



**National Forest  
Foundation**

# **Program Overview**

## **Matching Awards Program**

**Round 1 Application Deadline:** January 13, 2021

**Round 2 Application Deadline:** June 9, 2021

**Kerry Morse** - Conservation Awards Manager

**Adam Liljeblad** - Conservation Awards Director

**December 10, 2020**

# Webinar Overview

Today's webinar will:

- Provide a coarse overview of the NFF
- Detail the funding priorities of the Matching Awards Program (MAP)
- Provide information on requirements for grants
- Talk about COVID-19 implications, precautions and adjustments
- Describe the application process
- Provide a forum for Q&A



# Housekeeping

Feel free to submit questions at any time in the chat section. Questions that come in over the course of the presentation will be answered as soon as the main presentation is over.

The session is being recorded, so we'll be able to provide a web link afterward in case you want to revisit it or share it with someone who wasn't able to be on the session today.



# Who's Here?

A few quick questions to learn about who's on the call today:



# About the National Forest Foundation

## Mission:

*Engage Americans to promote the health and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System*

- Chartered by Congress in 1991
- Action-oriented projects
  - Enhance viability of natural resources & communities
  - Involve surrounding communities
  - Benefit America's National Forests and Grasslands



# About the National Forest Foundation

The leading organization working on behalf of the American public to inspire personal and meaningful connections to our National Forests.

NFF works in close partnership with the USFS nationwide.

Why? Because we believe these lands are an American treasure and vital to the health of our communities.



# About the National Forest Foundation

How we work:

- Direct site-based work
- Tree planting programs
- Grant programs
- Facilitation of organizational capacity and constituency building
- Inspiring people to get personally involved



# NFF Grant Programs

Provide grants to:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations
- Colleges and universities
- Native American tribes

Implement projects benefiting America's National Forests and Grasslands



# NFF Conservation Award Programs

Since 2001 we have:

Provided  
**\$80M** in  
award funds

Funded  
**2,300**  
**projects**  
nationwide

Conservation  
outcomes  
valued at  
**\$253M**

On-the-ground  
conservation and restoration

Capacity building of  
collaborative groups



# NFF Conservation Award Programs

## Our Shared Accomplishments:

190,573 Volunteers

2,794,777 Volunteer Hours

24,444 Miles of Trail Work

288,730 Acres of Wildlife Habitat Restored/Maintained

2,444,642 Trees Planted

5,220 Miles of Stream Surveyed or Restored

130,788 Acres Treated for Invasive Species



# NFF Grant Programs

**Adam Liljeblad**

NFF Conservation Awards Director



# Matching Awards Program

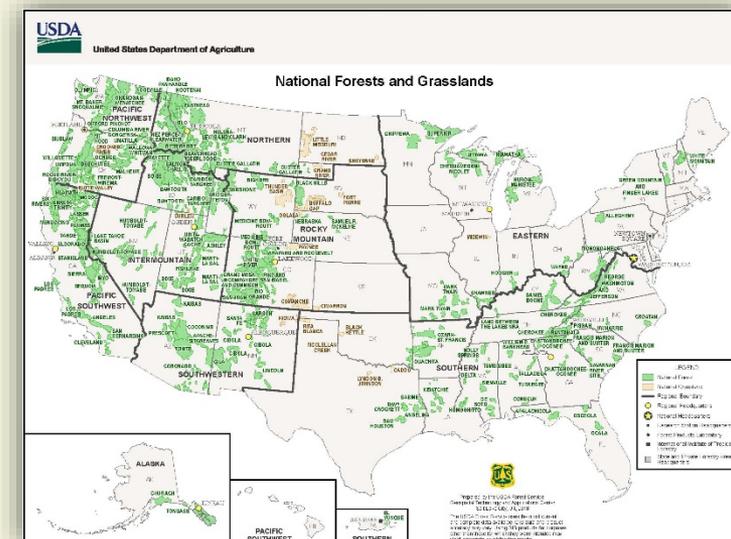
## Funding for “On-the-Ground” Work

Projects that physically change the landscape



# Matching Awards Program

- Awards federal funds from the USFS
- Funds specific projects not programs of work
- Supports action-oriented projects benefiting National Forest System (NFS) lands
  - On-the-ground conservation and restoration projects
  - Clear, direct NFS benefits
  - Emphasis on:
    - Boots on-the-ground
    - Dirty knees and fingernails



