Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Outreach of Interest (OOI) Announcement
INSTRUCTIONS

Partnership to Reach and Engage Underrepresented Audiences in a "Fit-for-Purpose" Outdoor Recreation Effort

SUMMARY INFORMATION

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Partnership to Reach and Engage Underrepresented Audiences in a "Fit-for-Purpose" Outdoor Recreation Effort

Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-24-REC-02

Assistance Listing Number: 10.699 Partnership Agreement Outreach

Funding Instrument Type: Other

Key Points

- OOI response deadline: **February 7, 2025; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)**.
- USDA Forest Service will send an auto-response upon receipt of your application submission.
- USDA Forest Service will send each applicant a follow-up message within one month of application receipt.
- Program information: Recreation| USDA Forest Service (usda.gov).
- Contact us: opega@usda.gov.

✓ **Please ensure that when you complete your forms for this proposal (SF-424, Narrative Statement…etc.) that you "Save As" and give your file a new name. DO NOT "Print to PDF". Once you have saved your forms under a new name, you will upload those forms into the attachment document.**

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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 connect with potential partners. This OOI is intended to solicit responses to explore future projects meeting the needs and interests of potential partners through partnership agreements within legislative authority with USDA Forest Service.

This OOI aims to reach partners and explore partnerships with entities previously overlooked or underrepresented in visitor and recreation program implementation and design on national forest lands. We are looking to our partners to help us in our development process, locally, regionally, and nationally to reach visitor and outdoor recreation audiences not currently representative more effectively of our national demographics. This can include helping the agency at the inception of project (tangible and intangible) design identify justice-oriented funding criteria, objective evaluation, and robust community engagement for recreation and visitor related efforts.

B. Funding

This OOI is non-funded and non-competitive. The intent of this OOI is to gauge your interest, feedback and/or your proposed projects ideas and concepts.

II. Agency Overview

A. Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service delivers world-class science, technology, and land management to sustain the Nation's forests and grasslands in collaboration with communities and our partners. USDA Forest Service manages 193 million acres of land, including 154 national forests, 20 national grasslands, 1 national tallgrass prairie, 7 research stations, and 81 experimental forests and ranges, as well as other special areas, in support of its' mission "to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

As the lead federal agency in natural resource conservation, USDA Forest Service provides leadership in the protection, management, and use of the nation's forest, rangeland, and aquatic ecosystems. Through implementation of land and resource management plans, the agency ensures sustainable ecosystems by restoring and maintaining species diversity and ecological productivity that helps provide recreation, water, timber, minerals, fish, wildlife, wilderness, and aesthetic values for current and future generations of people. For FY 2024, the goals of USDA Forest Service are to: 1) Sustain our Nation's Forests and Grasslands Working Environment; 2) Deliver Benefits to the Public; 3) Apply Knowledge Globally; 4) Excel as a High-Performing Agency. The Forest Service's National Priorities are: 1) Providing Economic Relief; 2) Tackling Climate Change; 3) Advancing Racial Equity; 4) Improving Our Workforce and Work Environment and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." As a values-based, purpose driven and relationship-focused organization, USDA Forest Service emphasizes working in collaboration with communities and our partners; providing access to resources and experiences that promote economic, ecological, and social vitality; connecting people to the land and one another; and delivering world-class science, technology, and land management. USDA Forest Service believes in service — to each other and the planet;

the interdependency of people and nature; that conservation means we protect, preserve, and restore public lands for the people and enjoyment; that diversity is key—people and cultures, experiences, and ecosystems; and safety underpins everything we do.

B. Partnership Agreements with the USDA Forest Service

Partnership agreements are entered into in support of USDA Forest Service mission. The USDA Forest Service may approach or be approached by a potential partner to enter into a partnership agreement that results in a joint accomplishment of work benefiting both organizations. The principal purpose of partner agreements is the creation of partnerships in support of projects of mutual interest and mutual benefit to each party. Mutual interest exists when both parties benefit in the same qualitative way from the objectives of the agreement. If one party independently has an interest in a project that is shared by the other party, and both parties pool resources to obtain the result of the project, mutual interest exists. Most of FS authorities requires a mutual interest agreement.

Partnership agreements are considered non-assistance agreements and are not considered grants or cooperative agreements as those terms are used in the Federal Grants and Cooperative Agreements, 31U.S.C. 6301 et seq. USDA Forest Service engages partnership work through a range of legislative authorities (see Section IV, Legislative Authorities).

Award Procedures

The Forest Service has general authority to negotiate and enter into different types of partnership arrangements, including but not limited to Stand-Alone Agreements, or Master Agreements with tiered Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs) or a combination thereof. Partnership agreements and their supporting documentation are both negotiated and drafted in collaboration with prospective partners prior to entering into a funding arrangement. Discussions cover at a minimum, the appropriate statutory authority; a description of the project, including methodology and technical specifications; contributions and the responsibilities of the parties; financial plan; the period of performance; monitoring and accomplishments reporting. Regardless of who initiates discussions, all elements of a project are subject to negotiation. Any party may terminate the agreement at any time.
Except for provisions necessary for legal compliance, all elements of a partnership agreement are subject to negotiation and modification. Both parties are expected to negotiate, resolve, and document differences in cost and/or proposed work in writing. None of the parties should perform work outside the scope of the existing instrument or in excess of the funding prior to the execution of a formal modification.

