



## Collaborative Capacity Program for Forests & Communities

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and Definitions

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*Last Updated 05/02/2024*

#### **1. What is the purpose of the Collaborative Capacity Program funding program?**

The purpose of the CCP's financial awards is to support the critical capacity elements and activities that make collaboration for forest stewardship successful. The program aims to provide capacity for communities and collaborative groups to progress towards on-the-ground stewardship outcomes on forests and grasslands currently managed by the USDA Forest Service as part of the National Forest System.

#### **2. How do you define "collaborative group" or "collaborative capacity"?**

See Program Definitions listed below.

#### **3. What do you mean by equitable decision-making and inclusive collaborative processes?**

Equitable decision-making and inclusive collaborative processes involve clearly articulated processes that share who is involved and how they were recruited; methods for how perspectives are gathered and noted; and steps for how decisions are ultimately made. Equitable decision-making processes and inclusive collaborative processes include necessary checks to prevent bias, such as a required quorum for voting. These processes can be documented through charters, MOUs, or other similar governance documents.

#### **4. What are the anticipated number of awards and budget for the 2024 round of funding?**

The CCP intends to host three annual funding rounds from 2024 through 2026. The total CCP funding amount for the three rounds is \$2.5 million or approximately \$800k per round.

#### **5. What are National Forest System lands?**

National Forest System lands include the public lands managed by the Forest Service, including forest, grasslands, and related lands throughout the United States and its territories. [Click here](#) to view a map of existing National Forest System lands. Examples include Mount-Baker Snoqualmie National Forest and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

**6. Can recreation-based collaborative groups be eligible for funding?**

Yes, recreation-based collaborative groups that can clearly describe how this funding will support their collaborative efforts and how their work leads to stewardship benefits on forests and grasslands currently managed by the USDA Forest Service are eligible for funding.

**7. What are some examples of “a future stewardship benefit to forests and grasslands currently managed by the USDA Forest Service as part of the National Forest System”?**

There are several examples of how collaborative groups and communities can provide a future stewardship benefit to forests and grasslands. Some examples include determining areas within a forest or grassland for prescribed or cultural burning, completing accessibility improvements to a trail, restoring an area of historical or cultural relevance with appropriate signage, and planting native plants along a restored waterway.

**8. Can you provide an example of how a successful application from a Tribal Nation and/or Native-controlled organization would use this funding?**

The CCP financial awards can offset the costs of staff time and provide facilitation or meeting resources to Tribes who are seeking capacity to support efforts such as co-stewardship agreements, resource management of fish and game across boundaries, prescribed burning activities, and other collaborative land management efforts.

**9. If awarded, what is the disbursement schedule for grants? Are grant funds provided up front or as a reimbursement?**

NFF prefers to distribute all funds up front for CCP awards. In some cases, funds will be provided in installments, which occurs on a case-by-case basis.

**10. What are the reporting requirements for grantees?**

Reporting requirements for grantees include update reports that are completed every six months. These reports include a financial status report, plus a brief descriptive report on activities completed. This brief report on activities completed can be in written form or through an interview.

A final report is also required at the end of the performance period. This final report includes a written financial report plus a written narrative describing the activities completed. Final report narratives may also include video, photo essay, story map, or media.

National Forest Foundation staff are available to provide guidance for these reporting requirements and will work with grantees to make sure reporting requirements are not a burden.

### **11. What is the source of funding for the Collaborative Capacity Program?**

The CCP is funded by appropriations to the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Section 40803-c-10) to support “collaboration and collaboration-based activities”.

### **12. What types of technical assistance does the Collaborative Capacity Program offer? Who is eligible for technical assistance?**

More information on technical assistance with this program is forthcoming and will be available on the program’s website.

### **13. For Tribal applicants, is writing or working towards co-stewardship agreements an eligible activity?**

Yes, activities supporting co-stewardship agreements are eligible activities. While co-stewardship agreements remain relatively undefined, the CCP uses Oregon State University’s College of Forestry [definition](#) of co-stewardship as opportunities which involve one or more Tribes working directly with the USDA Forest Service to promote an approach to managing national forests and grasslands that seeks to protect the treaty, religious, subsistence and cultural interests of federally recognized Tribes.

## **Program Definitions**

The CCP operates under the following definitions:

**Collaborative capacity** is essential for all types of collaborative groups and communities to effectively work together, especially those working in forest stewardship. Collaborative capacity is made up of elements, or specific resources and skills, needed for a collaborative to function, perform, and endure. These capacity elements support and allow collaborative activities to occur, which lead to durable stewardship outcomes on-the-ground.

**Collaborative Forest Stewardship** is when people with different perspectives work together to find shared solutions to complex forest management challenges, like extreme wildfire, climate change stressors, and concerns about sustainable recreation. This type of collaboration can succeed at multiple levels – from local to national – to build shared understanding and solutions. A variety of support is required to make collaborative forest stewardship successful, like coordination, facilitation,

communications, fundraising, training, and more. Collaborative forest stewardship is a tool for working across land ownership boundaries to reduce wildfire risk, ensure sustainable recreation and access, and build forests and communities that are resilient to climate change and other stressors.

**Collaborative groups** consist of multiple partners and interests who work together to identify common ground. They may aim to lead, coordinate, organize, and provide feedback on collaborative forest stewardship projects in a specific place or region. The term “collaborative groups” refers to all partnerships, networks, coalitions, and initiatives working towards shared place-based or regional goals.

Many have observed there has historically been a lack of meaningful inclusion and genuine engagement with Tribes and underserved communities in the field of collaborative forest stewardship, creating inequities in decision-making and planning for forest stewardship projects. What collaboration means is evolving and expanding into a broader range of ways of reaching and engaging with people and communities, including those who have been previously excluded from accessing National Forests and the benefits derived from them. For example, through their government-to-government relationships, Tribes are increasingly collaborating with the Forest Service through co-stewardship agreements.<sup>1</sup> Several opportunities exist to collaborate with underserved communities through natural resources projects as well as sustainable recreation and cultural heritage projects. The CCP uses definitions of equity and underserved communities cited in the Forest Service’s Equity Action Plan<sup>2</sup>:

**Equity** is the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

**Underserved Communities** are populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

The **National Forest System** includes the public lands managed by the Forest Service, including forest, grasslands, and related lands throughout the United States and its territories. [Click here](#) to view a map of existing National Forest System lands.

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<sup>1</sup> [Annual Report on Co-Stewardship USDA \(2022\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Forest Service Equity Action Plan \(2022\)](#)