Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Outreach of Interest (OOI) Announcement
INSTRUCTIONS

Revegetation with Native Plants

SUMMARY INFORMATION

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Revegetation with Native Plants

Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-25-VE-01

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: Native Plant Materials | US 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.

USDA Forest Service is interested in potential partnerships to help collect, map, develop, monitor, and restore native plants, where needed. USDA Forest Service is also interested in engaging and educating community members, youth, veterans, tribes, students, underserved communities, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs. Both partners would benefit through the sharing of knowledge, input to revegetation programs and priorities on national forest lands, and hands on knowledge identifying, handling, and processing native plant materials, and/or monitoring and documenting native plant revegetation success. Involvement in this work could also benefit others by encouraging long-term relationships with the land, highlighting the importance of native plants in our environment.

Your submission signals an opportunity for USDA Forest Service to explore with you your ideas/projects/programs and federal funding opportunities. USDA Forest Service is committed to fostering a strong, collaborative partnership that benefits native plant communities and restoration projects using locally adapted native plant seeds and propagules. These collaborations are vital for understanding revegetation and restoration needs, establishing shared priorities, expanding capacity, and ensuring the growth of resilient and healthy forests with native plants. By working together, all stakeholders can maximize the impact of native plant revegetation and restoration efforts on national forests.

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

The native plants needed to restore land impacted by wildfire, drought, and invasive plants, are

in short supply. USDA Forest Service is reaching out to partners interested in working together to develop native plant materials and to monitor their success in revegetation and restoration projects. Units are identifying lists of priority plant species best suited for native plant materials development, considering resource needs, future demand, and past propagation and establishment success. Once identified as a priority, native plant materials, primarily seed sources from wildland populations, are identified and mapped, and seed is collected when the seed is at peak viability. Native seed is then, cleaned and tested, and stored, to eventually be combined and increased in production fields. The genetically diverse plant materials can then be used to meet not only the needs of the national forests, but also to create a sustained market for native plant materials across all lands.

USDA Forest Service is interested in partnerships to help collect, map, develop, monitor, and restore native plants, where needed. USDA Forest Service is also interested in engaging and educating community members, youth, veterans, tribes, students, underserved communities, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs. Both partners would benefit through the sharing of knowledge, input to revegetation programs and priorities on national forest lands, and hands on knowledge identifying, handling, and processing native plant materials, and/or monitoring and documenting native plant revegetation success. Involvement in this work could also benefit others by encouraging long-term relationships with the land, highlighting the importance of native plants in our environment.

The current Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation (BIL) has dedicated funding to the development and improvement of revegetation programs including the development of reserves of native herbaceous, shrub, and select tree species for future use. This funding provides the financial opportunity to develop partnerships for revegetation and native plant material programs on every forest across the country, and through several executive orders, encourages outreach to tribes and Justice 40 communities.

B. Statement of Work

The purpose of this agreement is to foster relationships with diverse and underrepresented groups to participate in revegetation programs on National Forest lands. Partners are desired with interest in identifying, mapping, and collecting native plant materials, primarily native seed. The native plant material collections would vary throughout the growing season and could include grasses, forbs, shrubs, and some trees. Desirable collections for native seed ensure the sustainability of wildland populations, but typically target no more than 20% of the population, and at least 10,000 pure live seed/population. To develop a genetically diverse seed source, several populations are targeted for collection throughout a provisional or climate-matched seed zone. Coordination and communication will be paramount for the success of viable collections. As needed, information on the priority plant species and phenology, known and likely locations for the species, digital data and maps, mapping programs, information on desired seed handling techniques, and documentation programs and needs, will be provided.

USDA Forest Service unit will provide support with collections and monitoring, but much of the work will be conducted by the partner.
Deliverables could include:

- Identify, map (using mobile programs on phones or tablets) and collect viable native plant seed or other native plant materials from wildland populations following protocols agreed to by USDA Forest Service.

- Document all scouting and collection sites and ensure that all collections are clearly labeled and stored correctly prior to processing.
- Increase or produce native plants from genetically diverse sources in greenhouse settings and/or production fields.
- Develop learning networks around native plants and revegetation efforts.
- Implement revegetation plans and projects on priority project sites.
- Monitor plantings for germination and establishment and document methods and results.
- Lead citizen science, collection and monitoring opportunities involving educators, students, and volunteers. The partner would provide oversight and training with assistance from USDA Forest Service unit as necessary.

USDA Forest Service will suggest locations, collection times, techniques, seed storage protocols, and reporting/data sharing. They will also work with the partner on any educational support and provide overall project oversight. As the partnership develops and grows, USDA Forest Service involvement can adjust as appropriate.

C. Project Priorities

Areas of interest include:

- Enhance or support on-going native plant material projects.
- Use or understand current USDA Forest Service protocols, programs, and databases to collect and develop native plant material sources.
- Offer learning networks around native plants and revegetation efforts, especially programs that reach out to youth, STEM, and underserved communities.
- Provide long-term monitoring of establishment of relationships for implementation of native plant materials for revegetation and restoration efforts.
- Involve citizen science opportunities.

