Maryland Department of Agriculture
Atlantic Conservation Coalition - Climate Pollution Reduction Grant
Public Lands Agroforestry - Request for Proposals

The Maryland Department of Agriculture ("MDA" or the "Department") issues this Request for Proposals (RFP) from eligible persons seeking a grant to fund the planning and implementation of agroforestry demonstration sites for the purposes of research and monitoring or establishing demonstration sites for education and outreach. Projects implemented on lands owned by federal, state, or local government agencies, as well as lands owned or managed by public or private universities, religious entities or land trusts that prioritize research, education, or public access are eligible to apply for these funds.

The purpose of this request is to encourage the planning and implementation of proven and innovative agroforestry techniques that strive to include design elements to achieve the outcomes listed below. Grantees will include data collection and sharing of research results or propose a demonstration site to include regular public outreach and educational components in the proposal. All Projects should engage key stakeholders and the public on the demonstrated benefits of agroforestry systems.

For purposes of this RFP, agroforestry is defined as the intentional combining of agriculture and working trees to create sustainable systems. Agroforestry practices covered under this RFP are windbreaks/hedgerows, alley cropping, silvopasture, riparian forest buffers, and forest farming or food forests designed and installed consistent with NRCS standards. To be eligible for financial assistance, the Project must have strong potential to achieve 3 or more of the following outcomes:

- Reduce greenhouse (GHG) emissions
- Increase soil carbon sequestration
- Increase resiliency of farm production systems
- Improve access to parks and recreational green space for low income/disadvantaged communities (LIDACs)
- Increase tree canopy cover
- Improve adaptation to extreme weather events
- Improve water quality
- Improve biodiversity and wildlife habitat
- Improve the health of communities and ecosystems

The Department will employ a ranking system to evaluate proposals as described in Section 3.

SECTION 1- GENERAL INFORMATION

Background

Financial assistance is being made available through the Atlantic Conservation Coalition by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. The Grant calls for the implementation of agroforestry practices on 400 acres of public lands in Maryland. **Funding is available up to $350,000 annually for agroforestry implementation.** Funding exists for state fiscal years 2027-2030. There is no minimum amount for requests.

Timeline

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis through April 30, 2030. The Department anticipates that applicants will be notified of award status within 2 months of application.

Grant Requirements

The Grantee is expected to perform all necessary work under the Grant Agreement by dates to be included in the Grant Agreement, but no later than August 31, 2030. The Grantee is expected to develop a timeline that outlines proposed ("Project") milestones and anticipated completion. **At the sole discretion of the Department and upon request with justification by the Grantee, this timeline may be modified to address unforeseen issues that the Grantee has incurred in implementing the Project. If the Project extends beyond the stated grant period, the Department will not be responsible for any additional costs that the Grantee incurs.**

The Grantee shall be responsible for interim progress reports on a quarterly basis, and a close-out report at the completion of the grant period.

Quarterly reports must include:

1. The status of Project implementation, indicating milestones achieved that year.
2. A statement as to whether the approved timeline is being met, including a detailed justification addressing any delays and documenting a strategy for addressing delays within a specified timeline.
3. A description of any modifications made to the Project scope and budget as detailed in the Application, such as operational or functional changes to address the parameters of the site or farm operation.
4. Categorize and document all expenditures connected to the Project and include copies of associated receipts.
5. Photos and any relevant supporting documentation.

Closeout reports must include:

1. Performance monitoring information.
2. Plans for continued Project implementation after the grant closes (as applicable)

3. A description of outreach and education efforts (including an event summary, population served, and number of participants).

General Requirements

The Grantee shall install and implement the Project in the following manner:

1. Provide technical and administrative support as well as oversight for installation, maintenance and outreach/demonstration during a period of time established in the Grant Agreement. The Project must be implemented and managed in a manner consistent with achieving Project outcomes.
2. Adhere to the Project's implementation timetable and meet identified milestones as established in the proposal. Award recipients will be required to collaborate and be responsible for on-site performance documentation as a condition of accepting an award.
3. Environmental or performance monitoring to include installation of appropriate monitoring equipment and laboratory analysis, as applicable, shall be included in applications to qualify for an award under this RFP.
4. MDA may facilitate and provide support for monitoring certain performance parameters, such as pre-and post-Project soil testing using the Cornell Soil Test and MD Soil Health Card to assess changes in soil health measures over the Project duration
5. Cooperatively work with individuals or institutions, approved by MDA, that would benefit from exposure to the Project.
6. Performance results will be shared with interested stakeholders and posted in publicly available reports.
7. Projects will be made accessible for scheduled tours.
8. Meet all necessary local, state or federal requirements for Project implementation, including compliance with all terms, conditions, requirements, and restrictions applicable to Subrecipients pursuant to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant.

