**National Forest Foundation**

# MAP Frequently Asked Questions

*This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about the Matching Awards Program (MAP). Use this guidance as a supplement to, not a replacement for, the instructions in the online application form and eligibility information in the [RFP](#).*

## Table of Contents

## General Questions

**What is MAP?**

MAP is a nationwide competitive grant program that provides funding to benefit National Forest Service lands. 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 benefit National Forest Service lands.

**What are the anticipated number of awards and budget for Round 2 2024?**

The NFF anticipates awarding 20-25 new grants with a budget of approximately $700,000.

**When is the next opportunity to apply for MAP funding?**

MAP 2025 Round 1 RFP will most likely be released in late 2024, and the application deadline will likely be in early 2025. Check the [MAP webpage](#) for up-to-date information about grant deadlines and sign up to receive our [Taproot eNewsletter](#) to get an email notification when the RFP is released.

## Eligibility Questions

**Who is eligible to apply?**

Nonprofit organizations, Tribal governments and organizations, and universities are eligible to receive MAP grants. Other kinds of organizations may apply if they utilize an eligible fiscal sponsor consistent with the [NFF Policy on Fiscal Sponsorship](#).

**What are examples of eligible Community Engagement activities?**

Eligible occasions for Community Engagement in public lands include, but are not limited to:

- Public lands days, cleanup days, and similar events
- Field trips for schools or collaborative groups
- Outdoor skills training
- Indigenous ecological practices

- Ceremonies or celebrations related to natural resources
- Trail or site ambassadors
- Nature-based therapeutic activities

**What are examples of eligible Stewardship activities?**
Community Engagement should be at the heart of the project's goals and objectives, with stewardship activities as a secondary focus area. Stewardship activities must be completed by the participants in the program. Stewardship Activities may be **paid or unpaid.** There is no volunteer requirement.

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:
- Recreation area cleanup, such as trash pickup
- Native trees and shrub planting
- Trail maintenance, such as drainage clearing or brushing
- Invasive species control, such as pulling weeds or educating boaters about not transporting aquatic invasive species
- Forest and watershed restoration, such as habitat improvements or protection of cultural resources
- Hazardous fuels reduction, such as thinning and piling of fuels
- Ecological or social monitoring to inform management decisions, such as invasive species surveys and mapping, or monitoring the amount of visitor use at a trailhead or campground
- Education about sustainable recreation principles, such as talking with trail users about leave-no-trace principles at a trailhead

**Can you provide an example of an eligible project that includes a stewardship component of "education about sustainable recreation principles"?**
Participants in the proposed project should be completing the stewardship activity.
If the organization's staff are educating the participants of the program on sustainable recreation principles, the participants are not engaging in stewardship activities. If the participants receive that education from staff and then implement it by teaching others, those participants are engaging in a stewardship activity.
Examples:
- **Eligible:** A project that proposes educating youth trail stewards on Leave No Trace principles. The trail stewards then make contact with the public at a busy recreation area and encourage those users to practice Leave No Trace.
- **Ineligible:** A project that proposes hiking trips for inner city populations with education for the participants on sustainable recreation practices. This is not considered to have an eligible stewardship component because the participants themselves are not taking a stewardship action.

**What does the NFF mean by "adjacent public lands"?**
Adjacent public lands are lands bordering U.S. National Forests or Grasslands. To be eligible for MAP funding, project proposals that take place on adjacent public lands must clearly demonstrate benefit to the adjoining National Forest or Grassland. For example, a project that works to control weeds on adjacent public lands benefits the adjoining National Forest because it reduces the opportunity for the weeds to spread and harm the National Forest. Eligible adjacent public lands include but are not limited to National Park, Bureau of Land Management, state, or city lands.

**How much of a proposed project can take place on adjacent public lands?**
Any portion, or the entirety, of a project may take place on adjacent public lands, so long as the proposal clearly demonstrates benefit to the adjoining National Forest or Grassland. For example, a project that proposes nine backcountry stewardship trips, four of which are on National Forest land and five of which are on adjacent National Park lands is eligible so long as the benefit to the adjacent National Forest is identified.

**Can our organization apply for more than one MAP grant in the same calendar year?**
A single organization may not submit a new application to MAP until any previous MAP grant has been fully closed.

**My organization has multiple projects that are eligible. Can my organization submit more than one proposal for MAP?**
Only one MAP proposal per organization is allowed. You may submit one proposal that includes multiple component projects.

## *Timing Questions*

**When is the earliest my project can start?**
For MAP 2024 Round 2, the earliest the grant can start is September 1, 2024. Project activities taking place in July or August will not be eligible to be covered by MAP funding.

**My project takes place in spring/summer 2025. Should I apply to MAP 2024 Round 2, or wait until Round 1 2025?**
If your project includes planning and recruitment activities that take place in fall/winter 2024 that you would  like covered by MAP funds, you should apply in Round 2 2024. If no project activities will take place until late  March 2025, it's better to apply in Round 1 2025. The application deadline for Round 1 2025 will likely be in January 2025.

## *Match Questions*

**Why is a 1:1 Cash Match required?**
The requirement of a 1:1 nonfederal cash match is due to stipulations of the funding source for this program. Funds awarded through MAP are provided to the NFF by the U.S. Forest Service as Federal Awards under Federal Assistance Listing 10.682, which states that *"[NFF] shall obtain...private contributions to match funds made available by the Forest Service on at least a one-for-one basis: Provided further, That the Foundation may transfer Federal funds to a...recipient for a project at the same rate that the recipient has obtained the non-Federal matching funds"*.