Project Length

Awards under this announcement are typically 1 to 5 years in length. Projects of greater complexity may be awarded for a longer period, not to exceed 5 years.

Cost Share Match Requirements and Match Reductions or Waivers

For partnership agreements, the partner's contribution should not be less than 20 percent of the total project cost, unless allowable under a reduction or waiver (see below). The matching amount should be consistent and commensurate with the project scope, size, and/or benefits received. The partner may satisfy the matching requirement by providing cash, real or personal property, services, and/or in-kind contributions, such as volunteer labor. Cash and third-party in-

kind matches must consist of eligible costs.

Cash match is from the applicant's budget, such as personnel salary, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies, or cash provided by another party. Source of cash match cannot be derived from another Federal award. Cash donated or provided to a cooperator, specifically for that project is an in-kind contribution.

In-Kind match is a non-cash contribution of value. A non-Federal entity's in-kind match must meet the following criteria:

- Are verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records;
- Are not included as contributions for any other Federal award;
- Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives;
- Are not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost-sharing requirements of other Federal programs;
- Are provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and
- Conform to the Forest Service handbook (FSH1509.11), manual (1580) and/or other applicable federal laws and regulations.

Supplemental Guidance for Match Waivers and Match Reduction: The Forest Service may reduce or waive the minimum 20 percent cooperator match requirement for a project that serves an underserved/disadvantaged community or is a tribal sovereign.

Indirect Cost

Indirect costs are approved for reimbursement or as a cost-share requirement and have an effective period applicable to the term of master and supplemental agreements. Expenses that are necessary for the operation of an organization, but not specifically identified with or traceable to a specific program or output, that is, not a direct cost but rather a cost distributed across many programs or outputs. Often referred to as "overhead," or in the Forest Service as "burden," indirect costs are incurred as part of general management and administrative support of an organization, and may include office and personnel expenses, computers, and utilities.

III. Initiative Overview and OOI Intent

A. Program Overview

Americans are finding connections to national forests and grasslands in greater numbers than ever before. Visitation to national forests and grasslands in 2020 surged to a record-breaking 168 million visits, more visitors than at any other time in the history of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USDA Forest Service 2021). During the pandemic, visitors came to safely recreate, be restored, and create new memories. That surge also brought clarity to the USDA Forest Service as to where we need to improve delivery of affordable, safe access to outdoor recreation. We also know that not all visitors feel welcome or connected to the great outdoors. Our national forests and grasslands belong to all Americans, and our goal is to show that national forests and grasslands are open to anyone from any background or ability.

Outdoor recreation on national forests and grasslands continues to be one of our best opportunities to make connections, build relationships, and foster long-term care and stewardship of our natural resources. Our public lands can also be a source of healing, inspiration,

and purpose to bridge some of the divides and challenges our country has faced over the past few years.

B. Statement of Work

The purpose of partnerships is to foster relationships with USDA Forest Service and those in underrepresented communities, underacknowledged abilities, and those with diverse backgrounds who have previously not been reflected or adequately represented in the demographic make-up of the visiting public on national forest lands. We know that not all visitors feel welcome or connected to the great outdoors. Projects need to be a "shared stewardship" approach with mutual benefits to the partner and USDA Forest Service units and be proposed and implemented in coordination and cooperation from local communities. USDA Forest Service, through collaboration, would have the ultimate say as to where a project would be implemented and the standards that would need to be met. USDA Forest Service would provide project oversight and facilitate coordination with other relevant partners and to other program areas as needed. Although one partner may not fully encompass or have experience in all areas outlined below, partners should consider the unique qualities they would bring to a partnership that may have been previously overlooked. We are looking for partner(s) who recognize the need for and can facilitate an equitable outdoor environment, bringing about change from the inside-out.

Deliverables may include but are not limited to:

- Providing relevant and useable resources for inclusion in the outdoors, such as toolkits, educational resources, audio and video resources, and linguistic translations.
- Outdoor recreation-related programming, events, and leadership development initiatives that benefit racial equity and support for underserved communities.
- Providing subject matter experts (SME) (otherwise known as diverse outdoor enthusiasts) in inclusive space design, barriers to access, and strategies to expand welcoming and belonging for users who have traditionally been excluded or underrepresented.
- Provide outdoor equipment and entry level experiences for underrepresented individuals.
- Develop or utilize known marketing-driven efforts to increase diversity in local outdoor opportunities by making it easier and more interesting to participate in outdoor activities.
- Identify local opportunities to deliver authentic connections between agency staff and underrepresented individuals and organizations.
- Work with Indigenous groups, historians, and diverse local entities to tell previously untold stories and histories of public lands and highlight contributions made by Indigenous and people of color in cultivating, protecting, and promoting the outdoors.
- Work with local, regional, and national forests and grasslands to build goodwill with diverse groups by considering adjustments and changes to rules that will better serve the interests of those visitors.
- Help local, regional, and national forest recreation staff recruit and retain diverse talent through more inclusive job advertising, marketing campaigns, and retention tools such as recreation-related trainings and mentoring guidelines.
- Be a thought partner and convenor on initiatives and approaches that could provide low-cost transport options to help low-income families get to national forests and

grasslands.