The Grantee agrees to allow the Department to share certain Project information with MDA partners, including, but not limited to the Contractor's name, Project field location(s), conservation practices implemented, site photos, application, and site evaluation documents. Any information for publications or other public communications will only be shared by Grantee consent, unless otherwise required by law.

Applicants will be required to provide a written report of quarterly progress to Grant Monitor Nick Miller, nicholas.miller2@maryland.gov for review. Applicants must describe Project progress and include any substantive changes or clarifications to their Project. Any such written clarifications or changes shall become part of the Applicant's proposal and are binding if the grant is awarded.

Substitution of Personnel

Key personnel shall be the same personnel proposed in the application and will be incorporated into the Grant by reference. Such identified key personnel shall perform continuously for the duration of the

Grant, or such less duration as specified in the proposal. Key personnel may not be removed from the Project under this Grant without the prior written approval of the Grant Monitor. The applicant shall demonstrate to the Grant Monitor's satisfaction that the proposed substitute key personnel have qualifications and experience at least equal to those the key personnel for whom the replacement is requested.

Application Submission
Please submit your application packet in an email attachment (in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format) to Nick Miller at nicholas.miller2@maryland.gov

Right to Cancel and Other Reserved Rights
The State reserves the right to cancel this RFP, accept or reject any and all proposals, in whole or in part, received in response to this RFP, to waive or permit the cure of minor irregularities, and to conduct discussion with all qualified or potentially qualified applicants in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of the State.

Verification of Registration and Insurance
When applicable, MDA will confirm registration and standing of any business entity responding to the RFP with the State Department of Assessments and Taxation ("SDAT"). The website to register is https://egov.maryland.gov/businessexpress.

In addition, if applicable, MDA will require, for all work performed by the Grantee that is to be funded in whole or in part with grant funds provided by MDA, that the Grantee shall purchase and maintain comprehensive third-party legal liability insurance or its equivalent with limits sufficient to cover losses resulting from, or arising out of, action or inaction in the performance of the Grant Agreement by the Grantee, its agents, servant, employees, or subcontractors. Insurance limits will be determined by MDA at time of award.

SECTION 2- MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

These Minimum Qualifications are requirements that must be met by a Grantee:

1. Projects must be implemented on properties owned by federal, state, or local government agencies, or owned or managed by public or private schools or universities, religious entities or land trusts prioritizing research, education, or public access.

2. Proposals must include written verification in the form of a cover letter or letter of support from the site manager or other representative of the land holding entity that a site has been secured for Project implementation for the duration of the grant period.

3. Proposals must include a budget detailing how the funds will be distributed, including estimated costs for each item. If the applicant is providing matching funds or in-kind contributions, it should be stated in the budget, including the amount of the match

4. The Grantee and other key personnel working on the Project shall have relevant and material experience with the Project elements described in the Proposal. The Grantee will have key personnel who possess/have the necessary knowledge, experience, and training to successfully implement the steps outlined in the Proposal Narrative.

SECTION 3- EVALUATION COMMITTEE, CRITERIA, AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

Evaluation Committee

Evaluation of proposals will be performed by a committee established by the Department for that purpose. The Evaluation Committee will review proposals, participate in applicant discussions, review the applicant's written responses, and provide input to the Department. The Department reserves the right to utilize the services of individuals outside of the established Evaluation Committee for advice and assistance, as deemed appropriate.

Evaluation Criteria

The State of Maryland seeks to promote sustainable land management practices for long-term benefits, leveraging the benefits of "working trees" and the use of tree and shrub integration to:

(a) Improve soil health, air and water quality, water conservation, and carbon sequestration; and
(b) Diversify, mitigate risk, and enhance ecological stewardship of lands.

Installation of agroforestry demonstration sites will create opportunities to measure/quantify these benefits and encourage widespread adoption through public engagement and education. There are no minimum or maximum acreage requirements for p Projects. Grant funds must be used to support the implementation of agroforestry practices on public lands. Grant funding can be used for all aspects of Project implementation, including planning, materials and equipment, research costs, labor, education and outreach, and administrative costs required to meet project goals. To this end, the Evaluation Committee, in evaluating each Proposal, shall utilize the criteria listed immediately below. (Note: The importance of each criterion is listed in descending order; and unless stated otherwise, any sub-criteria within a criterion have equal weight.):

1. The extent to which the Project uses the integration of trees and shrubs within existing landscapes to achieve the outcomes cited on page 1.

