2024 Request for Proposals: Participatory Science Fund

To Apply: Application Link

Proposal Due Date: February 26, 2024 at 12:59pm PST

Awardees Announced: March 22, 2024

Contact: Lani Chang, Participatory Science Coordinator, USDA Forest Service, lani.chang@usda.gov

Subject: "2024 Fund Question"

OVERVIEW

The USDA 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. In 2017, the agency launched the Participatory Science Fund (formerly CitSci Fund) to support innovative community science projects that address science and resource monitoring needs while connecting people to the land and one another.

In addition to supporting resource information and monitoring needs, these projects have also strengthened relationships and increased trust between the Forest Service, partners, and the public; amplified funding; created pipelines for a more diverse work force; and demonstrated the efficacy of citizen science in federal land management.

This program is managed by the Washington Office, Ecosystem Management Coordination (EMC) – Adaptive Management, Monitoring and Analysis (AMMA) staff. The Participatory Science Fund is supported by the 2017 Citizen Science Act [1] and 1972 Volunteers in the National Forests Act[2]. This competition is open to all Forest Service units and partners.

Fund Goals

- Expand and strengthen the practice of using crowdsourcing, participatory science and/or multiparty monitoring in meeting resource information needs, Agency priorities and research needs.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful public engagement and collaboration in Forest Service activities.
- Fill information gaps through sound project design and data collection that reduce uncertainty about management actions.
- Sustain and grow successful projects and protocols that can be expanded and translated to other Forests.

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[1] The 2017 Citizen Science Act (Sec. 402 of the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act), grants federal science agencies the direct, explicit authority to use crowdsourcing and citizen science and encourages its appropriate use to facilitate broader public participation in the innovation process.

[2] Volunteers in the National Forests Act of 1972, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 558a-558d.

- Support existing partnerships and stimulate new partnerships that address mutually beneficial outcomes, expand capacity, leverage expertise and resources, and foster trust in Agency decision-making.
- Grow a network of crowdsourcing, participatory science, and multiparty monitoring experts within the Agency and externally.
- Offer opportunities for peer-to-peer learning for the Agency and partners.

TYPES OF PROPOSALS WE ARE SEEKING

Competitive proposals will aim to fulfil the goals of the fund listed above. Projects that are using participatory science to meet monitoring needs and fill information gaps, while also providing meaningful opportunities to engage the public/participants in the process are ideal.

Examples of past or potential projects include, but are not limited to:

- Recruiting members of the public and/or Forest Collaborative to help inventory mature and old stands to understand status and trends and generate broader public understanding of mature and old growth forests.
- Using iNaturalist and working with an outdoor recreation partner to collect data on recently listed Whitebark pine occurrence and incidences of blister rust.
- Collaborating with members of a Tribe to monitor traditional foods and other species of cultural importance and/or other ecological conditions impacting those species.
- Working throughout a region to collect phenological data on start of springtime to inform broadscale climate monitoring.
- Developing a method that could be replicated nationally to pull crowdsourced data from apps to understand trends in visitor use.

**See Evaluation Criteria below for more information

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility:

- Each project must have a Forest Service Partner Lead and at least one Partner Project Lead with a partnership agreement ready to execute and obligate funds by the end of FY24.
- This year's funding will not have Phase I-III funding structure as in previous years but projects at all phases will be eligible (first-year implementation/pilot to sustaining/expanding ongoing projects). Note that this year we are aiming to support an even mix of projects that have been previously funded and new projects.
- Projects must take place on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Projects could additionally extend beyond the boundaries, but there must be a clear connection back to NFS lands. Please reach out if you have questions.

Requirements:

- Participate in peer-to-peer learning sessions, potential to present at agency-wide community of practice meetings.
- Participate in end of year reporting – complete report template and database reporting.

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals should be developed collaboratively between FS and partners. Submit application via: link. The application deadline is **February 26, 2024 at 12:59pm PST.**

The committee (coordinator, AMMA staff and volunteer reviewers from throughout the agency) will review applications to select proposals to fund.

Once projects have been selected and announced, we will work with FS leads to link funding from WO-EMC to the lead's office or region through WorkPlan. Partnership agreements must then be executed, and funds obligated by end of FY24.

We have $100,000 to distribute amongst projects, **max request per proposal is $20,000**.

TIMELINE

Action	Target Date
Proposals Due	February 26
Proposal Review	Feb 27-March 22
Project Selections Announced	End of March
Partnership Agreements Executed	End of FY24
Accomplishment Reporting Due	TBD Project Specific
Final Reports Due	TBD Project Specific

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria	Max Points
Fulfills genuine FS scientific and/or management need	20
Clear project design (participant recruitment and engagement; appropriate protocols for participants; data management, analysis and sharing; use of data) indicates high likelihood of success	20
Results in meaningful participant engagement (i.e., participants involved in planning, question development, data collection; positive educational outcomes; skills development; etc.)	20
Demonstrated clear alignment of goals between FS and partner and articulates why participatory science is the ideal approach for meeting the goals of both parties	15
Utilizes existing protocols or creates new protocols that are replicable/scalable	10
Budget outlined/funds requested support achievement of goals and objectives	10
Aims to engage underrepresented and/or underserved population(s) and articulates why engagement of that population is important to the project	5
Demonstrated plans for project sustainability (i.e., funding, staff, capacity) beyond the funding provided and length of agreement	5

ADDITIONAL INFO

Participatory Science Definition: The term community science is a form of open collaboration in which individuals or organizations participate voluntarily in the scientific process in various ways, including —

enabling the formulation of research questions; creating and refining project design; conducting scientific experiments; collecting and analyzing data; interpreting the results of data; developing technologies and applications; making discoveries; and solving problems.

The term participatory science also encompasses citizen science, crowdsourcing, community science, multiparty monitoring, community-based monitoring, and others.

For the Citizen (Participatory) Science Toolkit and overviews of previously funded projects please visit: [Citizen Science | US Forest Service (usda.gov)]