



## MATCHING AWARDS PROGRAM 2023 Round 1 Request for Proposals

---

Updated 11/15/2022

- Geographic Restrictions:** Benefit U.S. National Forests and Grasslands
- Application Deadline:** January 23, 2023 at 11:59 p.m. MST
- Funding Type:** Federal Funds in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (CFDA: 10.682)
- Matching Requirements:** 1:1 match of nonfederal cash funds directly received by the applicant organization. Award Recipient must expend match within the NFF grant performance period and for completion of the same project. In-kind and federal contributions are ineligible for use as match.
- Performance Period:** Projects funded in this round will begin in April/May 2023 and run for 12 months.
- Informational Webinar:** December 8, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. MST [[Register Here](#)]
- Applicant Resources:** The Matching Awards Program is highly competitive and the NFF only funds projects that align exceptionally well with programmatic criteria. To ensure that your time is well spent, use all the resources available to determine whether your project is eligible including:
- This Request for Proposals (RFP),
  - The MAP Application Tips and Financial Plan Guidance Appendices, and
  - NFF Conservation Awards staff who are available to answer questions about eligibility, project scope, or the application process.
- Program Contact:** Kerry Morse, Conservation Awards Manager  
Phone: 406.830.3358  
Email: [kmorse@nationalforests.org](mailto:kmorse@nationalforests.org)

### NOTICE OF UPCOMING PROGRAM CHANGES

**The NFF is revising Matching Awards Program criteria after MAP Round 1, 2023.** [This document](#) provides a brief preview of the revised program's focus areas, eligibility criteria, and evaluation criteria categories. Full program details will be available in March 2023 when the MAP Round 2 RFP is released.

## Table of Contents

---

<b>Overview</b> .....	<b>2</b>	Environmental Compliance .....	5
About the National Forest Foundation .....	2	Forest Service Letters of Support.....	5
Matching Awards Program Overview .....	2	Geographic and Programmatic Restrictions.....	5
Upcoming Program Changes .....	2	<b>Proposal Review Process</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Eligible Project Types</b> .....	<b>2</b>	Application Review Process and Grant Administration.....	5
Program Focus Areas.....	2	Evaluation Criteria .....	6
Civic Engagement Requirements .....	3	<b>How To Apply</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Complementary but Ineligible .....	3	How to Start a New Application.....	7
<b>Funding and Match Requirements</b> .....	<b>4</b>	How to Return to the Application You Started.....	7
<b>Project Administrative Considerations</b> .....	<b>4</b>	Proposal Attachment Forms .....	7
Applicant Eligibility .....	4	<b>Applicant Resources</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Project Timing.....	4	Pertinent Policies and Documents .....	8
Budget Size .....	4	Informational Webinar .....	8
Funding Overlap Restrictions .....	5	Additional Questions and Program Contact .....	8

## Overview

---

### ABOUT THE NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION

The National Forest Foundation (NFF) is the leading organization working on behalf of the American public to inspire personal and meaningful connections to our National Forests and Grasslands. Through direct fieldwork, facilitation, grant programs, and promotion of responsible recreation, the National Forest Foundation inspires people to get personally involved in caring for the 193 million acres of public lands that make up our National Forest System. We do this because we believe these lands are an American treasure and are vital to the health of our communities.

### MATCHING AWARDS PROGRAM – CURRENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The NFF is soliciting proposals for its Matching Awards Program (MAP) to provide funds for on-the-ground projects that directly benefit America's National Forests and Grasslands. MAP pairs federal funds provided through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Forest Service with non-federal dollars raised by award recipients, multiplying the resources available to implement stewardship projects that benefit the National Forest System.

### UPCOMING PROGRAM CHANGES

The program information contained in this RFP applies to applications submitted in MAP Round 1, 2023 only. Following Round 1, the NFF will be updating the MAP program focus and funding criteria. See the [MAP webpage](#) for a brief preview of the upcoming changes.

## Eligible Project Types

---

### PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

All projects proposed for Round 1 2023 MAP funding must align with one or both of the NFF's two strategic focus areas of Outdoor Experiences and Forest Health. There are no funding targets for each program area. Applications that cohesively integrate the two program areas receive weighted advantage in the review process.

