



REACHING OUT:

A USDA Forest Service Toolkit
for Equal Participation



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I. REACHING OUT: A USDA FOREST SERVICE TOOLKIT FOR EQUAL PARTICIPATION

This toolkit is designed to help you—as a liaison with landowners, community leaders, nonprofit organizations, and volunteer groups that are implementing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service programs in your area—meet USDA and Forest Service goals and requirements for outreach to populations that have been traditionally underserved. There are communities, organizations, and individuals throughout the country, which, although qualified, traditionally have not received funding or assistance from Cooperative Forestry programs. As our Nation grows more diverse, the need to reach out to all segments of society, particularly the underserved populations and communities, becomes more pronounced. Accordingly, the mission, plans, and activities of the USDA Forest Service must be accessible to all those who qualify for them.

This toolkit will help you become aware of USDA Forest Service expectations and guide you in making your community outreach efforts more effective. Although it emphasizes Cooperative Forestry programs, it contains tips that could also be useful in managing other Forest Service programs. By assisting you in developing a *Public Outreach Plan*, the toolkit will help assure that USDA Forest Service programs are open to equal participation by traditionally underserved populations. The goals and requirements for public outreach apply to USDA Forest Service employees and organizations as well as State governmental or nongovernmental groups that administer programs funded by the USDA Forest Service.

“Traditionally underserved populations are individuals, groups, populations, or communities that the Forest Service has not effectively protected, supported, or promoted in the delivery of programs and services on a fair and equitable basis. The underserved have been minority groups (including American Indians or Alaska Natives), persons below the poverty level, and persons with disabilities.” *From: USDA Forest Service Interim Strategic Public Outreach Plan, April 2000*



II. OVERVIEW OF COOPERATIVE FORESTRY PROGRAMS

Cooperative Forestry is a Staff within the USDA Forest Service; its mission is to promote the sound stewardship of our Nation's State and private forests.

There are nearly 500 million acres of non-Federal forest land in the United States, comprising about 20 percent of the Nation's landmass and two-thirds of the Nation's forests. Over 50 percent of the Nation's forests are privately owned. Management practices on these lands impact everyone's social, economic, and natural environment.

Additionally, there are over 13,000 communities outside of the Nation's metropolitan areas. More than 32 million people live in rural areas; the economy of over 70 percent of these rural counties is dependent upon their natural resources.

The USDA Forest Service Cooperative Forestry programs provide technical and financial assistance to help rural and urban citizens, including private landowners, care for forests and sustain their communities where they live, work, and play. Through partnerships with State forestry organizations and others, Federal funding is leveraged to help produce a variety of forest-based goods and services to meet domestic and international needs.

Economic Action Programs help rural communities and businesses dependent on forest-based resources become sustainable and self-sufficient.

- *The Rural Community Assistance Programs* help rural communities build skills, networks, and strategies to address social, environmental, and economic changes.

- *The Forest Products Conservation and Recycling Program* helps communities and businesses find new and expanded business opportunities based on forest resources.

- *The Market Development and Expansion Program* helps develop new markets for forest-based goods and services.

Landowner Assistance Programs help private landowners protect, improve, restore, and sustain forests.

- *The Forest Legacy Program* protects private forest lands from being converted to nonforest uses.

- *The Forest Stewardship Program* helps private forest landowners develop plans for the sustainable management of their forests.

- *The Stewardship Incentives Program* provides financial assistance to private landowners to carry out their stewardship plans. This program has not been funded since 1998.

These programs also support implementation of forestry practices by other Federal and State agencies through their land conservation programs.





The Urban and Community Forestry Program

helps people in urban areas and community settings sustain shade trees, forest lands, and open spaces. This program improves the quality of life in urban communities across the Nation by maintaining, restoring, and improving the health of trees, forests, and green spaces.

- The program helps State forestry agencies, local and tribal governments, and the private sector improve natural resource management of trees and forests in urban areas and community settings.
 - The program encourages and facilitates the active involvement of volunteers in the management and protection of their community's natural resources.
- The program analyzes, develops, disseminates, and demonstrates scientific information about protecting, managing, and maintaining community forest resources.

