

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION DEADLINES

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ATTENTION

This document contains important information about program requirements and the application process. The 2016 grant round will be especially competitive and only projects that are exceptionally aligned with programmatic criteria and very clearly defined are likely to be funded. Ensure you have reviewed and fully understand the Request for Proposals before continuing with the application process.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION

The National Forest Foundation (NFF), a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization chartered by Congress, engages America 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. The NFF believes that communities should play a significant role in determining the future of National Forests and Grasslands.

INTRODUCTION

In partnership with Ski Apache, the NFF is currently soliciting proposals for its Ski Conservation Fund™ (SCF) grant program on the Lincoln National Forest. SCF combines Federal funds provided through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Forest Service with individual donations voluntarily made by guests of partner resorts. This leveraged funding measurably multiplies the resources available for nonprofit partners to implement projects that directly benefit the Lincoln National Forest.

A common thread connecting NFF program areas is an interest in results-oriented projects that enhance the viability of natural resources while benefitting and directly engaging surrounding communities. The NFF will accept applications from non-governmental, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and Native American tribes working on or adjacent to National Forests and Grasslands throughout the United States. Through SCF, organizations completing on-the-ground conservation work can apply for this competitive funding once a year. SCF funding is available to support specific conservation and restoration *projects* and does not provide general programmatic support. Please note this distinction.

SCF project selection occurs through a single-stage proposal process. Submitted proposals are evaluated, with a subset receiving funding. The process from proposal submission to notification of funding generally takes about three months.

All SCF awards require a 50% nonfederal cash or in-kind match. Federal funds are not eligible to serve as match, but should be noted to show project leverage. SCF funds cannot be provided to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal

entity. Project completion must occur within one year of the project award date, which typically begins within 1-2 months of award notification. Successful applicants will have the opportunity to choose from a few pre-selected grant start dates.

PROGRAM AREAS

In 2015, the NFF revised its strategic plan to focus on the Program Areas of Outdoor Experiences and Forest Health. Over time, 70-80% of SCF award funds are allocated for Outdoor Experiences related projects, and 20-30% are allocated for Forest Health related projects. Descriptions of the two Program Areas are below.

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES

SCF supports results-oriented, on-the-ground, projects that improve the quality, condition, and care of Outdoor Experiences on National Forests by:

- a) 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
- b) Engaging youth, volunteers, or diverse, underserved or under-engaged populations in hands-on stewardship activities; and/or
- c) Employing youth and/or veterans crews to implement on-the-ground conservation, stewardship and/or restoration work.

Projects that generate tangible conservation outcomes while enhancing high quality recreational experiences for the users of the National Forest System will receive weighted advantage. Funds cannot support improvements of hardened facilities including, and similar to: campgrounds, parking lots, restrooms, visitor centers, and major signage.

FOREST HEALTH

SCF supports results-oriented, on-the-ground, citizen-involved projects that maintain and/or restore forest resiliency by:

- a) Promoting forest structural complexity, function and diversity over time; and/or
- b) Promoting forest health through the removal or control of non-native invasive species, and/or reintroduction of native plants and trees.

Projects that are consistent with or supportive of large-scale conservation initiatives will receive weighted advantage.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In addition to focusing on the above Program Areas, SCF requires projects show a strong commitment to civic engagement and community involvement through the direct involvement of the public. In order for a project to be eligible for SCF funding, it must have significant, legitimate community involvement or civic engagement in the pre-implementation, implementation, and/or post-implementation phases. Typically, this involves the use of volunteers in project implementation, or the implementation of projects selected as an outcome of a formal collaborative-planning process. The community engagement portion of the project does not necessarily have to occur in the portion of the project for which NFF funding is sought, but must be clearly described in the proposal narrative. The standard public involvement component of the NEPA process is insufficient to meet this requirement.

PROJECT TIMING

Once selected for funding, SCF projects have one-year to complete. Foreseeable delays, such as those related to NEPA and other environmental compliance must have already been taken into account before applying. Proposals will not be considered unless all environmental compliance work is complete at time of application. No Exceptions. If project completion cannot confidently occur within the period specified above, contact the NFF well in advance of the deadline to discuss the merits of applying.

ELIGIBILITY

501(c)(3) nonprofits, universities, and Native American tribes are eligible to receive SCF grants. If an organization does not meet this eligibility requirement, it must utilize an eligible fiscal sponsor. If using a fiscal sponsor, be sure to understand the [NFF Policy on Fiscal Sponsorship](#).

