Indigenous Forest Knowledge Fund
Spring 2024
Request for Proposals

History and Goals

From 2001 to 2016, the Northeastern States Research Cooperative (NSRC) provided competitive funding for applied forest research across the Northern Forest region, from New York to Maine. With congressional support over this 16-year period, more than $23.3 million in U.S. Forest Service funds was awarded for 335 collaborative research projects. The program was briefly paused in 2017, and NSRC leaders took the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on its points of strength and areas for improvement. Direct collaboration and service to stakeholders and non-academic partners emerged as a key area for growth.

With renewed support from Congress and $2 million in Forest Service funding, NSRC 2.0 launched in 2020. To ensure alignment with on-the-ground issues and emerging priorities, Tribal consultants and an External Advisory Committee representing forest industry, natural resource management, conservation, wildlife, and economic development set the research agendas for the general request for proposals (RFPs) issued in 2020, 2021, and 2023. The general RFPs encourage projects of high cultural significance to Indigenous communities (e.g., the health of brown ash and Indigenous peoples' access to lands for hunting, fishing, gathering materials, and other purposes).

In addition to the general RFP, NSRC leaders are committed to going further to (1) acknowledge and address structural inequities in opportunities for Indigenous youth to participate in forest research and (2) invest in the cultural and intellectual sovereignty of Tribal forest traditions alongside other forms of applied forest research. The NSRC recognizes and respects the deep, primary knowledgeof Tribal Nations in the Northern Forest region and established an *Indigenous Forest Knowledge Fund* for:

◆ The education, mentorship, and training of Indigenous youth in applied forest research and/or Traditional Ecological Knowledge about forest systems;

◆ New applied forest research that advances Tribal priorities; and

◆ The synthesis and translation of forest research and/or Traditional Ecological Knowledge to advance communications, outreach, and economic programs for Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities.

Budget and Project Duration Considerations

With these goals in mind, up to **$1,500,000 in NSRC funding will be awarded in 2024** to support projects with budgets ranging from $75,000 to $500,000 for one- to three-year funding terms. The planned start date should be no earlier than August 15, 2024, and no later than October 31, 2024. The exact number of funded projects will reflect the budget sizes of highest-ranked proposals. Project leaders will be required to track and report progress and expenses annually. Federal NSRC funds may not be used to purchase equipment (defined as $5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year).

Any remaining funds will be applied toward future NSRC competitions.

Requirements

◆ Projects must clearly address forest research, education, outreach, and/or economic priorities for Tribal Nations or other Indigenous communities.

◆ Project leaders and/or project settings should be on or directly related to Tribal homelands/territories or ancestral territories of the NSRC region (i.e., the Northern Forest region that includes/overlaps/impacts Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and/or Vermont).

◆ A signed letter of support from a Tribal Leader (e.g., Tribal Council Official/Tribal Chairperson) or Tribal Department Director attesting to the value of the project must accompany each proposal. In the letter, please describe how the project advances Tribal priorities in terms of education, training, research, communications, and/or economic development.

◆ Projects may be carried out independently or in collaboration with academic researchers from partner institutions. Each academic partner must submit a signed letter describing how the project will 1) benefit federally- and/or state-recognized Tribal Nations or other Indigenous communities and 2) describe how issues of Tribal cultural and intellectual sovereignty will be handled.

◆ NSRC funding may provide complete project support or be combined with additional funding from other public/private sources.

◆ We require written plans for: 1) protecting Tribal intellectual sovereignty, 2) protecting culturally sensitive sites and materials, and/or 3) data management. Plans should address how data and results will be shared and how sensitive information will be protected (e.g., locations of culturally sensitive sites).

◆ Projects presented as partnerships between Tribal and non-Tribal organizations should reflect equitable and appropriate distribution of funds in the budget, with Tribal partners in the decision-making role, directing decisions related to funding in whatever way works best and is manageable for their projects, organizations, and teams.

Timeline

◆ March 8, 2024: RFP issued

◆ June 14, 2024: Proposals due electronically by 4:30 pm

◆ July 12, 2024: Notification of project award decisions

◆ August 16, 2024: Funding committed

Review Process

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of Tribal consultants and NSRC administrators. The committee will apply the following evaluation criteria, giving equal weight to each:

❖ General fit to the program's primary goals and requirements;

❖ Clarity of the specific project objective and likelihood of success;

❖ Appropriateness of the approach and methods, including intellectual sovereignty and/or data management; and

❖ Tribal Leader (e.g., Tribal Council Official/Tribal Chairperson) or Tribal Department Director endorsement as expressed in signed letters of support.

Proposal Elements

◆ Project title

◆ Project leader (name, title, affiliation, and email address)

- Project collaborators (name, title, affiliation, and email address), including all persons or entities who will be directly supported by the proposed project

- Project goals (200-word max)

- Relevance to the goals and requirements of the NSRC Indigenous Forest Knowledge Fund (200-word max)

- Project approach and methodology (200-word max)

- Expected products, outputs, and potential outcomes (200-word max)

- Plans for protecting Tribal intellectual sovereignty and culturally sensitive sites and materials and/or data management plan

- Project budget and budget narrative: Contribution of matching funds is optional and will only be used as a funding decision criterion if projects are otherwise scored equally and funding is limited. See NSRC IFKF website for the budget and budget narrative template

- Project timeline

- Letter of support from Tribal leadership (one or more)

- Letters from academic partners (if applicable)

- Abstract for public posting

- How would you like to guide media outreach related to your project?

Proposal Submission Process

1. When your proposal is ready for submission, please access the Google Form at IFKF 2024 Metadata, where you will be asked to enter basic proposal metadata, including personnel, budget, and proposal elements from your proposal. If the link does not work, please copy and paste https://forms.gle/oRSMGQ8wTjtEVKNm6 into your browser. If a confirmation email from Google Forms (subject "NSRC 2024 Indigenous Forest Knowledge Fund Proposal Metadata") is not received after submitting the data, please contact margaret.fergusson@maine.edu.

2. After submitting the Google Form, please submit a pdf of the proposal via NSRC IFKF 2024 Proposals. (Alternatively, you can type https://bit.ly/3wJhSIE into your browser.) Files should be labeled as Last Name_First Name_IFKF2024. Simply upload the combined PDF file (all applicable proposal elements, including intellectual sovereignty/data management plans, budgets and budget narratives, and letters of support as one PDF). Please upload the proposal PDF only once.

3. If you do not get a confirmation email for your submission or have questions on the submission process, please contact Meg Fergusson at margaret.fergusson@maine.edu.

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Additional Information

Governance documents (NSRC Charter, Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement) are available at https://nsrcforest.org/governance.

If you have any questions about eligibility or how grant funds are distributed to awardees, please don't hesitate to contact Anthea Lavallee: alavallee@hubbardbrookfoundation.org.

If you have any questions about the application submission process, please don't hesitate to contact a program manager (https://nsrcforest.org/contacts).

FAQs and resources related to the IFKF RFP and previous general RFPs are available on the NSRC website.