**What are the Cash Match rules?**
To receive MAP funds, an award recipient must raise an equal amount of additional, non-federal cash funds to use as a match. Eligible matching funds must be from non-federal sources and be deposited within the bank accounts of the applicant organization. Matching funds must be expended within the grant period and be used toward completion of the same project activities proposed for NFF funding. In-kind contributions and federal funds are NOT eligible to meet MAP matching requirements. For additional requirements, refer to the RFP.

**Does 1:1 cash match documentation need to be shown at the time of application?**
No, you do not need to have secured your matching funds at time of application. Documentation showing that the required 1:1 cash match is in hand is only required when an organization is requesting granted funds from the NFF. The proposed cash match should be recorded on the budget forms within the proposal, but documentation is not required at the time of application.

**Can we use our organization general fund for match?**
Yes, as long as the funds were received from a non-federal source and are not restricted for use on another project, they may be used as match for your MAP funds.

## Budget Questions

**What is the maximum amount I can request for MAP?**

There is not an official minimum or maximum award amount for the MAP program and successful proposals vary widely in terms of budget size. In recent years, the NFF has considered applications ranging from less than $5,000 to over $70,000. The NFF suggests that new MAP applicants submit applications requesting $35,000 or less.

**What project costs are eligible for funding?**

"Direct costs" are those that are directly related to implementing your proposed project activities. Many kinds of costs are eligible, including:

- **Personnel** costs for employees of your organization are eligible to be covered if related to the project's goals and objectives – for example staff salaries and hourly rates of paid crew members – as is costs associated with **fringe benefits** for those employees.
- **Food** is an eligible cost if related to the project's objectives, for example lunches and snacks for youth crews or volunteers.
- **Contracts** are an eligible cost if related to the project's goals and objectives, for example hiring a trainer to train youth crews to be able to complete the project, or providing funds to a partner organization that has a role in implementing the project.
- **Travel** is eligible to be covered if related to the project goals and objectives, such as mileage charges or rental vehicles.
- **Promotional materials** are eligible costs if related to the project goals and objectives, for example fliers about an event, and disseminating the lessons learned after the project.

In addition to the direct costs described above, indirect costs are allowed and encouraged as part of a proposal budget. See below for details on indirect costs.

**What are indirect costs? What are some examples of eligible expenditures for indirect costs?**

"Indirect" costs (also sometimes called "overhead" costs) are expenses that are not directly associated with implementing the project but are indirectly related to the success of the project because they support your organization as a whole. Expenses such as office rent, software, technology systems, utilities, and office supplies are examples of indirect costs, as are salary or wages for administrative staff such as HR or accountants.

The NFF allows and encourages organizations to include indirect costs in their MAP proposal budget. Indirect costs do not need to be itemized – instead, they may be presented as a simple percentage of the total direct costs. For more information about how to calculate indirect costs and example budgets, review the NFF's Indirect Cost Rate Policy.

**When budgeting for volunteer hours as in-kind match, what rate should we use?**

The Independent Sector Value of Volunteer Time is a useful tool to estimate the dollar value of the contribution of volunteers. Either the national hourly rate or the state-specific rate is acceptable.

## Grant Administration Questions

**If my project is selected for MAP funding, what happens next?**

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 project contact person listed on the application 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.

- 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 due diligence and award administration.
- 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- or 18-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.

**If I receive a MAP grant, how do I request my award funds?**

Funds are released when the applicant sends NFF the required documentation of a 1:1 to cash match with eligible non-federal funds. Award recipients can request NFF award funds incrementally or in full at any point within the grant's active award period. NFF MAP grants are generally not reimbursable. Award funds not requested prior to the close of the award period become unavailable and the NFF cannot release them. The NFF will not authorize payment for requests received after the award period has ended. Before submitting a cash request, read the Instructions for Requesting Award Funds.

**What happens if I receive a MAP grant and then things don't go as planned?**

Award recipients may submit requests to modify their approved project if unforeseeable circumstances make the proposed scope of work or budget no longer feasible. Modification requests may or may not be approved. You must submit and obtain approval of any changes to project scope, budget, or award period at least 30 days in advance of implementing them and must do so before the award has closed. Read the Instructions for Requesting Project Modifications for full details on the process.

**How do I close an existing MAP grant?**

To close an existing MAP grant, submit a final report. Your final report may be submitted when the proposed project activities are complete. You do not need to wait until the report due date to submit the report. The final report is comprised of several components and should be consistent with the NFF report requirements found here. Once the NFF receives all required components of the final report and ensures that they are complete, the grant is closed.

## *Questions about Recent Changes to MAP Program*

**Why did the program change in 2023? Is the NFF moving away from funding on-the-ground work?**

The spring 2023 adjustments to MAP are the result of efforts to align the program with current National Forest System needs and the NFF strategic plan, as well as applicant [feedback](). The NFF is not moving away from on-the-ground work. With other NFF funding programs focusing on direct on-the-ground work, MAP now primarily focuses on community engagement while completing appropriate stewardship activities. Read more about the reasons and processes for the change in this [NFF News Release]().

**Is the program shift a one-and-done? Will you go back to the old version of MAP?**

While the program priorities will remain constant for the foreseeable future, the NFF intends to continue to adapt minor program details based on [feedback]() from those it impacts. After the initial round of grants under the new program criteria are finalized, lessons learned and additional feedback will be incorporated prior to releasing guidance for future application rounds. Be sure to read future RFPs closely as some details may change.