# What is “On-the-Ground”?



## “On-the-Ground”

- Work that physically changes the landscape
- Has immediate, visible impacts
- ...think dirty knees and dirty fingernails



## NOT “On-the-Ground”

- Inventory & monitoring
- ‘Citizen science’
- Signage and kiosks
- Project planning
- Community/public meetings



# Program Fit



## Good Fit for MAP

On-the-ground project work that benefits National Forest and Grasslands

- Trails and recreation
- Forest and ecosystem health
- Youth crews
- Volunteers



## Poor Fit for MAP

- General operating support
- Program support
- Work that doesn't directly benefit National Forests or Grasslands
- No direct on-the-ground benefits
- Advocacy or litigation





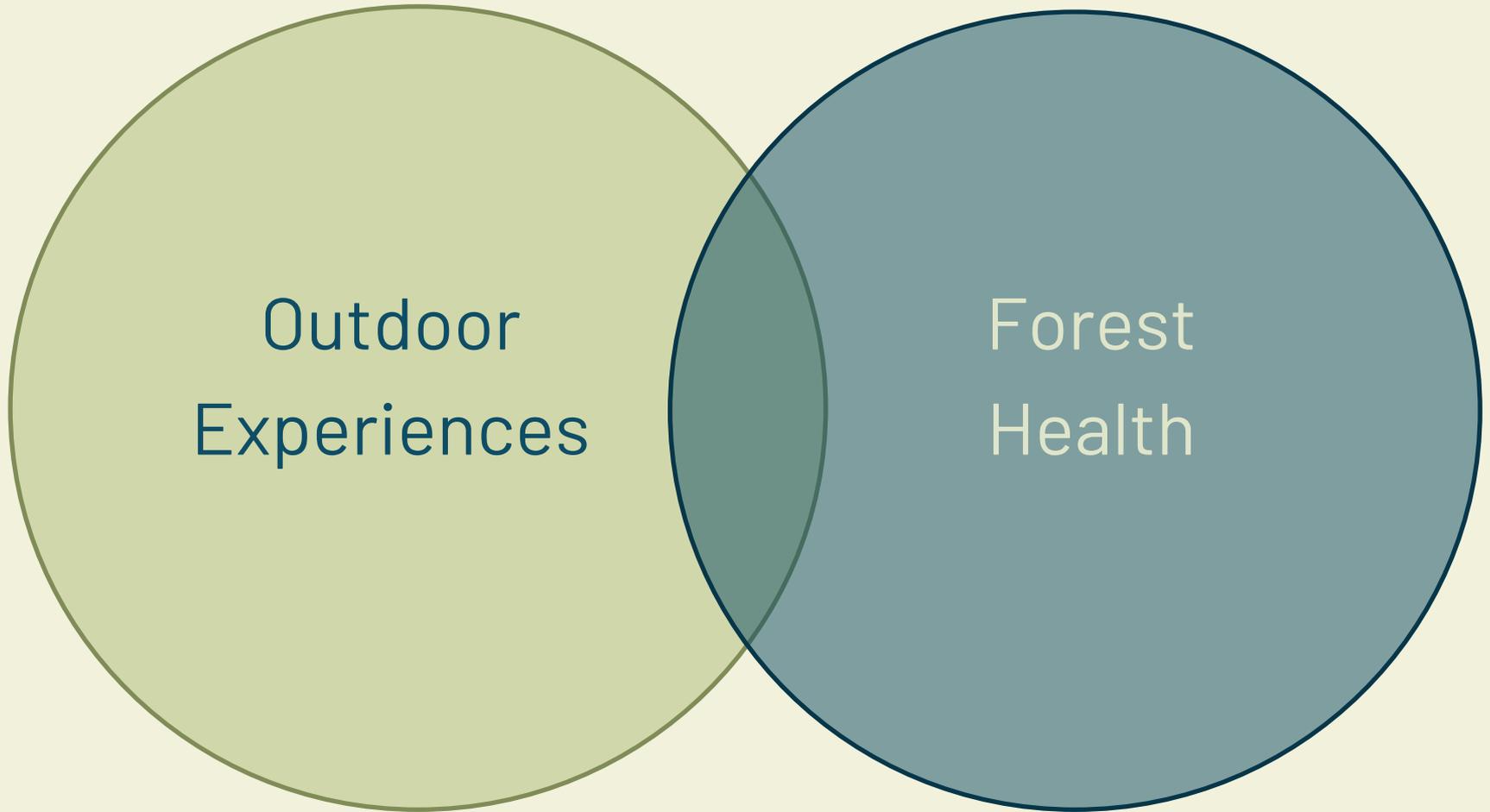
# Common Missteps Getting Started

Not fully reviewing,  
understanding and/or  
following requirements

Developing programmatic  
scope of work instead of  
project-specific



# MAP Focus Areas



# Focus: **Outdoor Experiences**

Results-oriented, on-the-ground, projects that improve the quality, condition, and care of Outdoor Experiences on National Forests.



