



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Outreach of Interest (OOI) INSTRUCTIONS

Braiding Together Reforestation, Indigenous Partnerships, and Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC): A Path Towards Resilient Forests and Communities

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Award Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service

Announcement Opportunity Title: Braiding Together Reforestation, Indigenous Partnerships, and Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC): A Path Towards Resilient Forests and Communities

Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-2023-24-40-WFD

Assistance Listing Number: 10.699 Partnership Agreement Outreach

Funding Instrument Type: Other (None)

Key Points

- OOI response deadline: **November 17, 2023; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)**.
- Forest Service will send an auto-response upon receipt of your package submission.
- Forest Service will send each applicant a follow-up message within one month of package receipt.
- Forest Service will hold a live informational webinar: **October 10, 2023 at 12:00 EST**. Forest Service staff will outline OOI details and host a Question & Answer session for potential applicants. Registration: [Webinar registration | Microsoft Teams](#).
- The webinar will be recorded for subsequent viewing. A link to the recording will be posted in grants.gov under opportunity number: USDA-FS-2023-24-40-WFD, after **October 10, 2023**.
- Program information: [Indian Youth Service Corps | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#).
- Contact us: accessga@usda.gov.

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I. Outreach of Interest Overview

A. Objective

This Outreach of Interest (OOI) functions as an outreach mechanism to cultivate relationships and create partnerships with Federally recognized Indian Tribes, Tribal Organizations, Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. This OOI is intended to solicit responses to explore future projects meeting the unique needs and interests of Indigenous communities through partnership agreements with USDA Forest Service.

USDA Forest Service is looking to address reforestation needs and empower the agency's implementation of the Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) program. This initiative aims to foster co-stewardship between USDA Forest Service, Indigenous communities, and IYSC program, with a shared commitment to environmental conservation and reforestation on Forest Service lands. New partnerships will help to address reforestation needs through projects that support reforestation or stand-up improvement activities on lands managed by USDA Forest Service. The agency seeks to actively involve IYSC program in reforestation efforts.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you your ideas/projects/programs and potential partnership opportunities. USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering a strong, collaborative partnership that benefits the environment, tribes and/or ANCs, Indigenous communities, and IYSC program. These collaborations are vital for understanding reforestation needs, establishing shared priorities, expanding capacity, and ensuring the growth of resilient and healthy forests. By working together, all stakeholders can maximize the impact of reforestation efforts on national forests.

USDA Forest Service seeks to actively involve IYSC programs in reforestation efforts by providing support and guidance to IYSC program participants, sharing successful working models, and assisting with agreements that include wrap-around services (removing barriers to Indigenous youth engagement).

B. Funding

This OOI does not commit funding. This outreach is to gauge your interest in partnerships, and we are excited to hear from you.

II. Agency Overview

A. Background

USDA Forest Service is an agency within U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) responsible for managing and protecting the nation's forests and grasslands. As part of its mission, USDA Forest Service is actively working to carry forth its new National Reforestation Strategy to support implementation of the Repairing Existing Public Lands by Adding Necessary Trees (REPLANT) Act 2021 and address the reforestation backlog and reforestation needs on Forest Service lands that meet the requirements that are laid out in the REPLANT act.

B. Tribal Engagement

To fully address reforestation needs, USDA Forest Service recognizes the importance of working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and incorporating their knowledge, values, and perspectives into its land management practices. By strengthening and establishing partnerships with Tribal governments, Indigenous communities and Tribal organizations, USDA Forest Service

aims to manage national forests and grasslands in a manner that aligns with the ecological, cultural, and spiritual values of forests and grasslands to Indigenous communities. These partnerships enable the agency to make informed decisions that respect and promote Tribal sovereignty, uphold trust and treaty obligations, and promote co-stewardship of forest resources. Through this collaborative approach, USDA Forest Service strives to ensure the sustainable management and conservation of our forests while honoring the rich heritage and contributions of Indigenous communities.

USDA Forest Service engagement with Tribes goes beyond consultation and extends to meaningful engagement and inclusion in decision-making processes and management activities. Coordination and collaboration together lead to information exchange, mutual understanding, informed decision-making, and mutual benefit. Recognizing the unique relationship that Tribal Nations have with the land, USDA Forest Service actively seeks to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into its policies, plans, and projects. This approach not only strengthens the agency's understanding of the ecological and cultural values associated with forests but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility and stewardship. By working hand in hand with Tribal Nations, USDA Forest Service aims to promote sustainable land management practices that benefit both the environment and the well-being of Indigenous communities.