THE MANDATE

As the manager of a program that receives funding from the USDA Forest Service, there are a number of things you should be doing to enhance public outreach. The following statements represent a partial list of guidelines provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as regulations and directives put forward by the USDA Forest Service and higher levels of the USDA.

- Assure that all programs are accessible to all those who qualify for assistance.
- Eliminate any discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

Case Study #1: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the USDA Forest Service Southern Region and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund

This memorandum is a partnership commitment to increase the number of minority landowners that have started to practice sustainable management of their forested lands in the Southern Region. Under the agreement, the two entities will work together to help identify traditionally underserved forest landowners by State. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund will help promote USDA Forest Service goals and objectives. In return, the USDA Forest Service will involve the Federation in developing multicultural outreach strategies for the State and Private Forestry programs. Further, the USDA Forest Service will work with these groups and State agencies to develop and implement sustainable forestry programs for Federation lands and minority landowners throughout the South.

- Work to ensure effective public participation and access to information.
- Strive to overcome linguistic, cultural, institutional, geographic, and other barriers to meaningful participation.
- Seek tribal representation in a manner that is consistent with the government-to-government relationship between the United States and tribal governments, the Federal Government's trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes, and any treaty rights.
- Reach out in ways that are proactive to persons who have not participated equally in programs and activities in the past.
- Use positive examples of employment and program participation by minorities, women, and other protected groups in pictures and other visual and audio public information materials.
- Include the USDA nondiscrimination statement on all materials produced for public information. See USDA Departmental Regulation 4300-3 at <http://www.usda.gov/ocio/directives/DR/DR4300-003.htm> for a copy of the current version of the full text of the USDA non-discrimination statement and the recommended abbreviated version of the statement for States and other partners.

Section IV of this document includes a list of the laws, regulations, and directives that have created the mandate for public outreach in Federal programs.

Case Study #2: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the USDA Forest Service and the National Network of Forest Practitioners

The purpose of this memorandum is to build a strong coalition of support for rural communities and to achieve quality land management for our Nation's forests. The National Network of Forest Practitioners (NNFP) is a grassroots alliance of individuals, organizations, and businesses in rural areas committed to finding practical ways to integrate economic development, environmental protection, and social justice. The NNFP seeks to accomplish its goals through peer training, technical assistance, information exchange, support for local and regional networks, access to policymakers, and promotion of its ideas on a national level. The MOU emphasizes a commitment to environmental justice and assistance for minority and underserved forest practitioners. Working together, the USDA Forest Service and NNFP have provided funding that enables a greater number of traditionally underserved individuals and groups to attend NNFP annual meetings, special forums, and USDA Forest Service events. They have encouraged collaborative stewardship through strengthened community organizations.

III. THE PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN

The Public Outreach Plan is a tool to help you become more aware of where the underserved populations in your area are, whether you have been providing fair access to all potential participants, and how to increase the participation of those groups in your programs. Your plan will include specific goals for identifying potential participants, strategies for reaching out and communicating with them, a timeline for implementing the plan, and methods for monitoring progress. You can develop a Public Outreach Plan by following the seven steps described in this document. These steps provide a good, general start to developing your plan. However, you will also want to tailor your plan to meet the needs of your community.

STEP 1: DESCRIBE THE DIVERSITY OF THE POPULATION IN YOUR AREA

The first step in developing a Public Outreach Plan is understanding the composition and diversity of the population that can be served by USDA Forest Service programs in your area by determining who your potential program participants may be. To describe the population, you must answer the following questions. What is the size of the population you serve? What is the ethnic composition of the population, for example, what percentage of the population is Hispanic, African American, and Native American? What percentage of your population is female? What percentage is disabled?