### **Outdoor Experiences Program Area**

The NFF supports results-oriented, on-the-ground projects that improve the quality, condition, and care of Outdoor Experiences on National Forests. Projects supported under this program area generate tangible conservation outcomes including enhancing high quality recreational experiences for the users of the National Forest System. Project examples include:

- Improving or maintaining recreation resource connectivity including, and similar to: trail maintenance, bridge, and crossing construction or repair, and installation of trail drainage structures
- Engaging youth, volunteers, or diverse, underserved or under-engaged populations in hands-on stewardship activities
- Employing youth and/or veterans crews to implement on-the-ground conservation, stewardship and/or restoration work

### **Forest Health Program Area**

The NFF supports results-oriented, on-the-ground, citizen-involved projects that maintain and/or restore ecosystem resiliency on National Forests. Projects should be consistent with or supportive of identified large-scale conservation initiatives. Project examples include:

- Promoting ecosystem structure, function, and diversity
- Promoting forest health through the removal or control of non-native invasive species, and/or reintroduction of native plants and trees

### **Integrated Projects**

The NFF encourages projects that cohesively integrate Outdoor Experiences and Forest Health program areas. Ideal projects will have a strong connection to each of the individual program areas, and effectively connect both in a clear, direct manner. Project examples include:

- Engaging community volunteers to complete riparian plantings as part of a watershed-scale restoration project
- Utilizing youth crews from underserved communities to complete habitat stewardship work and forest stand treatments

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

All MAP-funded projects must include direct public participation. Projects must contain significant, legitimate community involvement in the pre-implementation, implementation, or post-implementation phase. While the civic engagement portion of the project does not necessarily have to occur in the portion of the project receiving MAP funding, the project narrative must clearly describe the community's involvement. The standard public involvement component of the NEPA process is insufficient to meet this requirement.

Examples of eligible civic engagement include use of volunteers in project implementation, the engagement of paid youth or stewardship crews, or the implementation of projects selected as an outcome of a formal collaborative-planning process.

## **COMPLEMENTARY BUT INELIGIBLE: EDUCATION, HARDENED FACILITIES, AND MONITORING**

The NFF recognizes that complementary conservation activities including education, interpretation, surveys, inventory, monitoring, and hardened infrastructure are critically important to the engaged stewardship of our public lands. Despite their overall importance, funding restrictions currently prohibit the use of MAP Round 1 funds for these types of work with limited exceptions. This restriction includes but is not limited to "citizen science", "bio-blitz", and "Early Detection and Rapid Response" activities.

Eligible MAP Round 1 projects may include these activities only in the following cases:

- Education, signage, or interpretive elements may receive consideration as minor components of otherwise well-aligned larger projects and/or if they are explicitly covered with matching funds, not MAP funds.
- Projects with survey, inventory or monitoring components that focus on determining the long-term effectiveness of previous NFF-funded on-the-ground work are eligible for MAP funding.

Additionally, MAP funds cannot support improvements of hardened facilities including, and similar to: campgrounds, parking lots, restrooms, visitor centers, and major signage.

## **Funding and Match Requirements**

---

MAP funds are federal funds. In order to receive MAP funds, an award recipient must raise an equal amount of additional, matching non-federal cash funds. Eligible match must be from non-federal sources and received by the MAP applicant organization. Eligible matching funds must be expended within the dates of the NFF grant (see project timing section below), and toward completion of the same project activities proposed for NFF funding. In-kind contributions and federal funding are NOT eligible to meet MAP matching requirements.

Both MAP and matching funds:

- Must be paid to the applicant organization;
- Must support the same project activities and be expended within the same implementation period;
- Cannot support general administrative purposes beyond eligible indirect costs;
- Cannot support litigation or advocacy;
- Cannot be directed to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal entity;
- Cannot meet the matching requirements of any other federal funding program.

Upon selection for funding, award recipients must submit documentation showing the receipt of eligible non-federal matching funds to the NFF.

## **Project Administrative Considerations**

---

### **APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY**

501(c)(3) nonprofits, universities, and federally recognized Native American tribes are eligible to receive MAP grants. If an organization does not meet this eligibility requirement, it must utilize an eligible fiscal sponsor consistent with the [NFF Policy on Fiscal Sponsorship](#). The NFF does not consider MAP applications from federal agencies, individuals, for-profit organizations, or regional, state or local governmental entities.