# Focus: **Outdoor Experiences**

## Project Types:

Improving, or maintaining recreation resource connectivity including, and similar to: trail maintenance, bridge and crossing construction or repair, and installation of trail drainage structures; and/or

Engaging youth, volunteers, or diverse, underserved or under-engaged populations in hands-on stewardship activities; and/or

Employing youth and/or veterans crews to implement on-the-ground conservation, stewardship and/or restoration work.



# Focus: **Outdoor Experiences**

Projects **should** generate tangible conservation outcomes or enhance high quality recreational experiences for the users of the National Forest System.

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



# Focus: Forest Health

The NFF supports results-oriented, on-the-ground, citizen-involved projects that maintain and/or restore ecosystem resiliency on National Forests



# Focus: **Forest Health**

## Project Types:

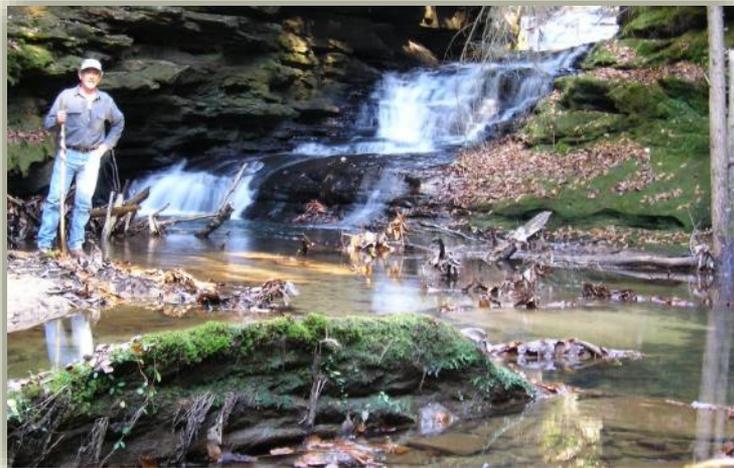
Promoting ecosystem structure, function and diversity; and/or