Applications will not be considered from:

- Federal agencies;
- Regional, state or local governmental entities;
- For-profit organizations;
- Consultants;
- Educational and research organizations proposing projects that do not show tangible, on-the-ground benefit;
- Organizations seeking general operating or programmatic support;
- Organizations seeking funding for litigation or advocacy;
- Organizations that cannot produce 50% cash or in-kind match of non-federal, project-directed funds.
- Organizations considering submitting a proposal for a project that cannot be completed within one year of award.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Successful projects will support the major strategic initiatives and current priorities of the NFF and the U.S. Forest Service. Priority is given to results-oriented projects that directly address at least one of the Program Areas through on-the-ground conservation projects. Projects must have significant community involvement or civic engagement in the pre-implementation, implementation, or post-implementation phases.

Evaluation is based on the extent to which a proposed project meets the below criteria:

Outdoor Experiences Program Area

- Improves recreation infrastructure, b) engages youth, volunteers, or diverse, underserved or under-engaged populations, or c) employs youth or veteran stewardship crews;
- Was developed with, or shows commitment to, working with diverse or new stakeholders in the pre-implementation, implementation, or post-implementation phase;
- Improves conditions of National Forest System resources in a measurable, on-the-ground manner;
- The extent to which the project generates tangible conservation outcomes and enhances high quality recreational experiences.

Forest Health Program Area

- Maintains or restores forest resiliency through on-the-ground projects;
- Works with stakeholders in the pre-implementation, implementation, or post-implementation phase;
- Results in direct, on-the-ground benefits to National Forest System lands in a measurable, on-the-ground manner;
- Is highly aligned with recognized large-scale conservation initiatives;

All Projects

- Enhances local understanding of natural resource issues, and increases local capacity for participation and engagement to address them;
- Is applicable to other areas through transferable best practices or sharing of lessons learned, and effectively does so;
- The amount requested is appropriate, cost-effective, and commensurate with project needs;
- The private match has been obtained in full;
- Specific project objectives are clearly articulated;
- The project objectives can reasonably be accomplished within one year; and
- The means of measuring project results and accomplishments are well defined and appropriate for the stated project goals.

MONITORING PROJECTS

Monitoring projects will be considered only if they are focused on determining the long-term effectiveness of NFF funded on-the-ground work. Any other baseline, implementation, or effectiveness monitoring is not presently eligible for funding.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

NFF funds awarded through this program are partially federal. These funds

- Cannot be used for general administrative purposes.
- Cannot be used for litigation or advocacy.
- Cannot be directed to the U.S. Forest Service or any other federal entity.
- Cannot be used to meet the matching requirements of any other federal funding program.

TO APPLY

The NFF utilizes an online application system.

1. Visit the NFF [Online Grant System](#) and either:
 - a. Log on with an existing account; or
 - b. Click [Create New Account](#) and follow the steps to create a new account.
Tip: You are required to create a new account if you have not previously applied for an NFF grant through [this](#) online system.
2. Once an account is created and you are logged in, click [Apply](#). You will be prompted for an access code. Enter the access code: [celery](#)
3. Click on [2016 Ski Conservation Fund – Lincoln National Forest](#)
4. Follow the instructions provided on the online form. Please note that if you click [Question List](#) you can download all the application questions for offline review.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

The online application contains the components listed below. Greater detail on the requirements for each component is provided in the online application.

1. Project Overview
2. Project Narrative
 - a. Executive Summary
 - b. Project Need and Objectives
 - c. Methods
 - d. Program Area Alignment
 - e. Community Involvement
 - f. National Forest System Outcomes and Impacts
 - g. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Dissemination
 - h. Environmental Compliance
 - i. Impediments to Implementation
3. Supporting Information
 - a. Organizational Background
 - b. Board of Directors Membership
 - c. Professional Staff Involved in the Project
 - d. Budget Narrative
 - e. NFF Financial Plan Form
 - f. NFF Expanded Budget Form
 - g. Basic Map
 - h. USFS Forest Supervisor's Letter of Support
 - i. Organizational Financials
 - j. NICRA (If Applicable)

FOREST SERVICE LETTERS OF SUPPORT

All applications must include a letter of support from the District Ranger of each National Forest Ranger District included in a proposal. Do not submit any additional letters of support. If not uploaded with the proposal, email letters of support to zmaumenee@nationalforests.org or fax it to (406) 830-3383 within 3 days of the grant deadline.

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- [NFF Indirect Cost Rate Policy](#)
- [NFF Definitions of Funding Sources and Expense Categories](#)
- [NFF Policy on Fiscal Sponsorship](#)

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Please contact the NFF with additional questions regarding SCF or the grant application process. Seeking help will not affect an organization's competitiveness for the program.

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