

Request for Proposals: Food Sovereignty Projects

Issued By:

United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET)
Office of Environmental Resource Management (OERM)
711 Stewarts Ferry Pike, Ste. 100
Nashville, TN 37214

USET Contact:

Lea Zeise, OERM Assistant Director
lzeise@usetinc.org

Issue Date: September 17, 2025

Due Date: October 17, 2025

Upload proposals [here](#) by **3:00 pm CST on October 17, 2025**. Submit questions to Lea Zeise by 3:00 pm CST on October 10, 2025. Answers will be provided by 1:00 PM CST on October 14, 2025.

Approved for Distribution:

Lea Zeise

Assistant Director, OERM

Leigh Mitchell

Director, OERM

United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

Established in 1969, the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization representing thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations. USET is dedicated to enhancing the development of Tribal Nations, and improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and improving the quality of life for Indian people through a variety of technical and supportive programmatic services.

Food Sovereignty Program

USET's Office of Environmental Resource Management initiated the Food Sovereignty Program in 2020. In the past five years, USET has partnered with member Tribal Nations on over a dozen projects to advance food sovereignty, conservation, and cultural practices. Past projects include Native Plant Nurseries to grow local native plant stock and educational workshops in community gardens to promote small-scale conservation practices. USET has also supported youth summits, events, and workshop series to promote conservation career paths and blend Traditional Ecological Knowledge with institutional science perspectives.

Scope of Work

USET is requesting proposals from its membership for the third round of projects funded by United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and in partnership with Intertribal Agriculture Council. The purpose of this funding is to promote implementation, outreach, and partnerships related to the conservation of soil, water, and wildlife and pollinator habitat. Project proposals must include an element of engagement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service on a local, state, or regional level. Priority will be given to proposals that connect cultural practices and knowledge with the project activities AND include an outreach component to the USET membership. Tribal Nations may submit up to two proposals with a limit of one proposal per category. Proposals should align with one of the following categories:

1. **Youth Projects:** Proposals must engage Tribal youth in conservation, agriculture, and/or Traditional Ecological Knowledge. These projects are encouraged to offer hands-on and intergenerational learning opportunities and connect cultural knowledge, science, and practices with Western scientific knowledge. Projects should include an element of conservation and agriculture career exploration for youth. Maximum project budget: \$25,000.
2. **Pilot Conservation Project:** Proposals support a new conservation or agriculture project, initiative, or program. Projects must include a component of outreach or education to community members. Maximum project budget: \$40,000.
3. **Intermediate Conservation Project:** Proposals should build upon conservation or food sovereignty programs in operation for two or more years with new activities, including

outreach, education, and/or new cultural or conservation practices. Maximum project budget \$60,000.

4. **Advanced Conservation Project:** Proposals should demonstrate significant past progress towards food sovereignty or conservation goals and demonstrate a clear project to significantly advance and expand program impact. Projects must include an outreach component to share outcomes with the USET membership. Maximum project budget \$120,000.

Timeline

Proposals are due October 17, 2025 at 3:00pm CT. Project plans may start as early as November 1, 2025 and must be completed by August 17, 2026. No project work shall begin prior to full execution of a contract agreement.

Eligibility

USET member Tribal Nations are eligible for all categories. Other organizations, including non-profits, may apply for the youth category and must include a letter of pre-approval from Tribal Leadership with their application.

Eligible expenditures must follow the 2 CFR Part 300 guidelines and may include salary, fringe, travel, supplies, contractual assistance, equipment under \$5,000, and indirect costs at an established federal negotiated rate.

Elements of Proposal

Proposals shall contain the following elements not to exceed three pages:

1. **Scope of Work Description (350 words maximum):** Project work plan with goals and clear milestone deliverables with due dates. Some examples of deliverables include hosting an event or webinar, producing a report, completing a training, or implementing a conservation activity.
2. **Related Past Work (250 words maximum):** Required for Intermediate and Advanced Conservation Projects, provide a summary of related past work and accomplishments. *Optional for Youth and Pilot Conservation Projects.*
3. **Budget:** Formatted on an Excel spreadsheet with budget categories: Salary, Fringe, Supplies, Equipment, Travel, Other (Professional Development, Printing, Etc.), and Indirect Costs.
4. **Tribal Approval Letter:** Required by organizations designated to do work on behalf of or for USET member Tribal Nations for youth projects ONLY. Letters are **not required** to be included with USET member Tribal Nation proposals.

Selection Criteria & Process

USET will conduct an internal review to select proposals received by **3:00 pm CST on October 17, 2025**. Proposals will be evaluated for their potential to advance food sovereignty, conservation, and/or education and outreach among USET member Tribal Nations. Selected projects will be awarded a contract identifying milestones and payment schedules.

USET will not consider proposals that are incomplete, submitted by any other means than the [submission link](#), and/or received past the deadline.