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

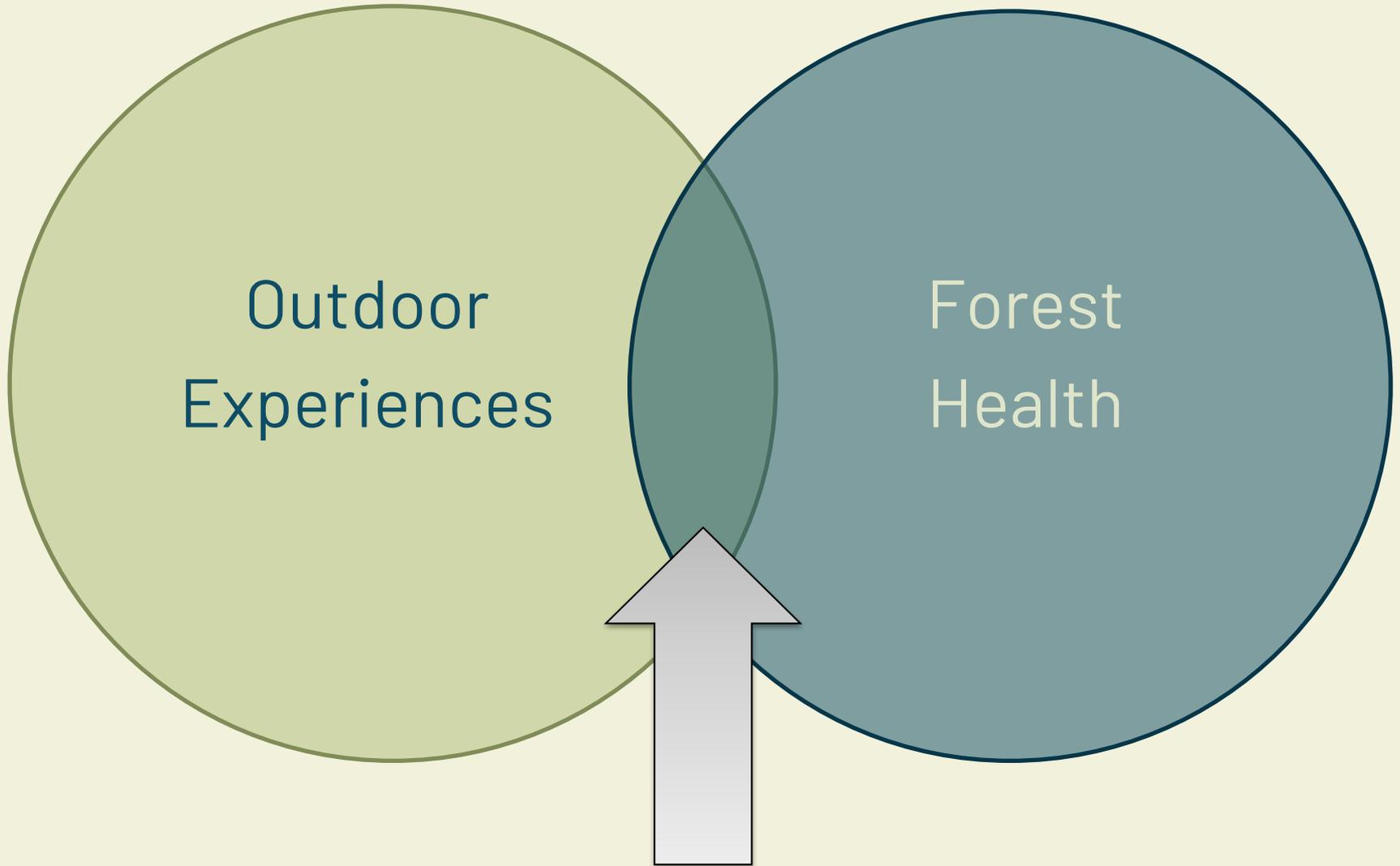


# Focus: **Forest Health**

Projects should be consistent with or supportive of identified large-scale conservation initiatives.



# MAP Focus Areas



# Emphasis: Integrated Projects

Projects that cohesively integrate Outdoor Experiences and Forest Health program areas are strongly encouraged.

Integrated projects will receive a weighted advantage in evaluation.

Ideal projects will have a strong connection to each of the individual program areas, and effectively integrate both in a clear, direct manner.



# Integrated Emphasis

Examples of integrated projects include, but are not limited to the following:

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.



# Out-of-Scope Requests

- Education and interpretation
  - May only receive consideration as minor components of otherwise well-aligned larger projects.
- Inventory or monitoring components
- Applicants can use funding from other sources (including MAP match) for out-of-scope components





# Common Missteps Project Structure

- Not ensuring a project is strongly aligned with funding priorities
- Poorly defining a project
- Not being fully ready to take on a project
  - Organizational capacity
  - Timing





# Organizational Eligibility

## Eligible Organizations:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofits
  - And projects fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit
- Universities
- Federally Recognized Native American Tribes

Must have a high degree of active community involvement in one or more phases:

