Innovative Finance for National Forests

2023 Proposal Application
Deadline: Monday, March 6, 2023, 8:00 p.m. EST.

Guidelines:
- Read the entire form before crafting your responses.
- Stay within the character limits, which include spaces.
- Reference the IFNF Request for Proposals for information on the program objectives, Focus Areas, Project Types, and criteria for awards here: https://www.usendowment.org/ifnf/.
- Please note, your project may fall into more than one Focus Area.

Program Contacts:
We encourage you to reach out to the following U.S. Forest Service (USFS) National Partnership Office contacts with application questions or to discuss your ideas further. These contacts can also help to connect applicants with Forest Service staff.

- Sophie Beavin, Conservation Finance Resource Assistant (sophie.beavin@usda.gov)
- Nathalie Woolworth, Conservation Finance Program Manager (nathalie.woolworth@usda.gov)

Submission:
Please submit your application to the Endowment's grantee portal at https://usendowment.force.com/grantee. The application questions below will be listed on the portal for you to fill out there and are only here for your convenience in preparing your application.

Note: 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. Once created, click on the "View Current RFPs" tab. For portal assistance please contact subawards@usendowment.org.

Required Attachments:

- USFS letter of support
- Payor letter of support (use template; optional for Feasibility Projects)
- Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) statement

Optional Attachments:
- Project map
- Additional letters of support (no more than two; only from critical project partners/stakeholders)
- Relevant publications, reports, or supporting documents (explain in the attachment how they are directly relevant to the specific project)

PROPOSAL APPLICATION

Applicant

Project Name (concise and specific to your project):

Lead Applicant (organization name):

Entity Type
- ☑ State government agency
- ☑ Local government agency
- ☑ Tribal Nation
- ☑ Non-profit organization
- ☑ For-profit company
- ☑ College or University
- ☑ Other (leave space to write in – 100 characters)

Lead Project Manager:

Email:

Phone Number:

Address:

Website:

Project Summary:
Concisely present your project idea. This should be a stand-alone "elevator pitch" that presents a compelling vision of your proposed innovative finance work, including the challenge addressed and how you propose to address it. (500 characters)

Summary of Financial Innovation:
Feasibility Projects: Describe the research question or need central to your proposal, why it is needed, and the proposed methods by which you will address it. (1500 characters)

Pilot and Scaling Projects: Describe the financial model or financial instrument central to your proposal, and how it will work. (1500 characters)

Funding Requested:

- IFNF funding request (nearest $1,000)
- Match (source(s)/amount(s))
- Please use the Endowment's Budget Template to create your budget. If providing match, be sure to fill out the Match Budget tab.

Project Characterization

Focus Area (Check at least one)

- ☑ Watershed Health
- ☑ Sustainable Recreation Infrastructure and Access
- ☑ Wildfire Resilience and Recovery

Jurisdiction and Ownership (Check one)

- ☑ National Forest System land only
- ☑ Adjacent lands only
- ☑ Cross-boundary combination of NFS and adjacent lands

Project Type (Check one)

- ☑ Feasibility
- ☑ Pilot
- ☑ Scaling

Feasibility Projects Only (check at least one, referencing the RFP section **Project Types / Feasibility Projects** for guidance on terminology)

- ☑ Financial Innovation
- ☑ Customer and Market Discovery
- ☑ Measurement and Quantification

US Forest Service Contact (required for Pilot and Scaling projects, optional for Feasibility projects)

USFS Point of Contact: Name and Title

USFS Point of Contact email and phone

USFS Unit and/or Program (*include multiple lines for multi-forest projects*)

USFS Region (check at least one)
- ☑ Region 1
- ☑ Region 2
- ☑ Region 3
- ☑ Region 4
- ☑ Region 5
- ☑ Region 6
- ☑ Region 8
- ☑ Region 9
- ☑ Region 10
- ☑ National

Project Narrative

1. Prior IFNF Grantees

Current grantees can apply for funding for a new IFNF project proposal. If you wish to apply for additional funding for an ongoing project, please discuss your approach with the IFNF program contacts before submitting an application. In general, requests for additional funding for an ongoing project should advance your work to a new Project Type (e.g. if you already received a Feasibility grant, you could apply for a Pilot grant this round). If you believe your project is ready to move to the next phase, please explain why and offer supporting and defensible rationale. (1000 characters)

2. Problem Statement

Please describe the specific problem you are attempting to address and how it affects key stakeholders. To reflect broader recognition of the scale of the problem you are addressing, please cite supporting literature. Be sure to explain why this problem fits into the Focus Area(s) that you chose. (1000 characters)

3. National Forest System Nexus

Describe the relevance of the challenge addressed and proposed solution to the National Forest System, using the RFP (pg. 4 "Focus Areas") for guidance on USFS challenges and priorities. This narrative should also outline the role of USFS units or programs in the project. (1000 characters)

Note: For Pilot and Scaling Projects include a USFS letter of support with your application package (optional for Feasibility Projects).

