

Introduction

The National Forest Foundation (NFF), 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. The NFF believes that communities should play a significant role in determining the future of our National Forests and Grasslands.

Overview

Population growth, declining timber economies and rural/urban migration patterns are having a significant impact on the physical and social landscape around us. Rural, land-based communities are facing unprecedented challenges and many are recognizing the importance of the interrelationship between the health of their local natural resources, community and economy. At the same time, natural resource issues can be contentious and heated, typified by distrust and deadlock. It is the belief of the National Forest Foundation and many others that one way to move past the controversy is to engage communities in dialogue-based collaborative processes to find common ground and develop proactive solutions.

The Collaboration Support Program (CSP) was developed with support from the Ford and Surdna Foundations to provide flexible funding to sustain *existing place-based collaborative* efforts (see text box below) as well as incentive to take the risks necessary to innovate and move the field of collaboration forward.

The Collaboration Support Program complements and adds to the NFF's "continuum of assistance" spanning from the Community Assistance Program, which enables newly forming collaborative groups to take the first steps towards becoming working organizations, to the Mid-Capacity Assistance Program, which provides capacity-building grants to support existing collaborative groups to build their capacity and implement successful stewardship projects, and the suite of grants is completed by the our matching grant programs: the Matching Awards Program, Wilderness Stewardship Challenge Program, and Ski Conservation Fund. These programs provide matching grants for on-the-ground projects focused on community forestry, watershed restoration, wildlife habitat and recreation.

Col·lab·o·ra·tion: A voluntary process through which a broad array of interests, some of which may be in conflict, enter into civil dialogue to collectively consider possible recommendations and actions that improve the management of natural resources to benefit both the environment and surrounding communities. Collaboration is different from a partnership in that collaboration involves a diverse and comprehensive array of stakeholders; a partnership is likely to engage a few parties that are interested in working together on a specific project (adapted from David D. Chrislip, 2002).

The Collaboration Support Program provides **two** types of small grants:

1) **Capacity Grants:** Up to \$5,000 is available for organizational development needs for collaborative efforts. Capacity grant funds can be used for a wide range of tools including but not limited to: training, consultants, community outreach, group facilitation, program development, nonprofit management skill building, and communications.

2) **Innovation Grants:** Up to \$10,000 is available for expenses related to the implementation of new ideas or strategies that will move the field of collaboration forward and have the potential to be transferred to other collaborative efforts across the country. All expenses must clearly support the organization's effort to implement the proposed idea or strategy. Examples of CSP activities in this category may include, but are not limited to: the development of multi-party monitoring plans, new organizational and governance strategies for making collaboration more successful and effective, new outreach strategies to expand the representation of additional stakeholders, and new strategies for effectively working with the U.S. Forest Service. Applicants must be able to demonstrate how CSP funds will move the field of collaboration forward as well as the new strategy's transferability to other efforts and regions. Successful applicants will be required to provide a short "thought piece" with the final report describing the impact of their strategy, how the results differed from what was expected (if applicable), the idea or strategy's application to other collaborative efforts and how the results will be shared.

Organizations applying for funding through the CSP will not be required to match the NFF funds. CSP funds will not be awarded to support one organization's participation in a collaborative effort. Participants may apply on behalf of a collaborative effort if the funds will be used in a manner that benefits all participants equitably.

Organizations currently receiving capacity-building funding through the Community Assistance Program (CAP) or Mid-Capacity Assistance Program are not eligible to apply.

Eligibility

In order to qualify for a grant through the CSP, the applicant organization must be:

- Engaged in a collaborative process;
- Legitimate stakeholders in the collaborative process;
- Incorporated as a 501(c)(3) or utilize a fiscal sponsor organization with that designation.