- Pre-Implementation
- Project Implementation
- Post-Implementation



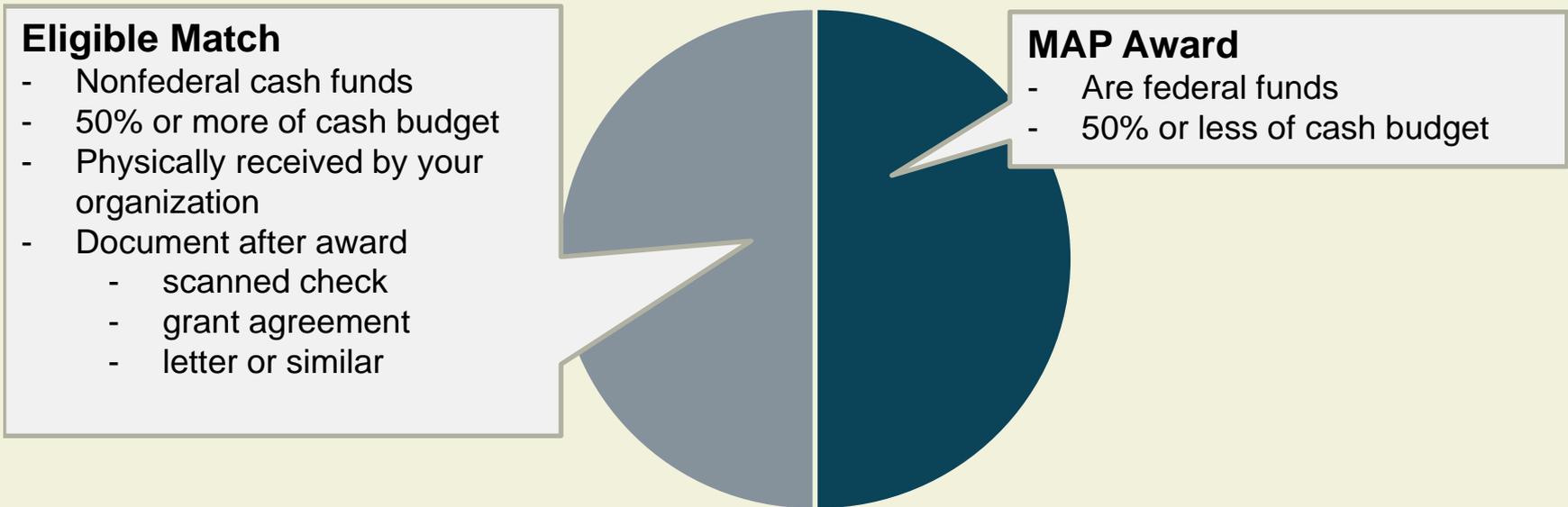
# Matching Requirements

- Minimum 1:1 **Cash** Match of eligible nonfederal funds
- Applicant organization must **physically possess** matching funds
- Match must be **concurrently spent** on MAP project
- Ineligible matching sources:
  - In-Kind contributions
  - Federal contributions
  - Funds spent on other projects



