



**COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND
LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
2015/2016 Request for Proposals
National Forests in California**

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION DEADLINE
Thursday, November 19, 2015 at 10:59 pm PST

INFORMATIONAL WEBINAR
Wednesday, October 14, 2015 at 9:00 am PDT
[\[Register Here\]](#)

ATTENTION

This document contains important information about program requirements and the application process. The 2015/2016 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.

OVERVIEW

A joint program between the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (USFS) and the National Forest Foundation (NFF), the organizations have partnered to support collaborative natural resource management through an all-lands approach. The organizations believe that it is important to support and build the capacity of collaborative efforts that further enhance natural resource and watershed restoration outcomes while also helping to build sustainable economic capacities in local communities.

The Community Capacity and Land Stewardship (CCLS) grant program is offered to support local efforts that work toward achieving watershed and landscape restoration objectives. Grants awarded must clearly benefit forest and grassland health, wildlife, fish and rare plant habitat, USFS leadership intent on ecological restoration related to sustainable recreation¹, or collaborative stewardship of National Forest System and adjoining private lands. At present, the entirety of program funding consists of USFS federal funds.

The CCLS program provides grants to enable community-based organizations and collaborative groups to build their capacity to facilitate and/or implement watershed or landscape-level restoration. Additionally, the program strives to build capacity to help meet other objectives associated with the creation of stable, living-wage jobs that contribute to the economic sustainability of communities. Grants will be awarded for a period of eighteen months. Organizations applying

¹ Please review the USFS Pacific Southwest Region [Leadership Intent on Ecological Restoration](#) for more information on sustainable recreation in this context.

for funding through the program will be considered based upon the criteria below. While applicants are encouraged to show leveraged contributions on their project financial plan, no match is required.

GOALS

The goals of the program are to ensure community-based organizations and collaborative groups have the capacity and resources to convene, plan, and monitor watershed restoration and landscape scale restoration projects on National Forest lands. Work may take place outside of National Forest lands if there is a clear, demonstrated benefit to National Forest lands.

As such, this program seeks to fund efforts that measurably contribute to the following outcomes:

Outcome 1: Community-based and collaborative organizations within California are successful in coming to agreement on the design and implementation of watershed and/or landscape scale restoration projects.

Outcome 2: Community-based organizations and collaborative groups have developed plans for facilitating job creation and retention and business development in their region.

Applicants must explain how their proposal will support the above two primary outcomes and, if successful, provide measurable results at the end of the grant period.

FUNDING TRACKS

For California, the CCLS program has two distinct funding tracks, one focused on newer organizations in the early stages of development, and one focused on more established organizations looking to increase their capacity. The tracks have different proposal requirements and different maximum grant amounts. Organizations can only apply for one of the two tracks.

Track 1

This funding track is reserved for lower capacity organizations in the early stages of organizational development. These grants are 18 months in length and limited to a maximum of \$12,000. Typically, applicant organizations will have the following characteristics:

- Just recently established or in their first two years of existence.
- Limited formal governance structure.
- Leadership tends to be driven by visionary and entrepreneurial Board members and/or volunteers; typically, there is no paid Executive Director.
- Financing is a very limited to nonexistent. Some startup funding may be secured for more developed groups, but organization has no formal accounting systems in place; contributions are primarily in-kind.

Track 2

This funding track is reserved for medium capacity organizations in the middle stages of organizational development. These grants are 18 months in length and limited to a maximum of \$24,000. Typically, applicant organizations will have the following characteristics:

- Two or more years old.
- Developed governance structure with engaged Board of Directors; Board may be reactive or strategic.
- Paid Executive Director and possibly program managers.

- Financing is more secured; there may be a few to many established funder relationships, and effective use of in-kind contributions.

Which Track should I apply for?

It is highly recommended that CCLS applicants review [The Five Life Stages of Nonprofit Organizations](#) with their Board of Directors. Applicants to Track 1 will tend to be in the *Getting Started* stage or *Stage One* for each of the listed qualities. Applicants to Track 2 will tend to be in *Stage Two* or *Stage Three* for each of the listed qualities. Please contact the NFF if you have questions about which track best fits your organization.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Evaluation will be based on answers to the narrative questions provided below under the proposal components and the extent to which the organization's work will contribute to the outcomes listed above. Proposals will specifically be ranked according to the extent that applicants fit the following criteria:

- Community-based-organization or a collaborative group.
- Organization facilitates the completion of restoration actions and treatments or help remove barriers to enhanced landscape or watershed restoration.
- Increased capacity provided through this grant is likely to result in a clear benefit to National Forests and Grasslands immediately or over time.
- Valuable ecological, economic, and social benefits are likely to result from the scope of work.
- Organization has a broad, diverse base of support.
- Award funds are critical for the success of the organization and the identified program of work.
- The scope of work provides ancillary benefits or outcomes of job creation or business development.
- Activities will be completed within 18 months of award.
- Budget is reasonable given the anticipated outcomes.