III. Initiative Overview and OOI Intent

A. Reforestation Backlog

On July 25, 2022, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a strategy to address a reforestation backlog of nearly four million acres on national forests. This ambitious plan is supported by the resources made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law REPLANT Act, enabling USDA Forest Service to increase capacity and efforts to eliminate reforestation backlog and establish necessary infrastructure, including nurseries, to meet future reforestation needs.

Areas of Forest Service managed lands with verified reforestation needs can be viewed in the [National Reforestation Needs Partner Web Map](#). The map depicts the scale, in acres, of reforestation needs on National Forest Ranger Districts. Reforestation needs may involve a range of activities including: seed and cone collection or processing, tree nursery services, reforestation needs assessment, site preparation, planting, seeding, surveys for certification of natural regeneration or seedling survival, monitoring, and more.

USDA Forest Service seeks to actively involve Tribes to support implementation of the National Reforestation Strategy, to foster a deeper connection between Indigenous communities and land management decisions. Recognizing the Indigenous knowledge held by Tribes, USDA Forest Service aims to incorporate Indigenous knowledge in the selection and cultivation of culturally significant tree species during reforestation efforts to promote biodiversity and ecosystem resilience while also respecting the spiritual and cultural significance of these plants to Indigenous communities. By embracing a collaborative approach that values the wisdom of Tribes and their relationship with the natural world, the agency hopes the National Reforestation Strategy will be a powerful tool for both environmental restoration and cultural revitalization.

Resources:

B. Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: USDA Forest Service Action Plan

Recently, USDA Forest Service implemented the Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: A USDA Forest Service Action Plan (Tribal Action Plan), providing agency guidance and assistance to fulfill the Federal trust responsibility, honor treaty obligations, and support Tribal self-determination. It acknowledges the crucial role of Tribal governments in developing land management strategies and the need to integrate Tribal perspectives and Indigenous knowledge into its approach. The plan provides guidance to advance Tribal consultation and strengthen Nation-to-Nation relationships through a co-stewardship model, and specifically speaks to Indian Youth Service Corp (IYSC) as an agency priority. By working hand in hand with Tribal Nations, USDA Forest Service aims to promote sustainable land management practices to benefit both the environment and well-being of Indigenous communities.

As part of the effort to build stronger relationships with Tribes, USDA Forest Service published an action plan focusing on advancing Tribal consultation and strengthening Nation-to-Nation relationships with Tribes. This plan acknowledges the crucial role of Tribal governments in decision-making processes for USDA Forest Service-managed lands and waters. It provides agency guidance and assistance to fulfill the Federal trust responsibility, honor treaty obligations, and support Tribal self-determination. It establishes a framework to: 1) Strengthen Relationships Between Indian Tribes and the USDA Forest Service; 2) Fulfill Trust and Treaty Obligations; 3) Enhance Co-Stewardship of the Nation's Forests.

Recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge, values, and perspectives, USDA Forest Service is seeking new and existing opportunities to engage with Tribes on reforestation efforts. By integrating Tribal perspectives and Indigenous knowledge into the implementation of USDA Forest Service Reforestation Strategy, the agency aims to enhance its approach to reforestation management.

Resources:

[Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships: A USDA Forest Service Action Plan](#)

C. Indian Youth Service Corp (IYSC)

In 2019 Congress passed the Dingell Act, which established the Indian Youth Services Corps (IYSC) to enhance connections between land management and engagement with Indigenous youth. The IYSC aims to create career and educational opportunities for Indigenous youth while fostering their cultural connections to nature through conservation projects on Tribal and public land. By engaging Indigenous youth in land stewardship and conservation, the IYSC not only contributes to reforestation efforts but also incorporates traditional knowledge and values into future conservation initiatives.

Through joint initiatives, such as the Tribal Action Plan and Tribal partnerships like the Indian Youth Service Corps reforestation efforts, USDA Forest Service is committed to building stronger

relationships, advancing Tribal sovereignty, and ensuring the voices and contributions of Tribes are valued and respected in the management of our nation's forests and grasslands. USDA Forest Service National Reforestation Strategy, the newly implemented Tribal Action Plan, and the Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) are intricately braided together to complement each other to create a comprehensive approach to forest restoration and community engagement.