The data on forest landowners is not readily available within the USDA Forest Service. An upcoming survey study of nonindustrial private forest owners (NIPF) will include questions on race, ethnicity and national origin, gender, and disability status. However, the results of this study will not be available for several years. Right now, the U.S. Census Bureau provides the best information for describing the racial and ethnic composition of our national population and the population within smaller geographical areas. Some of the following resources and research techniques suggest ways to determine the diversity of the population and the potential participants in USDA Forest Service programs in your service area.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

The Web site for the U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov>, contains valuable information. Within the site, select a State and then a county to view the information on racial makeup, gender breakdown, and poverty levels of that area. This information does not single out forest landowners, but it does provide an overview of the ethnic composition of the population by county. A new resource, *CensusCD Blocks*, is a Web site that contains complete data and maps for 7 million U.S. census blocks, which are distinct geographical areas different from counties. This source includes U.S. Census Bureau population and housing data and CD Block boundaries. To view this data go to <http://www.censuscd.com/cdblocks/cdblocks.htm>.

TAX ROLLS

Agricultural land may be taxed differently than residential or other types of land; it may be divided into “cropland” and “uncultivated agricultural land” categories. The tax records, or rolls, in some areas identify the owners of several acres or more of uncultivated agricultural land and indicate whether the land is pasture or forest land. An examination of these records will turn up NIPF landowners. Although time consuming, analyzing tax rolls is an effective method of identifying potential participants in USDA Forest Service programs. The Mississippi State University Extension Service has had success in analyzing tax rolls, which were purchased from private companies contracted to collect tax data. The companies must submit a request to the county to disclose tax data, which may extend the time it will take to collect the information.

OTHER RESOURCES

There are individuals within every community whom you may contact to obtain information about the diversity of the population in your area. Examples of certain professionals who may be helpful to you are:

- Members of State university forestry or natural resource schools and sociology departments who work with rural landowners or community groups, either through formal extension programs or on research projects.
- Private forestry consultants with statewide or large, within-State clientele.
- Urban foresters.

- Bankers, appraisers, and realtors who specialize in land sales and acquisitions (rural and urban) and have clients who are geographically dispersed.
- Sawmill operators or other customers of logging products.

A Directory of Organizations, including names of national and State organizations that work with underserved landowners, is being developed by the Cooperative Forestry Staff and copies will be available. The staff of the organizations listed in the directory may also help identify potential program participants.

After you have obtained as complete information as you can from all the sources available to you, describe your population’s characteristics. Include in your description a section on diversity and include the racial, ethnic, gender, and disability characteristics, as well as the socioeconomic levels, of the population that you serve. This population description will be the basis for identifying the underserved populations and your potential participants.



STEP 2: IDENTIFY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

You may already be asking program participants to voluntarily disclose information on race, national origin, gender, and disability status. If you have this information, the next step in developing your Public Outreach Plan is to compare that information to the population description you just established. The comparison will tell you whether you have been providing fair and equal access to all the people who qualify for your programs.

For example, if 10 percent of the people in your area that qualify for the Forest Stewardship Program are Hispanic, and your records show that Hispanics account for only 2 percent of the people that have received assistance, then you may conclude that the program is underserving Hispanic landowners. Consequently, a goal of your outreach plan would be to increase outreach to Hispanic landowners.

Comparing the potential participants from your population description to your actual participants will lead you to establish clear goals for your Public Outreach Plan.

potential participants and bring them into your programs. This is also a time to evaluate your past communication efforts and determine which methods have been effective and which methods have not yielded much success.

Perhaps you feel that you have tried to reach out to these groups but have found them unreceptive to your efforts. Or, it may be that with limited funding, you feel that everyone is “underserved” and that your program cannot sustain any new members. Know that both of these conditions can be overcome; neither should stop you from proceeding with your Public Outreach Plan.

Evaluate the success of your past efforts. When you were trying to reach potential participants, for example, those who speak Spanish, were your communication materials translated into their language? Providing equal opportunity to all people who qualify for USDA Forest Service funds means first providing equal notification about your programs. Be sure to communicate to potential participants by using the means available to them and that they will understand.