Summary

The native plants needed to restore land impacted by wildfire, drought, and invasive plants, are in short supply. USDA Forest Service is reaching out to partners interested in working together to develop native plant materials and to monitor their success in revegetation and restoration projects. Units are identifying lists of priority plant species best suited for native plant materials development, considering resource needs, future demand, and past propagation and establishment success.

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
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, Public Law 117-58,

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 **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-R13-2024-24-25-VE-01 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-R13-2024-24-25-VE-01 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.
- No hardcopy applications will be accepted.
- For questions related to OOI opportunity: USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-25-VE-01, 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 and communities. These collaborations are vital for increasing understanding and to maximize revegetation and restoration efforts to ensure healthy and diverse forests/grasslands with native plant species.

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 USDA-FS-R13-2024-24-25-VE-01.
- 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.

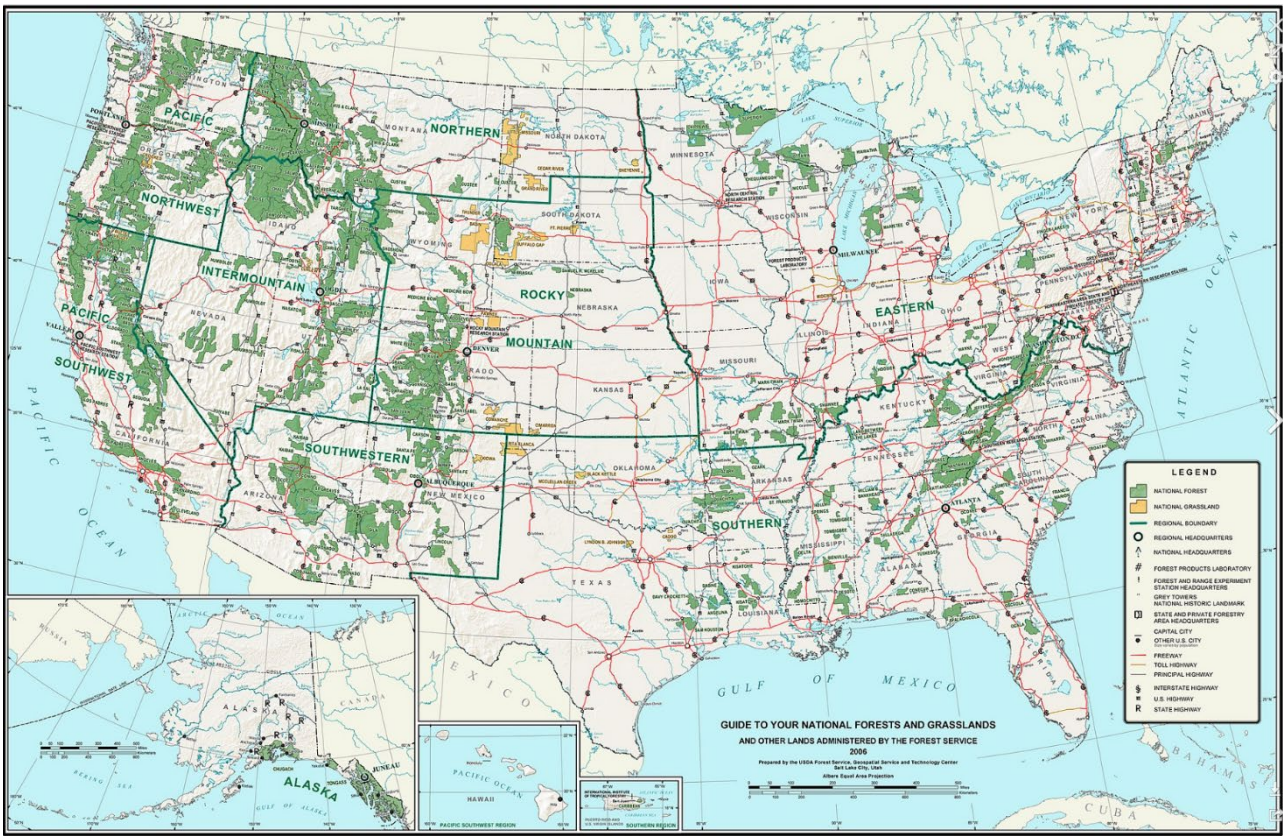
VII. Response Notice Timeline

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.

USDA Forest Service Map

Your USDA Forest Service Region generally is determined by the State where most of the proposed work will be conducted. Two USDA Forest Service regions may exist in one State. Locate your USDA Forest Service Region using the map below if you are not certain which Region applies.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_national_forests_of_the_United_States#/media/File:USA_National_Forests_Map.jpg

USDA Forest Service Northern Region (Region 1) MT, ND, Northern ID, & Northwestern SD

USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region (Region 2) CO, KS, NE, SD, & WY

USDA Forest Service Southwestern Region (Region 3) AZ & NM

USDA Forest Service Intermountain Region (Region 4) Southern ID, NV, UT, & Western WY

USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) CA, HI, Guam, and Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands

USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) OR & WA

USDA Forest Service Southern Region (Region 8) AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, Virgin Islands, & Puerto Rico

USDA Forest Service Eastern Region (Region 9) CT, DE, DC, IL, IN, IA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WV, WI

USDA Forest Service Alaska Region (Region 10) AK