- Develop opportunities to foster up and coming photojournalism, marketing, and other arts students to develop signage and ads for open spaces that include diverse images and messages that these spaces and activities are inclusive.
- Develop innovative and comprehensive courses that will help forest and grassland staff advance the knowledge and skills they need to create lasting change in better reflecting the diversity of the US population in all aspects of national forest recreation and related work.

Summary

This OOI aims to reach partners and explore partnerships with entities previously overlooked or underrepresented in visitor and recreation program implementation and design on national forest lands. We are looking to our partners to help us in our development process, locally, regionally, and nationally to reach visitor and outdoor recreation audiences not currently representative more effectively of our national demographics. This can include helping the agency at the inception of project (tangible and intangible) design identify justice-oriented funding criteria, objective evaluation, and robust community engagement for recreation and visitor related efforts. This OOI does not commit funding. This outreach is to gauge your interest in partnerships in the areas described in Part III: Initiative Overview and OOI Intent section of this document.

IV. Legislative Authorities

USDA Forest Service engages partnership work through a range of Legislative Authorities.

- Cooperative Funds and Deposits Act of 1978, Public Law 94-148 as amended. 16 USC 565a-1
- Wyden Amendment (Public Law 105-277, Section 323 as amended by Public Law 109-54, Section 434, and permanently authorized by Public Law 111-11, Section 3001)
- Interior and Related Appropriations Act of 1992, Public Law 102-154
- Public Land Corps Healthy Forests Restoration Act, Public Law 109-154, 16 U.S.C. 1701 638 Tribal Forestry Protection Act, Title 2018 Farm Bill P.L. 115-334, Section 8703, 25 U.S.C. 3115.
- Stewardship End Result Contracting, Public Law 108-148 §604. 16 USC 6591c.
- Good Neighbor Authority; Agricultural Act of 2014, Pub. L. 113-79, section 8206 as amended, 16 USC 2113a
- Agriculture Conservation Experienced Service (ACES) Program, 2014 Farm Bill, Public Law 113-79, Section 8302
- Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986, Public Law 96-480, 15 U.S.C. 3710a
- National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, Public Law 95-113, 7 US Code 3318 and 3319a

V. How to Respond

A. Eligible Responders

Eligible applicants include for profit; non-profits; institutions of higher education; federal, state, local, and Native American tribal governments; foreign governments and organizations and special purpose districts (public utility districts, fire districts, conservation districts, school districts, and ports).

B. Content and Grants.gov Submission

- Submit SF 424, Narrative Statement form, and the attachment form through grants.gov or the opega@usda.gov Inbox. Submissions should be in .pdf or .doc format. **Section VI: Forms** section of this document includes forms for your use. For other feedback, use the grants.gov "attachments" form.
- Respond by: **February 7, 2025; 10:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)**.
- Grants.gov submission is strongly **preferred**. A grants.gov applicant account is required for submitting responses 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-R13-2024-24-24-REC-02 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-R13-2024-24-24-REC-02 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 prerequisite to receiving any federal funding. SAM registration is a lengthy process. If you are not currently registered in SAM, we strongly recommend registration.
- For questions related to OOI opportunity: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-24-REC-02, please contact USDA Forest Service: opega@usda.gov.

C. System for Award Management (SAM) Registration

SAM.gov registration is required for submitting responses in SAM.gov (SAM.gov | Home), 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: opega@usda.gov.

VI. OOI Announcement

USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering strong, collaborative partnerships benefitting the environment.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you the ideas/projects/program in your submittal and your feedback.

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 Form: Application for Federal Assistance (OMB 4040-0001)
- Attachments Form: "Attachments Form" (attach documents for submission into

Grants.gov using this form)

- Narrative Statement Form: Home | Grants.gov. Search using the following opportunity number USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-24-REC-02.
- Please ensure that when you complete your forms for this proposal that you **"Save As"** and give your file a new name. **DO NOT** "Print to PDF". Once you have saved your forms under a new name, you will upload those forms into the attachment document.

Note: If you receive an error when opening a form, it may indicate that you have either opened the PDF file with an incompatible version of Adobe PDF software or you have opened the PDF file with a browser that has a built-in PDF viewer that is not compatible with Grants.gov. Save the form on your computer and then open the most up-to-date Adobe PDF software and open the saved file on your computer.

If you do not have a compatible version of Adobe PDF software, please reference the steps below to download a compatible version.

1. Go to http://get.adobe.com/reader/otherversions/
2. Under STEP 1, select your operating system.
3. Under STEP 2, select your preferred language.
4. Under STEP 3, select the version of compatible software you want to download.
5. Under OPTIONAL OFFERS, you may check or uncheck these offers based on your preference.
6. Click on the DOWNLOAD NOW button to begin the download of the software.

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.

This is not a grant announcement. It is a non-funded, non-competitive outreach of interest (OOI) 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.