Tip: Bridging the Communications Gap

State employees at the Sand Hills State Forest (SC) work along with Hispanic workers in the pine straw industry. To improve communications, six employees took a State-funded, 6-week course in Spanish.

STEP 3: REACH OUT TO UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Identifying the underserved groups in your community is the important first part of your Public Outreach Plan, but it is only the beginning. The next step is to find new ways to reach out to those



INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO THE COMMUNITY

A good way to reach underserved populations is by making contacts with or introducing yourself to personnel at agencies, religious organizations, and nonprofit and other community organizations that work with minority groups in your area. For example, attend a town or church meeting, and introduce yourself to the members of your

community. If your area has a local Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D), make yourself known to its members and attend its meetings. Establish contact with community leaders and ask for help in understanding the challenges and barriers that prevent underserved communities, organizations, and individuals from participating in Cooperative Forestry programs.



Case Study #3: Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association Honors the History of African Americans in the Southeastern Appalachians

Consider using an alternative approach, one not directly related to forestry concerns, for reaching underserved groups and promoting partnerships with the USDA Forest Service. Since 1990, the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association has been a leader in a regional collaboration to develop heritage tourism in a multicounty area of east Tennessee. This effort has served as a catalyst for economic development in the region while also calling attention to the need to preserve natural and cultural resources.

The Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association has involved the African American communities of east Tennessee in a broad effort to accomplish community development goals and work more effectively with the USDA Forest Service on matters of common interest. This traditionally underserved population has become actively engaged in the programs because the association recognizes the unique heritage and contributions of African Americans who have lived for generations in the mountains and forests of that region.

Starting in 1994 with a grant from the USDA Forest Service, the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association has worked successfully with local African American churches to plan and present the annual concert "Gospel Explosion." Recently, the association introduced a program called "Picture Days," which uses photography to build the record of African American history in McMinn, Monroe, and Polk counties. Anyone who has snapshots of people engaged in every-day activities, social gatherings, farming and other occupations, sports, school functions, and families at work and play is invited to share them at a session held in a local church and have them copied for the historical record. One community member explained, "Although these churches are hosting the 'Picture Days,' participation is not limited to church members. The events are open to anyone who has pictures of African American people and places in the area." "Picture Day" organizers are eager to preserve the local knowledge, memories, and heritage of their communities where the forest land and other natural resources have played a major role.

Tip: Adjust policies to reach the underserved

Alabama is among a number of States committed to ensuring that a good cross-section of citizens will benefit from USDA Forest Service programs. Accordingly, the State gives priority to applications from landowners that have not yet participated in the programs. Other States have also set aside funds for limited-resource and underserved populations.

BREAK THROUGH COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Understanding the barriers to communication can help you develop strategies for reaching potential participants. Examples of strategies include:

- Providing technical assistance workshops for landowners at times and locations that are convenient for participants to attend.
- Being realistic about the landowner's and community's needs.

For example, in a tight economy, when landowners are looking for revenue for their forest-based products, sawmill owners are more likely to have contact with landowners than you—a forester with a stewardship plan. Therefore, design your message and materials to acknowledge the landowner's need for profit and demonstrate how your stewardship plan will lead to an overall increase in revenue. This approach will make the landowner listen, and may appeal to those landowners that might not otherwise participate.

DEVELOP OUTREACH CHANNELS

The following list provides suggestions for the types of community organizations that can assist you in outreach efforts. Work with these groups to communicate important messages about your programs and establish good relationships with key members who will be able to pass honest feedback back to you from potential program participants.



Case Study #4: Personal Commitment Builds Long-Term Relationships

One rural community assistance program manager made a special commitment to promote the forestry issues and opportunities faced by small, African American communities. This program manager is known and recognized by many city mayors, including those who do not currently have a professional relationship with their local USDA Forest Service office or State forester. The program manager provides and staffs a Cooperative Forestry or Rural Community Assistance exhibit every year at the National Conference of Black Mayors and regional Conferences of Black Mayors. He provides network contacts to these elected officials, as well as specific program assistance. His successful advocacy comes from his personal commitment to the value of cooperative forestry programs and the long-term relationships he has built with the potential beneficiaries of the programs.