To further strengthen the connection between reforestation efforts and involvement of Indigenous communities, the Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) has been established as part of the Biden administration's commitment to building a 21st-century version of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The IYSC aims to create job opportunities for Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian youth while fostering their cultural connections to nature through conservation projects on Tribal and public land. By engaging Indigenous youth in land stewardship and conservation, the IYSC not only contributes to reforestation efforts, but also incorporates Indigenous knowledge and Tribal values into future conservation initiatives. With funding and support from the Interior Department, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation, USDA Forest Service, and National Park Foundation, Indian Youth Service Corps seeks to engage Indigenous youth in land stewardship and conservation, incorporating traditional knowledge into future conservation efforts.

Resources:

[BIA Indian Youth Services Corps](#)

[Forest Service Indian Youth Service Corps](#)

D. Summary

National Reforestation Strategy, Tribal Action Plan, and the Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) are braided together through their shared goal of addressing the urgent need for reforestation, incorporating Indigenous knowledge and Tribal perspectives, fostering sustainable land management practices and the power of Indigenous youth engagement. By recognizing the importance of collaboration, trust, and the involvement of Indigenous communities, these initiatives aim to restore and protect our forests, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and create more resilient future forests for our natural and cultural resources and communities.

IV. How to Respond

A. Eligible Responders

Eligible responders include Federally recognized Indian Tribes or Alaska Native Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

Please see **Figure 1: [Braiding Together Decision Tree](#)** to determining if this OOI interests you.

B. Content and Grants.gov Submission

- Submit SF 424 and SF424A through grants.gov. Submission should be in .pdf or .doc format. **Section VI: [Forms](#)** section of this document, include forms for your use. For other feedback, use the “attachments” form.
- Respond by: **November 17, 2023; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST).**
- Grants.gov submission is strongly preferred. A grants.gov applicant account is required for submitting interest through grants.gov. [Home | GRANTS.GOV](#). See Grants.gov

organization registration page for registration guidance.

Note: After registering, please choose “subscribe” in grants.gov. By subscribing to OOI Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-2023-24-40-WFD you will be notified of any updates and notifications.

Grants.gov provides customer support 24/7 via toll-free number **1-800-518-4726** and email at support@grants.gov. In addition, grants.gov has video tutorials available.

- Once registered in Grants.gov search for OOI Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-2023-24-40-WFD United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

Note: System for Award Management (SAM) registration is required to submit any application across the federal government through grants.gov. SAM registration is a lengthy process. If you are not currently registered in SAM, we strongly recommend registration.

- No hardcopy applications will be accepted.
- For questions related to OOI opportunity: USDA-FS-2023-24-40-WFD, please contact USDA Forest Service: accessga@usda.gov.

C. System for Award Management (SAM) registration SAM.gov | Home

SAM.gov registration is required for submitting responses in grants.gov. SAM.gov registration is free. The approval process for a new or renewal SAM registration can take several months. If you are awaiting SAM registration and cannot submit through grants.gov, please send your application to: accessga@usda.gov.

VI. OOI Interest

USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering strong, collaborative partnerships benefitting the environment, Tribal communities, and IYSC program. These collaborations are vital for understanding reforestation needs, establishing shared priorities, expanding capacity, and ensuring the growth of resilient and healthy forests. By working together, we all can maximize the impact of reforestation efforts on national forests.

In addition to reforestation, USDA Forest Service is interested in exploring further opportunities for collaboration with Tribal communities. These potential areas of interest encompass Tribal forestry, watershed management, fire management, tourism recreation, trails, first foods/culturally significant plants, sacred site protection/access and more.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you the ideas/projects/program in your submittal and identify potential for future partnerships aligned with the USDA Forest Service Mission.

Submission: For submission procedures, please see Section V: [How to Respond](#).

A. Forms

If you would like to provide interest or feedback, you can respond using the forms located within the Grants.gov website. In addition, direct links are provided below.

- [SF-424](#): Application for Federal Assistance (OMB 4040-0004).
- [SF-424A](#): Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (OMB 4040-0006)

This is not a grant announcement. It is a non-funded, non-competitive announcement to gauge applicants' interest in the Forest Service program of work. Responding to this OOI will not give an advantage to any organization or individual for any possible subsequent award action. Not responding to this OOI does not preclude participation in any future funding opportunity announcement, if any is issued.

VII. Response Notice Timeline

- A. The agency will send an auto-response when response submissions have been received.
- B. The agency will send a personalized follow-up message within one month of receiving responses to this OOI.