



Forested Community Schoolyards Request for Proposals

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Background

Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit, protects land for people to enjoy as parks, schoolyards, gardens, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities and healthy environments for generations to come. Founded in 1972, our work grows from the belief that no one in the United States should live more than a 10-minute walk from an outdoor space to play, learn, grow, or experience nature. Today there is only one park for every 14,000 people in the U.S., and as a result, an entire generation is growing up disconnected from nature and the outdoors.

For more than 25 years, and in communities across the country, TPL has partnered with schools and underserved communities to reimagine their outdoor spaces. We engage directly with a variety of partners, including neighborhood residents, community groups, schools, city agencies, and civic leaders in the creation of new green play spaces through our Community Schoolyards® initiative. TPL is working to make vibrant Community Schoolyards® standard practice across the country. Nowhere is this work more important than in Indigenous communities, where vacant school grounds exacerbate health and environmental disparities and fail to reflect Indigenous cultures. TPL is working alongside Tribal nations, Tribal schools, Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Indigenous communities, and the USDA Forest Service to transform uninspired schoolyards into culturally relevant green spaces that redress disparities in mental and physical health, climate vulnerability, and outdoor learning, while celebrating Indigenous lifeways.

Forested Community Schoolyards Program Description

Through the Urban & Community Forestry Program, under the Inflation Reduction Act (Funding Opportunity #: USDA-FS-2023-UCF-IRA-01), TPL is proud to serve as a national pass-through partner of the Forest Service to provide funding for TPL's *Forested Community Schoolyards Pass-Through Program*. The program will provide funding opportunities for federally recognized tribes, state-recognized tribes, tribally controlled schools, BIE-operated schools, tribal agencies, and tribally led nonprofits who support community efforts to reimagine how school grounds across Tribal and Indigenous communities are designed, maintained, and stewarded for student learning, climate resilience, and community use.

TPL seeks to fund Tribal and Indigenous community-led projects and programs that will protect, enhance, and expand tree canopy and outdoor learning in schoolyards; encourage maintenance and monitoring of trees; and/or provide training and employment opportunities for planning, planting, and sustainably maintaining trees and greenspaces. TPL is interested in funding projects and programs that align with our strategic commitments to advance positive health outcomes, mitigate climate outcomes, champion



equity in project locations and community engagement, center community, and advance learning outcomes.

We encourage community-inspired visions for a new model of forested Community Schoolyard® projects that may address any one or more of the following objectives:

- Celebrate Native cultures and build a resilient future for Indigenous people;
- Disrupt colonial practices that have contributed to epidemics of poverty, chronic diseases, and gaps in educational outcomes;
- Celebrate tribally designed recreation amenities and natural features that foster physical health and mental wellbeing;
- Provide natural hands-on learning environments or features that boost concentration and educational outcomes;
- Provide opportunities for nature-based play and exploration; and/or
- Implement natural climate solutions, like trees and rain gardens, to buffer communities from flooding, heat waves, and drought.

Proposals may include any of the following eligible activities and items: planning, community outreach, participatory design with students, community engagement before and during planting, schoolyard concept design development, professional design associated with improvements, irrigation, trees, shrubs, grasses and ground cover, planting, soil amendment, limited removal and disposal of concrete/asphalt and subbase/subgrade for tree planting, landscape fabric and associated landscape materials, natural boulders, boulder placement, stump rounds, felled trees and placement for seating or play, felling trees for use in nature play, nature play, mulch, engineered wood fiber, decomposed granite, irrigation stone, shade structures and outdoor classroom components, food forests, orchards, stewardship activities after planting, supplies for volunteer events (excluding food), teacher stipends, teacher professional development, training and the creation of outdoor learning lessons, apprenticeship programs and workforce development.

This funding opportunity cannot fund heavy construction, land acquisition, equipment purchases, manufactured playground equipment, or site furniture.

Available Funding

Individual awards will range from \$250,000 to \$500,000 over a three-year period, depending on the scope of work. A maximum of \$3,460,000 in total funding is available. There is no match requirement for projects that deliver 100 percent of the funding/program benefits to disadvantaged communities. Please refer to the “Eligibility” requirements below for more details.

Timeline

Wednesday, August 21, 2024	Applications open
Monday, September 9 at 3pm ET	Live Q&A Session/Application Support
Friday, November 8, 2024 at 11:59pm ET	Applications due
Friday, November 22, 2024	Applicants notified



The anticipated period of performance for all grants is January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2027. If necessary to complete grant activities, recipients can request a 6-month no-cost extension. All project work must be completed, and funds expended by June 30, 2028.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include federally recognized tribes, state-recognized tribes, tribally controlled schools, BIE-operated schools, a department or agency within a Tribal Nation, and tribally led nonprofits. All funds awarded must be utilized to benefit federally designated “disadvantaged” communities, based on tools such as the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and the EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities tool. TPL will confirm all proposals meet this eligibility criteria. If you are unsure if your organization and/or the community your project or program will benefit will meet this eligibility requirement, please contact CSYGrants@tpl.org for assistance.