- Religious organizations
- Civic associations
- Minority business associations
- Environmental justice organizations
- Legal aid providers
- Homeowners' and tenants' organizations and neighborhood watch groups
- Federal, State, local, and tribal governments
- Rural cooperatives
- Business and trade organizations
- Community and social service organizations
- Universities, colleges, and vocational and other schools, especially historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving colleges and universities, and the American Indian Higher Education Coalition



- Labor organizations
- Civil rights organizations
- Local schools and libraries
- Senior citizens' groups
- Museums and zoos



Case Study #5: Team Agriculture Georgia (TAG)

TAG is a consortium of Federal, State, local, and private resources that formed in 1996 to “improve State and Federal customer service to all landowners and land users.” This multicultural group contains professionals and support staff from six different USDA agencies, two State agencies, two educational institutions, and four nongovernmental organizations. In its first year, TAG completed a 60-page directory of Federal and State natural resource agencies, State agricultural educational institutions, and nongovernmental agricultural organizations in Georgia. The creation of this directory allowed member organizations to work collaboratively and eliminate real and perceived barriers. The group has also conducted a series of four TAG small farm workshops where presentations on State and Private Forestry programs were made. These workshops, conducted across Georgia, disseminated natural resource program information to limited-resource farmers.



STEP 4: DEVELOP THE MESSAGE AND CHOOSE THE MEDIA

After you determine how to reach an underserved population, you need to develop your message and choose the most appropriate media for delivering it. After taking into account the realistic needs of the community or individuals that you are trying to reach, you must determine what important points about your programs you want to communicate.

You not only need to

describe the programs you offer, but also sell the programs by showing how they will solve landowner or community problems. Remember that, in general, the underserved populations have not participated in your programs before. Try to identify the reasons for nonparticipation and show that the programs you offer will address their needs.

USE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDIA

Choose the media for delivering your message carefully so that you will achieve the desired results. Each means of communicating has advantages and disadvantages. For example, “word-of-mouth” is a common way of communicating information about USDA Forest Service programs. A program manager in a Cooperative Forestry program will tell the people he or she works with about a new program, and they will tell their friends. The advantage of this method is that you will be sure to enroll people who are interested in the program. A disadvantage of the word-of-mouth method, however, is that you are not likely to reach people who have not participated before. If the pool of participants does not represent the diversity of your population, then you should be advertising your programs more widely.

There are many ways to advertise your programs. Print an announcement in local newspapers; distribute brochures and fliers throughout your service area; put posters in popular gathering places; create an advertising spot for the radio; and attend local meetings, fairs, and

Tip: Food and Children Attract Customers

One forestry program manager stated that his office always serves a meal at outreach meetings, and that food seems to attract more people. Another program manager offered that attendance at forest landowner meetings had been low, so her office organized an educational day for school children. The children brought their parents, and hundreds of new people attended the program, which dramatically increased the office’s contacts with local forest landowners.

Case Study #6: A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

The USDA Forest Service, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, has formed a program known as Rural Community Arts. This program targets rural communities, which in the past have realized little benefit from arts funding, and seeks to help them find ways to blend local artistic talent and their natural resources with the goal of economic enhancement for their communities. Many Native American tribes and other minority groups are more willing to approach the USDA Forest Service with ideas for art and cultural projects than they are with their concerns for other aspects of community development or resource stewardship. As a consequence of the Rural Community Arts program, relationships are being formed that create the foundation for expanded involvement of these traditionally underserved groups in other USDA Forest Service programs and collaborative stewardship activities.

other public events; and make full use of the World Wide Web. Organize special meetings with groups that you cannot reach through other means. Take every opportunity to explain how your programs can help everyone in the community who qualifies for them and that you are looking to bring in people who have been traditionally underserved.

