverage External Capital Include:

- Private investments that generate financial returns and social/ecological outcomes;
- Non-Forest Service public funding and/or financing, such as federal and state grants and low-interest loans focused on economic development, infrastructure, and rural communities;
- Corporate sustainability commitments around climate/carbon/net zero emissions, water, and deforestation; and
- Philanthropy through foundations and high-net-worth individuals interested in climate/carbon, water, habitat, public health, and recreation access/infrastructure.

Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program

The Innovative Finance for National Forests (IFNF) grant program supports the development and implementation of innovative finance models that leverage sources of capital other than appropriations to support resilience of National Forest System lands.

- Eligible grantees include Forest Service partner organizations.
- Focus areas include wildfire resilience and recovery, watershed health, recreation infrastructure, and access.
- Project types include research and development, pilot projects, and scaling projects.

✓ Checklist for Conservation Finance Readiness	
	Defined ecological/social challenge and need for action (i.e. declines in water quality, natural disturbances, increasing visitation, etc.)
Landscape/ Project	NEPA decisions signed, projects planned and “shovel ready” (i.e. NEPA record of decision published and individual project plan complete)
	>\$3M in funding required to address challenge (if <\$3M required, consider philanthropic sources instead)
Business Case	Market demand (i.e. regulatory drivers, municipal targets, costs incurred, sustainability commitments)
	Potential for ecological/social AND financial outcomes (i.e. timber revenue, market credits, avoided costs, tourism spending, etc.)
	Beneficiaries willing and able to pay (i.e. entities benefit from outcomes and can enter contracts)
Capacity	FS positioned to be a value added partner (i.e. staffing, plan revision timing, local leadership, regional support, etc.)
	Local capacity to implement on-the-ground project (i.e. dedicated project managers, contractors available)
	Collaborative capacity and socio-political support (i.e. partners, elected officials, community buy-in)
Data	Ability to predict and monitor project outcomes (i.e. baseline analysis complete, monitoring process/expertise available)

Helpful links and resources

- [U.S. Forest Service Conservation Finance Program](#)
- [National Forest Foundation Conservation Finance Program](#)
- [Conservation Finance at the U.S. Forest Service Webinar](#)

Good Neighbor Authority

History and Congressional Authorities for the Good Neighbor Authority

In 2000 Congress provided authority to pilot Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) projects between the Forest Service and the state of Colorado.

In 2004 Congress included Utah and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The 2014 Appropriations Act renewed and expanded the Colorado GNA to all states with National Forest System lands through fiscal year 2018.

The 2014 Farm Bill provided the Forest Service and BLM permanent authority with specific limitations.

The 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act refined GNA by allowing for the permanent maintenance of roads if required for authorized restoration.

The 2018 Farm Bill allowed counties and Tribal nations to participate, and clarified revenue.

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Accomplishing restoration services through the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA)

Overview

Partnerships between the Forest Service and states, counties, and Tribes accomplish authorized restoration services on National Forest System lands. GNA is a tool to strengthen partnerships with a variety of entities to get resource work done on the ground and to operationalize shared stewardship.

Agreement Approach

To incorporate partnership elements and federal assistance regulations, the Forest Service developed GNA templates for agreements. These templates include elements of partnership agreements, ensure that the Forest Service maintains its land management responsibilities, incorporate grant regulations as a regulatory framework, and allow timber receipts (revenue) to fund restoration work.

Authorized Restoration Services

Authorized restoration services include activities to treat insect- and disease-infected trees, to reduce hazardous fuels, and to restore or improve forest, rangeland, and watershed health, including fish and wildlife habitat.

Key Takeaways

- GNA is a tool to strengthen partnerships with states, counties, and Tribes to accelerate restoration across boundaries.
- Projects must fit the specified definitions of authorized restoration services.
- Collaboration between partners at all phases of the GNA process is a “must” to address land management challenges and ensure successful outcomes.
- GNA gives the Forest Service the ability to leverage partner resources to increase capacity to accomplish work on National Forest System lands.

Helpful links and resources

[Good Neighbor Authority Project Map Viewer](#)

[2018 Farm Bill](#)

[Successful Partnerships of the Last Decade Peer Learning Session](#)

Regional Level Partnerships

Role of a Regional Partnership Coordinator

- Support cross-boundary partnerships
- Manage regional-level agreements
- Make connections with partners and communicate funding opportunities
- Provide leadership, coordination, and assistance in helping employees and partners build capacity to work together
- Share information, opportunities, and tools to support the needs of employees and partners
- Facilitate communication between the Washington Office, Regional Office, forest-level offices, and among functional areas to increase effectiveness and ability to leverage opportunities
- Identify and establish ways to monitor and measure partnerships and collaborative activities
- Tell partnership stories

