**U.S. Forest Service**

### Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

### August 19, 2020

**Background**

Through the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP), the Forest Service is authorized to provide financial assistance grants to Tribal Governments, local governments, and qualified nonprofit entities to acquire and establish community forests that provide continuing and accessible community benefits. CFP is authorized by Section 8003 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-234).

**Program Purposes**

1. Assist communities in acquiring forestland that would provide public recreation, environmental and economic benefits, and forest-based educational programs.
2. To acquire private forest lands that is threatened by conversion to nonforest uses. (Land that has a conservation easement in place is not eligible for the CFP because the CE has removed the threat of conversion).

**Maximum Funding:**

* CFP maximum request must not exceed the amount that is specified in the annual call for projects. FY 2021 it is $600,000

**Eligible Applicants:**

* A local governmental entity, Indian Tribe (including Alaska Native Corporations) or a qualified nonprofit organization that is qualified to acquire and manage land, as defined at in 230.2 of the final rule. (Individuals are not eligible to receive funds through this program). All applicants must have an active Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM).

**What is a Community Forest?**

Forest land that is at least five acres in size, at least 75 percent forested, and can provide community benefits, including any of the following:

1. Economic benefits such as timber and non timber products resulting from sustainable forest management and tourism;
2. Environmental benefits, including clean water, stormwater management, and wildlife habitat;
3. Benefits from forest-based educational programs, including vocational education programs in forestry;
4. Benefits from serving as replicable models of effective forest stewardship for private landowners; and,
5. Recreational benefits, such as hiking, hunting and fishing.

Lands held in trust by the United States on behalf of a Tribal Government as well as allotment lands are not eligible for acquisition under this program.

**Program specifics:**

* Competitive grants are awarded to protect forestland through full fee title acquisition, Conservation easements are not eligible.
* All community forests must have full public access.
* Lands purchased through the CFP cannot be converted to Tribal trust status.
* A 50% non-federal cost share match is required.
* Lands purchased must be 5 acres or greater and be 75% forested
* Allowable costs will include the purchase price and transactional costs associated with the acquisition, such as development of the community forest plan, title examination, land surveys, appraisals and appraisal reviews, and legal and closing costs.
  + CFP authorizes up to 10% of appropriated funds to be used for technical assistance targeting implementation of funded community forests. Request must be in the application

**Application Requirements:**

* + An annual request for proposals (RFP) will be issued. Proposals will be ranked and selected beginning of the fiscal year for funding in that year.
* The application can be no more than eight pages long, plus no more than two maps (eight inches by eleven inches in size).
* The complete list of requirements are in the annual request for projects (RFP) found in the Federal Register <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/08/14/2020-17838/request-for-applications-the-community-forest-and-open-space-conservation-program>

**Proposal Ranking Criteria:**

To the extent practicable, the Forest Service will give priority to:

* 1. Proposals that maximize the delivery of community benefits through a high degree of public participation; and
  2. Proposals with a subject property that makes substantial contribution to a landscape conservation initiative.

Additional criteria that will be used to review and rank proposals are:

* 1. Type and extent of community benefits provided;
  2. Extent and nature of community engagement in the establishment and long-term management of the community forest;
  3. Amount of cost share leveraged;
  4. Extent to which the community forest contributes to a landscape conservation initiative;
  5. Extent of due diligence completed on the project, including cost share committed and status of appraisal;
  6. Likelihood that, unprotected, the property would be converted to non-forest uses;
  7. Costs to the Federal government; and
  8. Additional considerations as may be outlined in the RFP.

**Submission Process:**

All applications, either hardcopy or electronic, must be received by the State Foresters or Tribal governments by January 11, 2021. State Foresters or Tribal government officials must forward applications to the Forest Service Region by February 8, 2021. Specific Dates are posted in the RFP.

**Guidelines for State Foresters or Tribal governments:**

* Send out RFP to state networks
* State Forester; if requested, provide technical assistance to the applicant in the development of the Community Plan
* Identify what technical assistance they may render in support of implementing the proposed Community Forest project and an estimate of needed financial assistance.
* Ensure that the 10% technical assistance needed is included in the application
* Provide a review of each application to help the FS determine that the applicant is an eligible entity, that the land is eligible, and whether the project contributes to a landscape conservation initiative**.**
* Confirm that the proposed project has not been submitted for funding consideration under the Forest Legacy Program**.**
* Forward information request or questions about the program to the Forest Service
* Submit eligible applications to the Forest Service

**Guidelines for Regional Forest Service:**

* Send out RFP to the state and identified interests
* Provide information about the program and answer any request for information
* Provide a review of each application to determine that the applicant is an eligible entity, that the land is eligible, and that application requirements are meet.
* Submit eligible applications to the Forest Service, Washington Office

For more information, please see documents posted at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/cfp.shtml>