4. Team and Partners

Why are you the right team for the job? Identify key team members and partners and clearly describe their roles in the proposed project. Describe the fit, motivation, and experience of your project team and partners. Note any prior experience working with the USFS as well as prior experience developing innovative finance projects. If partnerships are not yet established, describe how you plan to initiate collaboration. (2000 characters)

5. Policy

Identify any legal and/or policy hurdles (anticipated or current) that need to be overcome and how you plan to mitigate the impacts of those barriers. Confirm that the USFS instruments needed to support your work are in place or are being addressed (e.g., cooperative agreements, stewardship contracts, special use permits). (1000 characters)

6. Practices and Methods

Feasibility Projects: Please describe the research methods (e.g., survey, focus groups, data analysis) that will be employed for your project and why they have been chosen, touching on their effectiveness, practicality, affordability, and applicability. (1000 characters)

Pilot and Scaling Projects: Please describe the land management practices (e.g., mechanical thinning, culvert removal, trail construction) underlying your project and why they have been chosen, highlighting their readiness, effectiveness, practicality, affordability, and applicability. (1000 characters)

7. Payors (i.e., direct payment or repayment)

Feasibility Projects: Articulate how your project will help unlock Payors (defined below) for future projects. What steps have you taken to confirm the relevance of your project to those Payors? (1000 characters)

Pilot and Scaling Projects: Identify the specific entity (e.g., utility, local government, corporation, agency, etc.) that will ultimately pay for the outcomes proposed by this project, providing evidence as to their willingness and ability to pay. For projects that leverage upfront public or private financing this question does <u>not</u> refer to the financing source, but to the entities that will provide funds to repay any financing as the project performs. (1000 characters)

<u>Note</u>: For Pilot and Scaling Projects include a Payor letter of support with your application using the [template](#) provided (optional for Feasibility Projects).

8. Financing Sources (i.e., upfront capital)
<u>Feasibility Projects</u>: Articulate how your project will help unlock upfront capital to finance future projects. What steps have you taken to confirm the relevance of your project to such capital? (1000 characters)

<u>Pilot and Scaling Projects</u>: What upfront capital will you leverage from public or private entities to finance this project. How do you plan to mobilize that capital and what is your level of confidence in doing so? (1000 characters)

9. Project Sites/Project Readiness
<u>Pilot and Scaling Projects (optional for Feasibility projects)</u>: Please identify and describe your project site(s). What is the readiness of your project site(s) for implementation of land management activities, including: planning and permitting (NEPA); design, surveys, and site prep; and prioritization by USFS unit or other land manager. What local capacity (USFS or other) exists to implement land management activities at the pace and scale your project seeks to achieve? If barriers exist to implementation readiness, how do you plan to address those barriers? (1500 characters)

10. Impact and Scaling Potential (or Path to Scale)
<u>Feasibility Projects</u>*:* What potential does your project have to unlock a scalable solution to the National Forest System challenge described in Question 3? Please make clear the ways in which your project could lead to impact at scale, and the steps that will be required to achieve scale. (1000 characters)

<u>Pilot and Scaling Projects</u>*:* How will this project, once implemented, provide a long-term solution to the National Forest System challenge described in Question 3? Identify the market scale your solution is addressing and the potential for your solution to scale and achieve a significant share of the market (see guidance below). What steps will be required to achieve landscape-scale impacts or replication in many locations? (1000 characters)

The following framing provides an example of how to discuss market scale in three steps:
1) The total market for wildfire prevention across the US is likely to represent $XB in spending by governments, insurers, homeowners, and other actors by 2030, based on the following rationale;
2) The segment of the market our solution is relevant for is wildfire prevention on NFS lands, which is likely to represent $XB by 2030, based on the following rationale;
3) Our solution's share of that relevant market is likely to represent X% of the market for wildfire prevention on NFS lands, which is likely to represent $XB in spending by 2030.

11. Measurable Outcomes
Describe, in detail, the metrics, tools, and processes you will use to measure economic, environmental, and/or social outcomes from this project, including the reporting format and the entity responsible for measurement. (1000 characters)

12. Co-creation

To ensure effective co-creation with target constituents (e.g., landowners, municipalities, county agencies, utilities, business associations, etc.) please describe how you plan to engage these key stakeholders to result in sufficient uptake of the conservation practices and interventions envisioned for the project. (1000 characters)

13. Barriers to Success

What are the two to three biggest challenges you anticipate to successful completion of this project, and what are your plans to address these challenges? (1000 characters)

14. Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI)

Please detail information on the population(s) that will be affected or engaged in the proposed project in terms of JEDI considerations. (1000 characters)

15. Workplan

Provide a timeline including relevant milestones and/or deliverables for your project *(Note that IFNF contracts are a maximum of 3 years (2023 – 2027)*. (1000 characters)

16. Anything Else We Should Know? (1000 characters)