Benefits of Regional Partnership Agreements

- Create consistency in reporting, budgeting, and compliance compared to having multiple forest-level agreements
- Utilize capacity and expertise at the Regional Office to support the agreement
- Help temper different approaches with staff turnover
- Simplifies agreement process for the forests
- Allow for multi-forest or multi-state scope of work
- Build a strong track record of performance that fosters trust with the partners

Case Study: Regional Partnerships in Region 3

The Southwestern Region (R3) covers more than 20.6 million acres, boasting thousands of recreation opportunities spread across six National Forests in Arizona, five National Forests and a National Grassland in New Mexico, and one National Grassland each in Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle. The elevation ranges from 1,600 feet above sea level with an annual rainfall of 8 inches in Arizona's lower Sonoran Desert to 13,171-foot-high Wheeler Peak and over 35 inches of precipitation a year in northern New Mexico.

Conservation Legacy, a national organization that provides support for local conservation service programs, has a regional Master Agreement in Region 3 that provided continuity of operations when their national Master Agreement expired. The regional agreement allows work to be tailored based on the geographic area and need. Local work is completed through Supplemental Project Agreements for implementation. Forest-level projects include historic cabin restoration, Coronado Forest-wide trail maintenance, and a tri-forest trail crew. Regional projects include a cohort of resource assistants, recreation site mapping, and COVID response crews.

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Helpful links and resources

[Conservation Legacy work with the U.S. Forest Service](#)
[Forest Service Partnerships with Nonprofits Peer Learning Session](#)

Identifying Community Assets

Summary

Identifying assets within a given community, sometimes referred to as asset mapping, is a way to document available strengths, resources, and potential new partnerships within a community. Outlining assets allows agencies to engage with new and non-traditional resources and partners, expanding on the ground abilities and capacity. This exercise does not necessarily need to result in a graphic representation (i.e. map) of the resources, but all resulting information should be compiled in a way that is easily distributable (i.e. excel document) with clearly defined next steps.

Keys to Success

- Clearly define goals, objectives, and purpose
- Engage staff members to increase knowledge base
- Consider non-traditional sectors
- Consider the final list of assets a living document to be revised and updated

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1. Identify your needs

The first step in identifying community assets is determining why you are conducting the exercise, what you are hoping to identify, and who needs to be involved. This step will help identify goals and ideal outcomes, which will serve as guidance for the next steps in developing the exercise.

2. Identify assets in your community

The process of identifying your community assets (individuals, associations, and institutions) can take many different forms, like a facilitated community meeting, taking a walk through your neighborhood, holding interviews, conducting internet searches, or simply having a conversation with your staff members and colleagues. The chosen approach should be informed by your goals and outcomes as identified in the first step. The result of this step is likely a list of known and pending partnerships and assets, and a list of community assets without existing partnerships.

3. Verify assets, collect information, and refine list

While it may seem easy to list research assets, this next step creates an understanding of the viability of continued and future partnerships. This step includes digging deeper into the asset list to find contact information, partnership viability, and to determine what the asset has to offer.

4. Share information and develop next steps and strategy

The final step includes compiling relevant information related to the assets that have been verified into a digestible format for distribution to staff members. This information will inform an outreach plan and help set goals and deadlines for building relationships with new assets. Make sure to include any pertinent staff in these discussions and take staff capacity into consideration before assigning tasks.

Helpful links and resources

- [E-brary asset mapping overview](#)
- [Community Research Lab toolkit](#)
- [Community Toolbox](#)
- [Assets-oriented community assessment](#)

Adapting to Staffing Transitions

Overview

The challenge of rotating line officers in the Forest Service is a well known barrier to community and forest level collaboration. It takes time to develop good relationships, and when a key agency contact is transferred, a collaborative effort can stall while community members establish rapport with the new person.

In May 2022, the National Forest Foundation hosted a discussion-based peer learning session that focused on the challenges of agency staff turnover and strategies for overcoming these challenges. This document is a summary of those discussions.

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Best Practices for Adapting to Staffing Transitions

- Turnover can create a blank slate to set a new direction on the project and create new partnership opportunities.
- Building relationships takes time; it's important to show up and be a resource for new employees.
- Build an operation manual on how to transition a position prior to a transition.
- Allow for more informal time on virtual meetings to get to know each other.
- Continually check in on the relationship and acknowledge that partnerships take work and time.
- Create a network of partners that shares opportunities such as position openings and resources for training new employees.
- Utilize the ACES program for rehiring retired employees for specific tasks.
- Lean on partners when experiencing a staffing shortage.
- Have a holistic employee onboarding process that includes making community connections.
- Use transition periods to come together and talk about the partnership.
- Establish mentors for new hires to show them the ins and outs of the office.
- Hire in cohorts so new employees come on as a group.
- Notify partners of staffing transitions in advance so they don't come as a surprise.
- Staffing transitions allow opportunity to incorporate new employee retention policies. Retention policies are currently focused on higher levels in the agency, but there should be an emphasis on retaining employees of all levels.