II. Selection Criteria

Application review will be conducted using a scoring rubric that aims for fair and objective assessment of applications. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria, with a maximum of 100 points:

Project Narrative	0-50 points	Summary of project to include: applicant introduction, project summary, project goals and activities, target population, project capacity, expected outputs and outcomes, and evaluation plan. Note: A required output of this grant is the planting and establishment care of trees or planning associated with the planting and care of trees. The use of noninvasive, native, and/or traditional plants and plantings is also encouraged.
Alignment Statement	0-25 points	Description of how proposed outdoor project/tree planting program may advance the following objectives: 1) generate positive health outcomes, 2) mitigate climate outcomes, 3) champion equity, 4) center community in decision making, and 5) advance learning about trees and native vegetation. Note: Alignment is NOT required across all categories; however, proposals demonstrating multiple alignments are encouraged.
Eligibility	REQUIRED	Demonstrated/documentated eligibility status as described in Part I above.
Budget and Cost Effectiveness	0-25points	Budget and narrative are submitted using provided templates. Costs estimated are reasonable and allowable.



III. Application Instructions

Proposal Requirements and Explanation of Terms

Proposals should contain four parts: 1) a completed application form (which includes a project narrative and alignment statement), 2) proof of eligibility, 3) a budget, and 4) a budget narrative. Each component is described below.

Application Form

Competitive application forms will contain your project narrative (maximum three pages) and alignment statement (maximum one page), addressing each of the following application elements:

The **applicant introduction** describes your mission and goals, as well the connection/relationship with the population being served in the project. Effective introductions will also support eligibility requirements.

The **project summary** provides an overview of your community-led vision for your project or program, with an emphasis on why the forested Community Schoolyards® effort is important for the students and broader community.

Project goals and activities detail what you plan to do and accomplish with your project or program, and how you will execute those plans with relevant activities, including stewardship and maintenance. Please also include an estimated timeline of activities.

The **target population** is a description of the community the project or program will engage and benefit.

Project capacity describes your ability to do the work of the project or program you propose. Summarize personnel, resources, and related capacities that are or will be in place to support your project or program. Please also list your partners and their roles and responsibilities.

The **expected outputs** summarize how your project or program will protect, enhance, and expand tree canopy; engage the community in project development and implementation; encourage the maintenance and monitoring of trees; and/or provide training and employment opportunities for planning, planting, and maintaining trees and greenspaces. The **expected outcomes** section describes the impact your project or program will have on the target population and surrounding community.

Your **evaluation plan** details how you will track and measure your success. Please note: Subaward recipients will be required to submit impact reports directly to the Forest Service every six months through an online reporting platform. Recipients will also be required to submit regular grant progress and financial reports to TPL every six months, via email. A basic template will be provided.

Your **alignment statement** is a brief statement (maximum one page) describing how your forested Community Schoolyards® project or program aligns with one or more of TPL's commitments to advance positive health outcomes, mitigate climate outcomes, champion equity in project location and community engagement, center community, and/or advance learning outcomes.



Note: Alignment is NOT required across all categories; however, proposals demonstrating multiple alignments are encouraged.

Eligibility

The application form requires a brief eligibility statement (250 words maximum) summarizing how the applicant and the community the proposed project or program will benefit qualify for this funding opportunity. In addition, please include in your application evidence of your status as a federally recognized tribe, state-recognized tribe, tribally controlled school, BIE-operated school, a department or agency within a Tribal Nation, or tribally led nonprofit.

Applicant eligibility supporting documentation can include IRS nonprofit Section 501(c)(3) determination letter; demographic data of students served; documentation signaling status as a federally recognized tribe, tribal department or agency within a Tribal Nation, tribally led nonprofit or school, BIE-operated school, etc.

Budget and Budget Narrative

Please provide a budget and budget narrative for your project or program using the provided templates (see attached).

The budget is your numbers-based financial plan for executing your project or program. Please include whole dollar amounts for personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies (no food), contractual, and other (as needed).

The budget narrative is a brief explanation of how you arrived at the dollar amounts in your budget for each category.

Indirect Costs

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) may be used, if established.

De minimis rate: Any Non-Federal entity (except State and local governments that receive more than \$35 million per year in Federal funding) that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect rate (NICRA) may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in 2 CFR 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, and travel. MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, and participant support costs. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.



Federal Requirements

Because this is a subaward of federal funds from the Forest Service, the eligible entity receiving funds must comply with federal requirements, including the OMB guidance for federal procurement at 2 CFR 200, federal health and safety regulations, federal minimum wage, etc. Applicants must not be debarred or suspended, comply with annual audit requirements, and have the financial capabilities to administer a grant.

Expectations for Award Recipients

Subaward recipients will be expected to meet with TPL staff at least once a month to discuss project progress, navigate project challenges, and receive technical support.

Subaward recipients will be required to submit impact reports directly to the USFS every six months through a provided USFS reporting platform. Recipients will also be required to submit regular grant progress and financial reports to TPL every six months, via email. A basic template will be provided.

Submission Instructions

Download and complete the application, using the guidance above in this Request for Proposals to help you complete each section. The application is a Word document that can be edited to accommodate your application details. Please be mindful of the page limits for each section. Save your application as one PDF file.

Proposals will be accepted via e-mail. Only complete proposals will be eligible for review. Complete proposals will contain the following:

- Application Form
- Proof of eligibility
- Budget
- Budget narrative

Proposals should be saved as a single PDF file and e-mailed to CSYGrants@tpl.org by Friday, November 8 at 11:59pm ET.

Submission Instructions

IV. Application Support

TPL will provide multiple opportunities for technical assistance to interested applicants:

Register here for a live informational webinar to be held September 9, 3pm ET. The webinar will be recorded and posted if you are unable to make the live event.

TPL will support all interested applicants through the application process. Please let us know how we can assist by emailing your questions or other concerns to CSYGrants@tpl.org.