

Request for Proposals

North America Biochar Industry and Stakeholder Assessment

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc. (Endowment) in cooperation with funding partners and the U.S. Biochar Initiative (USBI), is looking to hire an external consultant to conduct a detailed industry and stakeholder assessment. This assessment will help the USBI evaluate and update its strategic plan and support the Endowment and other partners in the development of additional support and programs to advance the biochar sector.

The consultant is encouraged to be creative and propose a scope of work that will include a survey of existing industry status, evaluation of potential markets, current product development status, including a needs assessment developed through engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. The target date for completion of this work is July 2023. Proposals may be submitted by government agencies, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and for-profit companies and consultants.

About the Endowment and USBI

USBI is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization promoting the sustainable production and use of biochar through research, policy, technology, and practice. We promote biochar for sustainable food security, improved soil fertility, environment, and climate resilience. Our vision is to leave a legacy of fertile soils and carbon sequestered by raising awareness of and increasing the utilization of biochar through collaborative efforts with organizations involved in production, application, and research. We engage the scientific, agriculture, and biomass communities to use safe, stable, sustainable biochar through collaboration to learn, educate, inform, demonstrate, and develop markets, policy incentives, and quality standards. The USBI board of directors is dynamic, talented, and diverse. It includes biochar producers, technology developers and suppliers, research, agricultural extension, policy, and education.

The Endowment is the nation's largest non-profit dedicated to keeping working forests working for all their environmental, societal, and economic benefits and values. To achieve this, the Endowment works collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities. Our programs range across traditional, future, and ecosystem markets, along with programs for asset creation and forest retention and health.

Background

To support the US Forest Service and other landowners, a focused effort to increase applications, markets and production of biochar will be implemented with the United States Biochar Initiative (USBI). USBI is a 501(c)3 non-profit launched in 2009 with an emphasis to support expansion of biochar. Their focus is to engage the scientific, agriculture, and biomass communities to use safe, stable, sustainable biochar through collaboration to learn, educate, inform, demonstrate, and develop markets, policy incentives, and quality standards.

Biochar is a unique material that has increasing potential to be a significant carbon solution for the United States and other countries. It can also support the conversion of agricultural biomass and forest materials removed through hazardous fuels treatments, low-value forest products and industrial residues. A strengthened biochar sector can support increased use of these materials to support environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

Demand for information, market, and technical support for biochar from forest and agricultural residues has increased with the need to find outlets for hazardous fuels, increase soil carbon and climate resilience. The biochar industry has not yet matured to support the increased demand. The United States Biochar Initiative (USBI) is a 501(c)3 volunteer organization that fulfills those needs but requires funding to develop sustainable operations to help grow the biochar market and production. Funding provided by the U.S. Forest Service and the Endowment over a three-year period will support expanded capacity to assist in conversion of forest and industrial wood residues to biochar and biochar-based products through increased communication, market and technical assistance, education and outreach, and special initiatives such as mobile carbonizers, in-woods and onsite training, and multi-year field demonstrations.

The hired consultant(s) will support this effort by conducting a detailed industry and stakeholder survey and assessment. The result of this work will include a detailed understanding and inventory of current and in-development biochar producers and their capabilities, survey of existing and potential products and markets with an assessment of the status of development, barriers for biochar in those products and markets and comprehensive evaluation of the needs and opportunities. Recommendations for how USBI, the Endowment, and the sector can advance these opportunities should be included. The deliverables from this work will be used by USBI in evaluation and updating of its strategic plan and development of its organizational structure and by the Endowment and other funding partners in the development of initiatives, programs, and financing to help advance this market opportunity.

Proposals are encouraged to include a stage-gate approach. The approach would provide an initial market assessment, survey of existing and in-development biochar production and target specifications, and a priority ranking of target products and markets based on criteria such as potential market size, product development needs and barriers and other factors. This initial work product would be provided within three months and be presented at a convening of the emerging industry participants.

The second phase of the work would utilize the feedback provided from the industry participants and USBI to set priorities for developing a more comprehensive evaluation of target products and markets and help to guide overall strategic planning for USBI's work.

Proposal selection will be made by the Endowment program team and the USBI Board of Directors in consultation with the U.S. Forest Service. The proposal and all attachments should be submitted via the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities grantee portal by November 18, 2022. Award(s) will be made by late December 2022 with final deliverables expected by late July 2023.

Application Instructions

Please follow the directions closely and fill out all mandatory fields and attachments in the portal. An additional Proposal Narrative must be submitted and uploaded to the portal along with the rest of your application. This narrative should not exceed 8 pages.

The Proposal Narrative should include the following:

1. Describe your organization's experience assessing new product opportunities and market development needs. Provide specific examples related to biochar or innovative forest or agricultural products as applicable.

2. Describe relevant experience conducting industry and stakeholder surveys or market evaluations.
3. Describe your organizations experience working with biochar production, biochar products, end uses and carbon markets.
4. Describe your organization’s experience in forestry, agriculture, water, or other natural resource management areas.
5. How does your organization demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Key Information to be completed in the Online Application Portal:

- Title
- Organizational Experience (please include related work experience and reference projects)
- Qualifications of Team and Partners
- Workplan Activities (please include expected timeline, strategy, and deliverables)
- Budget (please upload the budget to the Financial Information section in the online application, there is a link to a budget template for your use in the Financial Information tab)
- Contact information.

For any portal/application issues please contact subawards@usendowment.org.

For proposal technical questions please contact Matt Krumenauer at matt@usendowment.org.

To view or complete the application go to the Endowment’s grantee portal:

<https://usendowment.force.com/grantee>

If you already have an account on the portal from a previous Endowment project, please use those login credentials. If you are a new user, please click on “New User” and follow the instructions to create an account.

Note: Please use Google Chrome or Firefox as your web browser when completing the application.

Decisions and practices of the Endowment are not and will not be unlawfully influenced or affected by race, color, creed, age, religion, national origin, sex, disability, genetic information, veteran status, uniformed services, sexual orientation, (including transgender status, gender identity or expression), gender, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions or on any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.