# Matching Requirements

## Simplified 1-Year Project Budget

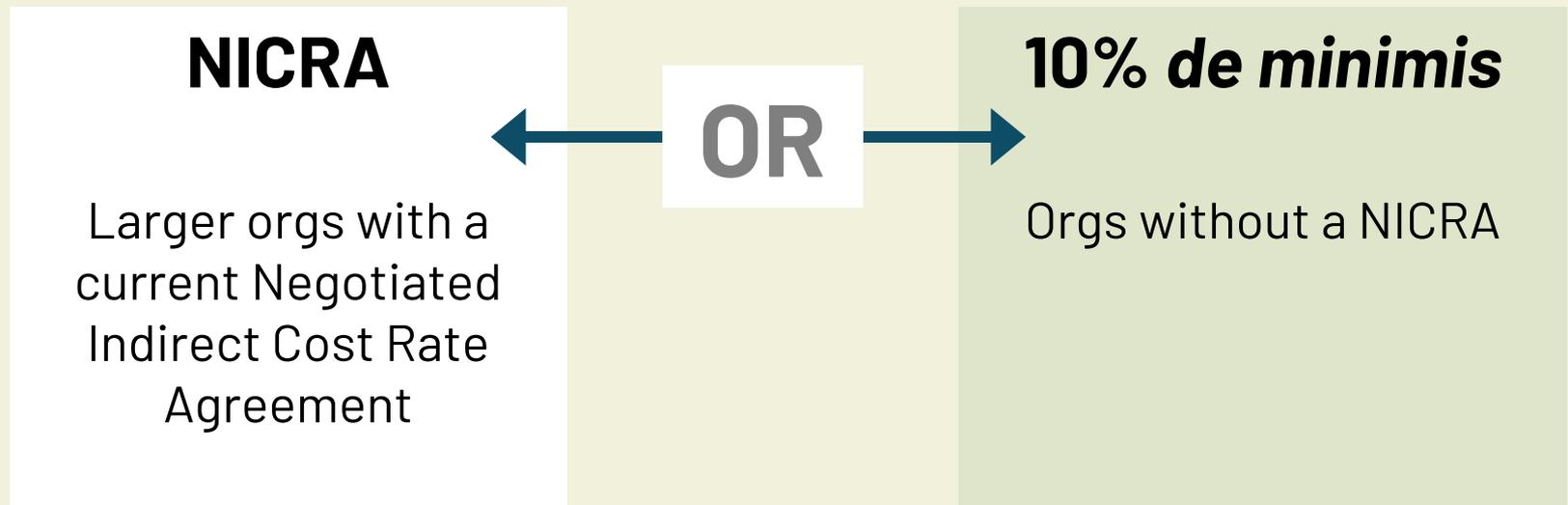


- *Show further leverage with in-kind + other federal contributions*
- *Be sure to follow NFF budget category definitions*



# Indirect Costs

- OK to include overhead costs in MAP budget
- Allowable indirect rates:

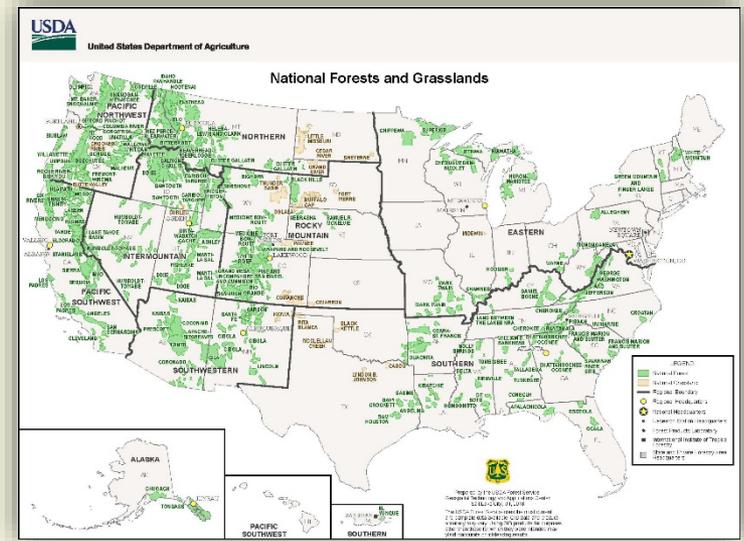


- *Be sure to review and understand NFF's full Indirect Costs Policy*



# Geography + Letters of Support

- Projects eligible nationwide
  - Must benefit National Forests and Grasslands
  - There are partially restricted geographies listed in RFP
    - Contact NFF Conservation Awards staff before proposing work in one of those areas



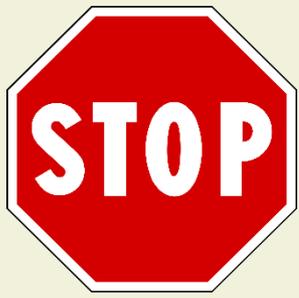
- Letter of support from Forest Supervisor required for all applications
- Do not submit any additional letters of support



# Project Timing & Compliance

- MAP projects must be completed within one year
  - *Anticipated* performance periods:
    - **Round 1:** April / May 2021 - April/ May 2022
    - **Round 2:** August / September 2021 through August / September 2022
- Environmental compliance must be complete at the time of application for funding
  - NEPA and other permitting in-hand
  - All applications with incomplete environmental compliance work are rejected outright
- Grantee COVID-19 implementation adjustments are anticipated and will be accommodated as allowable