2. The Grantee's readiness to begin implementing the Project and ability to complete it in a timely manner as demonstrated by:
    a. The expertise of key personnel and their expertise in relation to implementation of the proposed Project
    b. The sufficiency of staffing and, in particular, the employees and/or contractors named to develop/install/construct/implement the proposed Project

c. The external financing available to develop/install/construct/implement the proposed Project (other than the requested grant sum).

3. Additional consideration may be given to Projects that provide economic or social benefits, particularly for low income/disadvantaged communities (LIDACs) and landscapes that may be designated as ecologically critical.

SECTION 4- PROPOSAL FORMAT

The Proposal shall include the following documents and information in the order specified. All pages of proposal shall be consecutively numbered from beginning (Page 1) to end (Page "x").

1. **Title Page**

2. **Cover Letter:** The Cover Letter should be brief and signed by an individual who is authorized to commit the Applicant to the services and requirements as stated in this Request. The Cover Letter should include the following:

   - Name and address of the Applicant
   - Name, title, e-mail address, and telephone number of primary contact for the Applicant
   - Project Title
   - Signature, typed name, and title of an individual authorized to commit the Applicant to its Proposal
   - Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)
   - Applications for Projects implemented on grounds managed by institutions of higher education require a faculty member to serve as lead or co-lead on the project. If the Project lead is a faculty member not affiliated with the university managing the grounds, the co-lead must be affiliated with the managing institution of higher education. The application must include a letter of support from the center director of the participating experimental station if they are not the signatory on the Cover Letter.

3. **Proposal Narrative:** The Applicant must submit a Proposal Narrative that includes the following information:

   a. **Project Description**: The location of the current site and what practices or systems you are proposing to implement. Include a detailed aerial site map of the existing site with all existing structures labelled and the proposed Project location illustrated. Describe the existing site conditions, including soil types and condition, typography, USDA Plant Hardiness zone, compass rose, vegetation, usage history, and any other pertinent information. Use the Site Plan Planting Template to provide Project details and describe

how the Project will achieve the desired outcomes. Photographs of the site with descriptions to support the narrative are encouraged.

b. **Project Outcomes:** The outcomes you expect to gain from Project implementation: e.g., reduced GHG emissions, increases in organic matter or soil organic carbon, improved air or water quality, reduction in carbon intensive inputs, increased biodiversity etc.
c. Describe your **Methods** for measuring and tracking the stated outcomes.
d. Provide a **Project Timeline**: a detailed annual breakdown that illustrates how your Project will be implemented over the grant period with annual milestones.
e. **Data Sharing**: Indicate how the Project outcomes will be recorded and shared with MDA.
f. **Education and Outreach**: Identify key community stakeholders and describe how they will be engaged in outreach and education efforts over the grant period.
g. Include a **Project Maintenance Section** that describes how the Project will be maintained, expanded, or potentially improved after the grant period closes.
h. **Identification and Marking**: The Applicant must clearly identify and mark any information within its proposal that it believes constitutes trade secrets, or confidential commercial or financial information.

5**. Documentation of Proposed Staff, Partners and Subcontractors:** The Applicant shall identify the number and types of staff proposed, including Project partners and subcontractors to be utilized under the Grant. Describe in detail the specific responsibilities of key staff and subcontractors pertaining to all stages of Project completion.

6**. Applicant Qualifications and Capabilities:** The Applicant shall include information on experience with similar Projects and/or services. The Applicant shall describe how the organization can meet the requirements of this Request.

7**. Project Budget:** All proposals must include a detailed budget. Please follow the instructions below and use the form provided on the website to complete the Project budget requirement.

8. **Site Plan and Tree and Shrub Planting Template:** All proposals must include detailed maps or design documents clearly illustrating the site plan for Project installation. Additionally, proposals must include a complete Tree and Shrub Planting Template, provided on the website.

Financial Information:

1. Grant funding can be used for all aspects of Project implementation, including planning, materials and equipment, research costs, labor, education and outreach and administrative costs required to meet Project goals. Applicants may add other funding categories as needed. Indirect costs are ineligible for funding.
2. The Proposal shall contain all price information in the format specified. The Applicant shall provide information as provided in instructions for financial information and complete the Budget Form.

3. Outside funds, such as cost-share or matching funds, are not required, but they are encouraged.
4. An Applicant must document and identify outside funds that have been secured or committed and their source(s), and how they are to be applied for activities and materials supporting this Project. This information should be included in the budget form, including any grants, matching funds, or in-kind funds, and liabilities.
5. All calculations shall be rounded to the nearest dollar, i.e., anything $.50 or above rounded up and below $.50 rounded down.