Challenges of Staffing Transitions

- When positions are left vacant for long periods of time it creates more work for other employees.
- Institutional knowledge is lost during staffing transitions.
- Staffing transitions are difficult during a multi-year project, especially when there is no overlap between outgoing and incoming employees.
- Retention challenges due to salary and housing issues make it difficult to maintain work and relationships.
- Finding qualified applicants for vacant jobs is difficult. This is especially true for seasonal employees when there is a lack of housing options.
- Leadership guidance on how to transition roles during significant reorganization is lacking.
- It is difficult to onboard new employees when there is uncertainty if the position will be remote or in person.
- The model of career advancement in the Forest Service that moves employees around to different forests rather than allowing them to advance in place leads to significant turnover.

Helpful links and resources

[U.S. Forest Service "Handover Memo"](#)

[Adapting to Staffing Transitions Peer Learning Session](#)

Building Landscape Collaboration Case Study

Case Study: Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership

The Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership (Lake Tahoe West) is a collaborative effort to restore forests, watersheds, and wildlife habitat across 60,000 acres of the Lake Tahoe Basin to increase resilience to climate change, drought, and extreme wildfire. Convened by the California Tahoe Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, California State Parks, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team, and the National Forest Foundation, Lake Tahoe West includes federal, state, local, and private lands stretching from Emerald Bay to Dollar Point. Partners and participating entities include the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, fire protection agencies, conservation organizations, the recreation community, scientists, residents, business, and government.

Through a survey of and workshop for Lake Tahoe West participants, the Lake Tahoe West coordinating team developed recommendations for convening a landscape collaborative group.

Recommendation 1.

Engage partners and stakeholders to build agreement around restoration needs, goals, and approaches. Develop a common vision and understanding of the landscape with a landscape assessment and restoration strategy.

Recommendation 2.

Target new science where it is most needed and select tools and approaches based on a collaborative understanding of how results can inform management.

Recommendation 3.

Design a robust process for science coordination, communication, and documentation.

Recommendation 4.

Prioritize goals and invest in a thoughtful process to avoid process fatigue. Engage stakeholders sustainably by focusing on the key areas that need agreement.



Helpful links and resources

[Bringing Partners Together Peer Learning Session](#)

[Lake Tahoe West Webpage](#)

[Lake Tahoe West Landscape Restoration Strategy](#)

[Lake Tahoe West StoryMap](#)

[National Forest Foundation Collaboration Resources](#)

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Sharing Partnership Stories

Overview

Communicating the accomplishments created by partnerships can increase the visibility of projects and partnerships. It can also inspire other to get involved, create a sense of community, help partnerships learn from one another, and generate new ideas for creative projects. Working with partners to share project success stories helps to raise public awareness of the novel ways that people are working to support the land and communities. In addition to the examples in this document, working with your public affairs department is essential for crafting stories.

Using Visuals to Share Data

Using graphic visuals is a great way to summarize partnership accomplishments. Here is an example from Region 6 that highlights the work accomplished through partnerships.

Credit to Sarah Kassel, R6 Volunteer and Service Program Manager, and Darah Isaacson, R6 Visual Information Specialist.



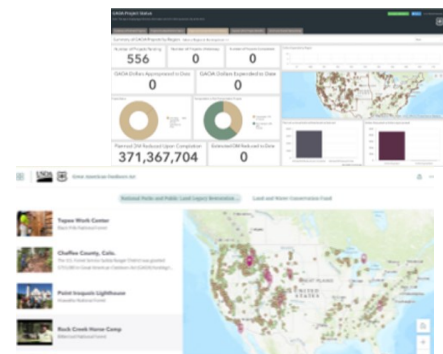
The Success of Trailhead Ambassador Programs peer learning session

Partner Media Platforms

Beyond the U.S. Forest Service website and media channels, collaborating with partners on communications through their media platforms can highlight the partnership and increase the Forest Service's audience. Partner media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, partner blogs, annual reports, and press releases. Webinars are another good way to expand exposure.

Story Maps

ArcGIS StoryMaps are interactive maps that allow you to create inspiring, immersive stories through a combination of text, multimedia content, and geospatial data. StoryMaps transform on-the-ground projects into digestible and engaging reports.



Helpful links and resources

- [Sharing Partnership Success Stories Peer Learning Session](#)
- [Forest Service Office of Communications](#)
- [Social and Traditional Media Rights and Responsibilities for Federal Employees](#)

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