# Common Missteps Project Budget

Not aligning project narrative  
and budget

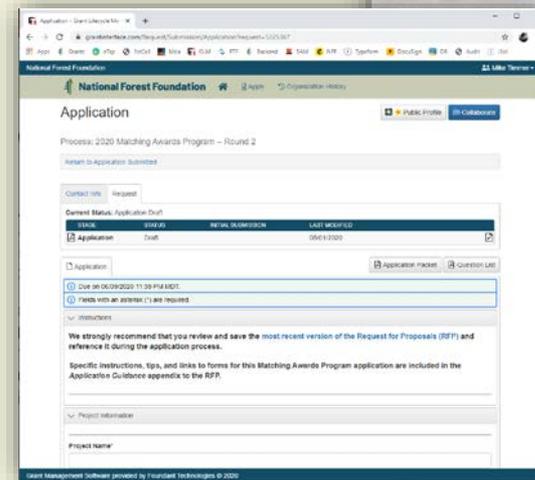
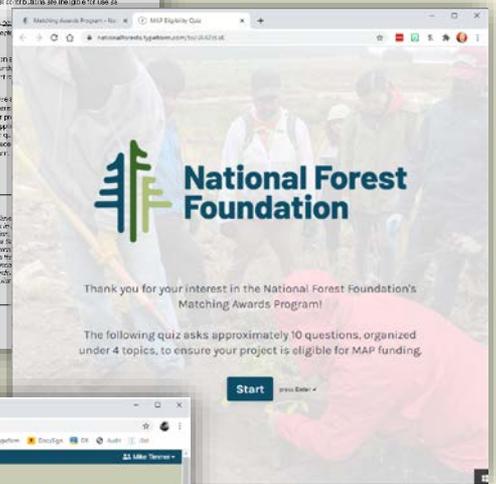
Including ineligible funding  
components without indication  
that they will be paid with non-  
NFF funds

Matching funding does not  
overlap with project time period



# Application Process

1. Review program summary and RFP
2. From RFP, access and complete online pre-screening questionnaire
3. Initiate an application using the link available upon completion of the questionnaire
4. Prepare and submit application online



# Grant Payment Process

An advance of grant funds can be requested incrementally or in full at any point during the award period.

- Complete a **Cash Request Form**
- Include **documentation that eligible nonfederal match has been received** by your organization
- Send cash request to NFF by email
- Advance funds transferred via EFT typically within 1-2 weeks

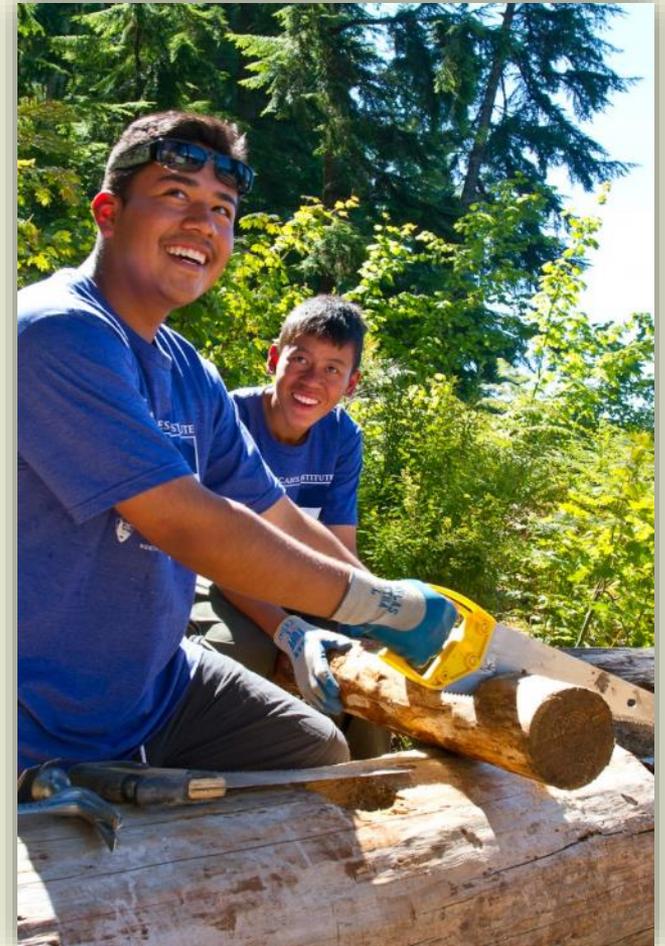
**There is no longer a requirement to mail NFF a physical check for matching funds.**

Award Recipients submit match documentation + paperwork via email to release MAP award funds.