USE OF FUNDS

Approved projects must provide explicit benefits to forest and grassland health, wildlife, fish and rare plant habitat, and USFS Pacific Southwest Region leadership intent on ecological restoration related to sustainable recreation, or collaborative stewardship of National Forest System and adjoining private lands. Examples of projects include:

- Community outreach that helps support a collaborative group and enables them to be more effective on the ground;
- Workshops and training related to facilitation, contracting, and other topics that will assist groups in building their capacity to meet the program goals;
- Dissemination of best practices and tools to assist community-based nonprofit organizations and collaborative groups in project development, implementation, and monitoring;
- Organizational and staff support, including facilitation, technical assistance, networking and peer to peer exchanges and evaluations leading to shared learning;
- Travel related to collaborative group activities; and
- Development of organizational action or project strategic plans, or other similar documents as a result of or necessary for collaborative processes.

Program funding is provided by the USFS Pacific Southwest Region under the [Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Agreement Authority](#), sometimes known as the *Wyden Amendment*. As such, all awarded grants must support the protection, restoration, or enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resources on public or private land, or reduce the risk of natural disaster that upon these resources when public safety is threatened. CCLS funding is not intended for on-the-ground implementation. These funds may not be directed to, or used to fund the personnel or resources of any federal entity. Further, funding from grants may not be used to lobby or influence any federal, state, or local legislative body or any federal, state, or local legislative proposal.

WHO SHOULD APPLY

The NFF will accept applications from community-based nonprofit organizations and collaborative groups according to the definitions below. Tribal entities that meet the intended outcomes of this program are also fully eligible for funding. Contact the NFF if you have questions about a group's eligibility.

Community-based nonprofit organizations are entities that have a nonprofit tax-exempt status (generally 501(c)(3)), a board of directors, staff, and programs, although some community-based organizations run on volunteers or with very few staff members. These organizations implement projects in the community on their own, through collaborative efforts, or in partnership with other entities, including businesses and county, state, and federal agencies. If the organization does not have 501(c)(3) status, it must utilize a fiscal sponsor with that status.

Collaborative groups 1) are comprised of diverse interests that may represent local, regional, national, and other interests; 2) agree to work together to identify common ground; and 3) agree to advance solutions based on that common ground. Many collaborative groups work out agreements through project development, design, implementation, and monitoring; others simply develop and advance recommendations; and others may do a hybrid of both. If a collaborative group does not have 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, it must utilize a fiscal sponsor with that status.

WHO SHOULD NOT APPLY?

Applications will not be considered from:

- Federal agencies;
- Regional, state or local governmental entities;
- For-profit organizations;
- Consultants;
- Organizations seeking funding for work inconsistent with the Wyden Amendment;
- Organizations seeking funding for litigation or advocacy;
- Organizations seeking funding for the direct implementation of on-the-ground projects;
- Organizations considering submitting a work plan for a project that cannot be completed within 18-months of award.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

The NFF has developed the Conservation Connect Program to provide tools needed for engaging in collaborative, community-based stewardship on national forests and grasslands. Conservation Connect is designed according to the NFF's peer-learning philosophy of creating opportunities for practitioners to share their successes and challenges and to learn from the experiences of others. Conservation Connect hosts peer-learning teleconferences and offers mentoring, access to coaches, a resource library with best practices and tools, and a variety of information on emerging topics of interest. For more information, please visit [Conservation Connect's website](#).

The Forest Service and the NFF have also jointly developed the online Partnership Resource Center, an excellent resource for community groups that focus on natural resource management issues. For more information, please visit the [Partnership Resource Center website](#).

Resources for grant seekers offering tips and best practices for writing successful proposals are widely available on the internet. The NFF has also compiled a list of [some good starting places](#).

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

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

1. Abstract
2. Project Narrative
 - a. Context
 - b. Need
 - c. Goals
 - d. Activities
 - e. Outcomes
 - f. Grant History
3. Program Documents
 - a. Timeline
 - b. List of Participants
 - c. Budget Narrative
 - d. NFF Financial Plan form
 - e. US Forest Service Forest Supervisor's letter of support
4. Organizational Financials

TO APPLY

The NFF utilizes an online application system.

1. Visit NFF's [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 [pepper](#)
3. Click on [2015/2016 Community Capacity and Land Stewardship – California](#)
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.

FOREST SERVICE LETTERS OF SUPPORT

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

INFORMATIONAL WEBINAR

An informational webinar will be held on Wednesday, **October 14, 2015 at 9:00 am PDT**. You must [register for the webinar](#) in advance.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

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

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION

The National Forest Foundation, 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.