### **PROJECT TIMING**

The proposed project period should be no more than 12 months long and start at least 2 months after the application deadline for the round. Specifically, the Round 1 performance period will begin in April or May 2023 and run for 12 months.

All activities funded by the NFF MAP grant and its associated matching funds must occur within the performance period. If project completion cannot confidently occur within the period specified above, please contact the NFF well in advance of the application deadline to discuss.

### **BUDGET SIZE**

There is not an official minimum or maximum award amount for the MAP program and successful proposals vary widely in budget size. In recent years, NFF has considered applications ranging from less than \$5,000 to over \$60,000. New applicants to MAP are encouraged to submit applications requesting under \$30,000.

## **FUNDING OVERLAP RESTRICTIONS**

There are limitations on overlap of MAP and other NFF awards to foster distribution of funds nationwide:

- A single organization, or an independently operating chapter of a national or regional organization, may receive only one MAP grant in a 12-month period.
- A single project, as defined by its location, goals, and objectives, may receive only one NFF grant in a 12-month period. A project that is receiving funding from another NFF funding program may not also receive MAP funding in the same year. Where multiple organizations are partnering on the same project, they must coordinate to submit only one application per 12-month period.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE**

The NFF will not consider proposals unless all environmental compliance work is complete at time of application. This includes but is not limited to NEPA decisions and categorical exclusions, archaeological clearances, and any other mandatory federal, state, or local clearances. No Exceptions.

## **FOREST SERVICE LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

All applications must include a letter of support from the Forest Supervisor of each National Forest or Grassland unit included in a proposal. Proposals that include work on more than approximately four National Forest System units within any Forest Service Region may choose to obtain a letter of support from the Regional Forester rather than each Forest Supervisor.

Support letters should be no more than a few months old, and addressed either to the National Forest Foundation Matching Awards Program or to a representative of your organization. Do not submit letters from Forest Service District Rangers or any additional letters of support.

If not uploaded with the proposal, email letters of support to [grants@nationalforests.org](mailto:grants@nationalforests.org) within three business days of the grant deadline. Do not send letters of support via hard copy, fax, or any method other than direct upload or email.

## **GEOGRAPHIC AND PROGRAMMATIC RESTRICTIONS**

MAP funding is available for projects that directly benefit U.S. National Forests and Grasslands nationwide. While work that does not physically take place on National Forest System lands is technically eligible for funding, the NFF currently funds very few projects off Forest Service lands.

# **Proposal Review Process**

---

## **APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS AND GRANT ADMINISTRATION**

A committee of National Forest Foundation staff, Board, and U.S. Forest Service representatives reviews proposals and makes funding recommendations within three months of the application deadline. Due to differences in budget allocations, proposals for projects that are directly linked to NFF-initiated work planned for implementation in the NFF 2023 Fiscal Year will be evaluated separately from projects that are fully independent of NFF-initiated work.

When the NFF selects a project for funding, the following tasks take place to complete the grant award and administer the project during the grant period:

- NFF notifies the listed project contact about the pending award.
- Upon initial notification of award, the Award Recipient must obtain a Unique Entity ID (UEI) number if they do not already have one.

- The Award Recipient chooses the most appropriate performance period start date and interim report due date for their project. The NFF typically provides several performance period options within a predetermined window.
- NFF staff complete a risk assessment of the potential Award Recipient including audit findings, staff experience, past performance on NFF grants, and other factors relevant to award administration in order to determine specific agreement terms.
- NFF prepares grant agreement and sends via DocuSign to project lead listed in proposal application. The project lead may reassign the agreement to another signer if appropriate.
- Award Recipient must fully execute the grant agreement within 60 days. The NFF automatically voids agreements not executed within 60 days.
- Award Recipient may begin to charge costs to their MAP grant beginning on the first day of the performance period. MAP funds cannot cover expenses that the Award Recipient incurs outside the performance period.
- Award Recipient may request payment of MAP grant funds at any time within the performance period, including a full advance at the beginning of the grant period, or incrementally as it raises matching funds.
  - In order to request funds, the Award Recipient provides documentation of receipt of matching funds and accompanying request forms. Acceptable documentation of matching funds includes a copy of the grant or donation check, an agreement or letter from a funder committing funds, or a signed letter from Award Recipient indicating the eligibility of funding source.
- Interim narrative and financial reports are due approximately halfway through the one-year grant period.
- The grant end date is initially set at 12-months after the start of the performance period. The Award Recipient must complete all project activities by the end of the performance period.
- Final narrative and financial reports are due one month after the end of the performance period.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Each member of the MAP review committee numerically scores applications based on the following evaluation criteria. Applications that receive funding generally receive high scores on every individual criterion.