# Expected Round Funding

- Budget for Round 1:
  - \$700,000
- Anticipated Award Range:
  - \$5,000 - \$65,000
- Anticipated # of Awards:
  - 20-25 new grants
- 2020 Rounds 1 + 2
  - 66% of Proposals Funded
  - 66% of \$ Requested Funded



# Competitive Proposals

- Grant rounds are competitive
- Nearly all proposals received meet baseline standards
- Focus on the quality of the whole proposal
  - Strongly fit overall program
  - Strongly integrate Forest Health + Outdoor Experiences
  - Strongly address major and minor evaluation criteria





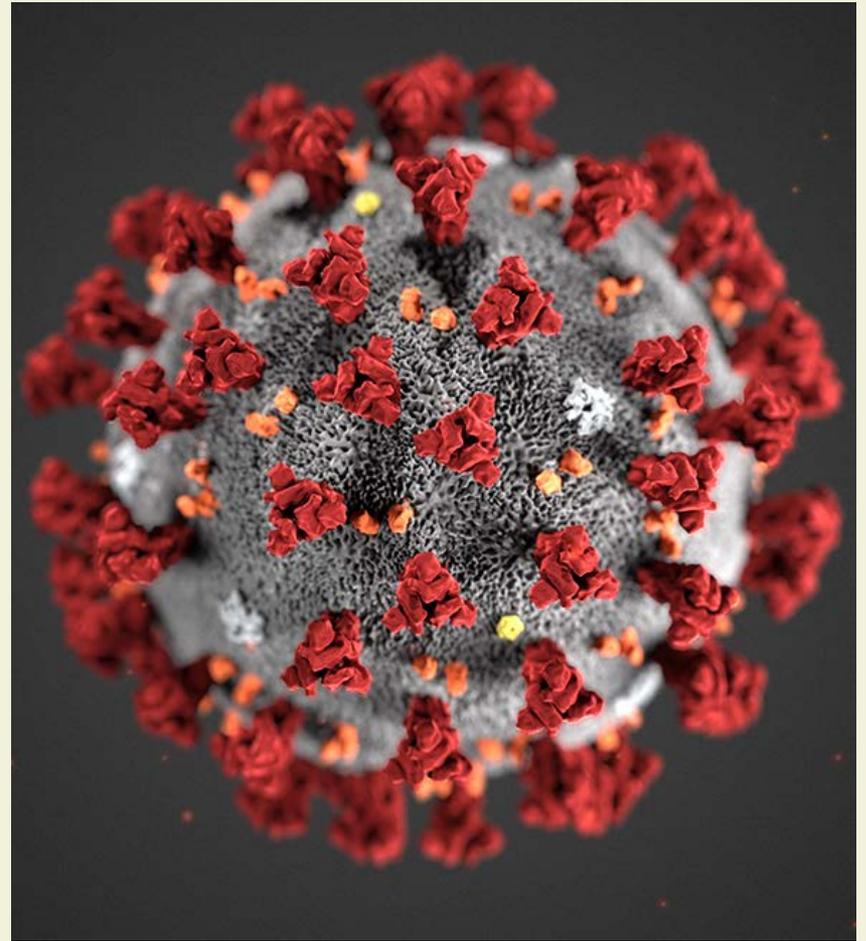
# Common Missteps Project Finalization

- Not making sure you address all evaluation criteria
- Not acknowledging shortcomings
  - Timing
  - Questionable history
  - Questionable capacity
  - Unfulfilled obligations



# MAP and COVID-19

- A dynamic environment for
  - Nonprofits
  - Working with the FS
  - Stewardship Projects
  - (All of us)



# MAP and COVID-19 | Suggestions

- Coordinate even more than usual with U.S. Forest Service contacts
  - Local closures and restrictions
  - Capacity to support partnership work
- Certain types of work *possibly* cannot be completed within the proposed project period
  - Large volunteer groups
  - Youth engagement
- **Work with FS to understand specific local restrictions**

???



# MAP and COVID-19 | Direction

- MAP recipients are required to follow applicable public health guidance
  - CDC
  - State
  - Local
- NFF understands how dynamic the planning environment is and will accommodate allowable changes



# Questions?

## Matching Awards Program Deadlines:

January 13, 2021 11:59 pm MST

June 9, 2021 11:59 pm MDT

*Use the Q&A box to enter questions*

### **Primary Contact**

**Kerry Morse**

**Conservation Awards Manager**

**kmorse@nationalforests.org**

**(406) 830-3358**

**<https://www.nationalforests.org/grant-programs>**

# Proposal Evaluation

Proposals Quantitatively Evaluated by:



Evaluation Criteria listed in RFP Appendix

**Pay attention to all criteria**



# Typical Score Distribution