In addition, the collaborative group must be:

- Placed-based;
- Working to develop solutions for sustainable management or restoration on and around National Forests and Grasslands that lead to on-the-ground work; specific issues should be related to community-based forest stewardship, recreation, watershed restoration, and/or wildlife habitat;
- Seeking to build local ecological, social and economic sustainability;

- Implementing a new strategy or idea that will move the field of collaboration forward (if applying for an Innovation Grant).

Who Should Not Apply:

- Local, state or federal agencies;
- Individuals;
- Organizations requesting support for scientific research;
- Organizations requesting support for litigation/advocacy;
- Individual organizations seeking support for their own participation in a collaborative process;
- Organizations already receiving capacity-building funds through the Community Assistance Program or Mid-Capacity Assistance Program.

Selection Criteria

Evaluation for CSP **Capacity Grants** will be based on answers to the narrative questions provided below and the extent to which the collaborative has the following in place:

- A well defined, diverse stakeholder group;
- Specific buy-in to the process from all the stakeholders;
- An agreed upon timeline for the process;
- A common understanding of the goals and possible outcomes of the process;
- Acknowledged local leadership.

Evaluation for CSP **Innovation Grants** will be based on the following *additional* criteria assessing the extent to which proposed activities:

- Have the potential to contribute to the body of knowledge about the field of collaboration;
- Can be monitored to measure and document success;
- Are broadly applicable to other collaborative efforts or regions.

Application Process

A complete Collaboration Support Program proposal consists of a **CSP cover sheet, program narrative, participant list, financial plan, letter of support from the U.S. Forest Service, and supporting documents** submitted according to the guidelines below:

1. Complete the coversheet according to instructions on the form, which can be found on our website www.nationalforestfoundation.org. Textboxes on the form have length limitations. Please contact the NFF if you have trouble with this electronic form.

2. A project narrative (up to 3 pages), that includes:
 - a. Clear identification of the central issue(s) the group is addressing;
 - b. Identification of the ecological, social (community) and economic benefit(s) of the process and potential outcomes;
 - c. A budget narrative describing how the funds will be used and why they are needed;
 - d. How the CSP grant will help the organization or group to achieve its goals.

If applying for an **Innovation Grant**, please also include the following (up to 2 additional pages):

- e. A description of the new collaborative strategy or idea you would like to implement. What experiences have led you to this idea?
 - f. How do you see this project moving the field of collaboration forward?
 - g. At what scale do you see your lessons learned being applicable-regionally or nationally? How do you plan to share those lessons?
 - h. How will the organization track and determine the success of the project?
3. A listing of participants and the interests they represent to demonstrate an inclusive, broad base of interest and support. Please distinguish between active members and stakeholders the group has invited (up to 1 page);
4. The CSP financial plan showing how award funds would be used. This document can be found on our website at www.nationalforestfoundation.org;
5. A letter of support from the local U.S. Forest Service Forest Supervisor.
6. Supporting Documents:
 - a. A 501(c)(3) status verification letter for your organization or your organization's fiscal sponsor;
 - b. A copy of the organizations most recent audited financial statement. If you do not have an audited financial statement, please send an unaudited accounting of finances.

Program Contact

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Program Resources

The Forest Service and the NFF have joined forces to develop the online Partnership Resource Center (www.partnershipresourcecenter.org), an excellent resource for community groups focused on natural resource management issues.

Collaborative groups in the West (U.S. Forest Service Regions 1-6 and 10), including grant recipients, also have access to the **Western Collaboration Assistance Network** (WestCAN), a

program linking community-based collaborative groups with expertise and technical resources through customized assistance (call 1-866-773-4633 or email kdibari@natlforests.org) and an online collaboration library at www.WestCanhelp.org.

Application Deadline

The submission deadline for the Collaboration Support Program is **Friday, May 23, 2008**. Selection decisions will be made in late June.

To Apply

Please submit **one unstapled single-sided copy** of your completed proposal to the address below, for **receipt no later than the stated deadline**. You will receive confirmation of receipt of your proposal via e-mail. Late proposals will not be accepted.

**Collaboration Support Program
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