- The extent to which project goals and objectives are specific, consistent with the identified need, and clearly articulated.
- The extent to which the project improves conditions of National Forest System resources in a measurable, on-the-ground manner.
- The extent to which the project is highly aligned with either the Outdoor Experiences or Forest Health Program Areas.
- The extent to which the project cohesively integrates the Outdoor Experiences and Forest Health Program Areas.
- The extent to which the means of evaluating and monitoring project outcomes are well defined and appropriate for the stated project goals.
- The extent to which the project directly engages diverse or new stakeholders in the pre-implementation, implementation, or post-implementation phase.
- The extent to which the project clearly enhances understanding of natural resource issues, and increases capacity for participation and engagement.

- The extent to which the project readily and effectively transfers best practices or shares lessons learned.
- The extent to which the NFF-funded portion of the project can reasonably be accomplished within one year.
- The extent to which the amount requested is appropriate, cost-effective, and commensurate with project needs.
- The extent to which matching funds are fully committed.

## How to Apply

---

Applicants complete and submit MAP applications through an online application platform. Refer to this RFP document and the following appendices as you complete the online form.

### HOW TO START A NEW APPLICATION

1. Use this link <https://form.typeform.com/to/jVN4LvFz> to complete a short 10-question quiz that ensures your project and organization are eligible to receive MAP funding.
2. Upon successful completion of the eligibility quiz, you will receive an email with an access code and instructions that will allow you to initiate an application.

### HOW TO RETURN TO THE APPLICATION YOU STARTED

If you have already completed the eligibility quiz and initiated an application, you can return to the application form by following these steps:

1. Go to the application login page at <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=nationalforests>
2. Log in with your existing account
3. Click “Edit Application” to the right of the name of your saved application

### PROPOSAL ATTACHMENT FORMS

The NFF regularly updates its standard forms and applicants must download and use the current forms each grant round. Do not re-use NFF forms saved on your computer from previous rounds.

- [NFF Master Financial Plan form](#)
- [NFF Expanded Budget form](#)

## Applicant Resources

---

The Matching Awards Program is highly competitive and the NFF only funds projects that align exceptionally with programmatic criteria. Applicants report spending an average of 31 hours on the completion of a MAP application. To ensure that your time is well spent, use all the resources available to determine whether your project is eligible, and make sure you have fully addressed the application requirements.

### PERTINENT POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

Prior to developing a MAP application, applicants should review and understand this RFP and the following policies:

- [NFF Indirect Cost Rate Policy](#)
- [NFF Policy on Fiscal Sponsorship](#) (if applicable)

Additional guidance on how to complete the NFF MAP application and budget forms are provided in these documents:

- [MAP Application Tips](#) – This document contains detailed guidance on certain application questions and components including instructions, tips, and checklists. This section is intended to help applicants develop and submit a competitive proposal.
- [How to Complete the NFF Master Financial Plan](#) – This document covers definitions of expense categories and match sources, and provides detailed examples of both the Master Financial Plan and Expanded Budget forms.

### INFORMATIONAL WEBINAR

An informational webinar regarding MAP proposal requirements and the submission process will take place December 8, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. MST. [Register in advance here](#). The webinar will also be recorded and posted on the NFF's Matching Awards Program webpage.

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND PROGRAM CONTACT

Please contact the NFF with additional questions regarding MAP or the grant application process. NFF Conservation Awards staff are available to answer questions about eligibility, project scope, or the application process.

Requesting and receiving help will not affect an organization's competitiveness for the program.

Kerry Morse, Conservation Awards Manager  
Phone: 406.830.3358  
Email: [kmorse@nationalforests.org](mailto:kmorse@nationalforests.org)