

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

Project Application Guidance *Updated August 2024*

The following documents must be submitted with the application:

1. **Application Narrative**
2. **Two project maps**
3. **Eligibility verification**

Application narrative, including the project budget, shall not exceed **eight pages**. In addition to the 8-page application, verification of applicant's eligibility and two maps must be submitted with the application. The maps must be of sufficient scale showing the location of the property in relation to roads and other improvements as well as parks, refuges, or other protected lands in the vicinity. Other letters of support may accompany the application but are not required.

The application should clearly describe the land to be acquired with CFP funds. If the proposed project is an expansion of existing conserved lands (including a phase or addition to an existing community forest) or part of a larger land acquisition effort occurring at the site, the application should be specific to the community forest portion of the effort proposed for funding.

Please review section 230.4 of the Final Community Forest Program Rule and Section 4 of the current Request for Applications for additional information regarding application requirements. The current RFA, scoring guidance, map guidance, and other resources are available on the CFP website at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>

If you are interested in applying to this program, please contact your regional program manager:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/contact-us/community-forest-regional-coordinators>

1. Application Narrative Requirements List (8 pages maximum)

This list may be used to assist with the preparation of your CFP application to ensure that all required elements are addressed and easily identified by reviewers.

About the proposed Community Forest:

- Contact information for the project lead (name, title, phone number, email).
- Description of the Property (*Include acreage and county location*)
- Verify that the land proposed for acquisition is eligible and describe how it meets the definition of eligible land (as defined in the Final Community Forest Program Rule).
 - Eligible lands are private forest lands that are threatened by conversion to non-forest use; not held in trust by the United States; provide defined community benefits; and are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested.
- Description of Current Land Use (*Include any existing improvements and plans for utilization or demolition of existing structures*)
- Description of current forest type and vegetative cover
- Description of the type and extent of community benefits, including to disadvantaged communities, in the following categories: economic, environmental, recreational, and educational

- Economic benefits, such as timber and non-timber products resulting from sustainable forest management, recreation, and tourism;
- Environmental benefits, including clean air and water, stormwater management, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources.
- Recreational benefits such as hiking, hunting, and fishing secured through public access.
- Educational benefits including K-12 conservation education programs, vocational forestry/environmental science education programs, replicable model of effective forest stewardship for private landowners, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and connection to other environmental, cultural, or historical education programs or experiential learning opportunities.
- Description of the planned public access *(Include limitations to protect cultural or natural resources, or public health and safety)*
- Description of the relationship of the property within, and its contributions to a landscape conservation initiative as well as any environmental justice initiatives.
- Description of any threats of conversion to non-forest uses.
 - Pressure of conversion to non-forest use may be driven by residential or industrial development, agricultural expansion, installation of wind or solar technology, or other uses that substantially remove or fragment forest cover. Attributes to consider when evaluating threat include adjacent land use characteristics, landowner circumstances, lack of temporary or permanent protections, and attributes of the property that may facilitate development
- Description of applicable zoning and other land use regulations affecting the property

Establishing the Community Forest: *Note: Would a reviewer of this application understand the importance of this project to the community and to disadvantaged parts of the community?*

- Objectives of the Community Forest
- Description of benefiting Community
 - *(Include demographics or vulnerabilities such as health, economic, environmental or climate impacts faced by a community, associated benefits of the proposed Community Forest to the Community, and intentional engagement of diverse, underrepresented groups.)*
- Description and documentation of community engagement in the proposed community forest, including outreach to disadvantaged communities.
 - *(Community engagement may occur at different stages of the project, from initial planning and development of the proposal to long-term management and can include public agencies, local nonprofit organizations, community groups, members of the public, and others. Describe community engagement in the planning of the community forest acquisition to date, including determining access and use of the forest, and anticipated engagement of the community in the long-term management. Identify what has occurred, what is planned, who has been engaged, and strategies used to engage the community.)*
- Identify the people and organizations that support the project.
 - *(Include their specific role in acquiring the land and establishing and managing the community forest)*

Acquiring the Community Forest:

- A proposed project budget not exceeding \$600,000 and technical assistance needs as coordinated with the State Forester or equivalent Tribal government official **(see Appendix A: Budget Table Example)**.
- Long-term management costs and funding source.
- Status of due diligence
 - *(Including signed option or purchase sale agreement, title search, minerals determination, and appraisal)*

- Description and status of cost share (secure, pending, commitment letter, etc.).
- The status of negotiations with participating landowner(s) including purchase options, contracts, and other terms and conditions of sale.
- Proposed timeline for completing the acquisition and establishing the community forest.

2. Project Maps

Two maps displaying the project area must be submitted with the application. The maps must be of sufficient scale showing the location of the property in relation to roads and other improvements as well as parks, refuges, or other protected lands in the vicinity. Each map should fit within a single page (eight and ½ inches by eleven inches in size).

For additional guidance on formatting your project map, a Map Recommendations and Examples document is available on the Community Forest Program website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>.

3. Eligibility Verification

Applicant Eligibility

A written description or documentation verifying that the applicant is an eligible entity (see §230.2 of the final rule) must be submitted with the application. Eligible Entities include local governmental entities, federally recognized Indian Tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations. Include an explanation of the capacity of the organization to acquire the property and plan for long-term management (e.g., similar responsibilities and financial resources).

Federal Lands Verification

A letter of support is required from the Federal land manager if the property is located within the designated boundary of a Federal land management unit. Reach out to your regional CFP program manager prior to submission if you are unsure whether the property is located within the boundary of a Federal land management unit or how to secure the letter.

Appendix A. Budget Table Example

Estimated Project Costs			
Cost Classification	Total Cost	CFP Cost (Federal)	Non-Federal Cost
Land Cost			
Land Surveys			
Appraisals and appraisal reviews			
Legal and closing costs			
Community Forest Plan Development			
Title examination			
Total Project Cost			

Cost Share Budget Table		
Funding Source	Federal	Non-Federal
Community Forest Program		
<i>(Enter Name of Organization)</i>		
<i>(Enter Name of Organization)</i>		
<i>(Enter Name of Organization)</i>		
<i>(Enter Name of Organization)</i>		
Total		
Explanation of Cost-share:		

Technical Assistance Request		
Cost Classification	Total Cost	Total Funds Requesting
Community Forest Plan Development		
Total		
Explanation for Technical Assistance (<i>Technical assistance is for a grant to be issued to the State or as a separate grant to the Tribe if the project is funded. Do not repeat the ask for Community Forest Plan Development in the Project Cost table above</i>):		