KEEP COMMUNICATIONS CLEAR

Be sure that the information you impart is tailored to the community you serve. All oral and written communications should be easy to read. Keep in mind the need for language modifications for certain communities. Where potential applicants do not read, write, or speak English, produce your marketing materials in their native language. Use simple, easy-to-understand language and common terms in brochures, management plans, and also in conversations with land-

owners and community leaders. Have someone from the community help to present information and materials. Include alternative formats such as Braille, large print, or audiotape, as required by USDA policy.

ORGANIZE COMMITTEES WITH DIVERSITY IN MIND

When organizing meetings or committees and assembling participant lists, always review the list for its inclusiveness and to determine whether it is representative of the diversity of interested parties. Also, make the meeting sites accessible to potential participants. Equal access and participation should be a primary consideration early in the planning phases of events. Similarly, when identifying partners for implementing programs, be sure that your partners can reach a diverse set of potential participants.

Simplify Application Forms

When one State service forester learned that many of the farmers in his area had not applied for Forest Stewardship Program assistance because they did not understand the application form, he decided to create an easy, 1-page form.

Tip: Principles of Public Communication

- Maintain honesty and integrity in all communications.
- Recognize community and indigenous knowledge.
- Encourage active community participation.
- Use cross-cultural formats and exchanges.



STEP 5: CREATE AN OUTREACH WORK ENVIRONMENT

As part of developing your Public Outreach Plan, you should make adjustments to your internal office processes and create a more customer outreach-oriented staff and environment. For example, consider developing training programs that strengthen employee and partner capabilities to engage and serve the underserved

communities. There may be internal barriers within your office that prevent full participation by traditionally underserved populations. Identify them and adjust your operational systems to fully include those underserved communities.

New policies, publications, or administrative decisions made by your office should always be considered in light of their impact on particular populations.

Tip: Increase Attendance at Landowner Workshops

(The following tips, submitted by Dr. Glen Hughes of the Mississippi Extension Service, have generated a high turnout rate at Mississippi Landowner Workshops.)

- **Create a local planning committee that represents diversity.** The planning committee, which is responsible for planning, promoting, and conducting your workshops, should represent the diversity of your population. Take a grass roots approach by involving landowners, public officials, bankers, and attorneys, as well as Federal and State agency staff, and include women and minorities on the committee. The higher profile and better known your committee members are, the greater the chance of attracting more people.
- **Send a letter to forest landowners.** Participants in the Mississippi workshops are notified through a letter. The committee uses county tax rolls to identify the landowners. Although other sources of publicity are also used, such as television, radio, newspaper, and personal contacts, most of the attendees in past workshops indicated that they learned of the meeting through the landowner message.
- **Limit jargon and acronyms in publicity.** Technical terms such as *thinning*, *prescribed burns*, and *reforestation* mean little to people who have perhaps inherited their land and may not be familiar with the language of forestry. Avoid using these terms. Most landowners do understand, however, the notion that idle land can make money for them if they planting trees. Too often people do not know where to turn for information and avoid approaching “the Government” because it seems too big and bureaucratic, and because no one can understand those confusing acronyms.
- **Partner with local forestry or natural resource groups.** County Forestry Associations (CFAs) and similar organizations in most of Mississippi’s heavily forested counties, are natural allies when planning and conducting programs. Such partner organizations often have greater flexibility than larger, governmental organizations do, and some may be willing to help administer and manage grants.
- **Release employees from some of their regular obligations to pursue new outreach efforts.** Most people are hired and paid to do tasks other than outreach. To achieve your outreach goals, offer greater flexibility in work schedules or release time to accomplish these new and different tasks. As a boss, be willing to take risks and afford latitude to your staff when they need it.

For instance, will certain people be adversely affected by a new direction more than others? When a policy decision results in delivery of new services, that service should be equally available to all eligible customers. For example, creating or amending a State Forest Stewardship Plan must not discriminate against any group and must invite equal participation in the program.

Other ways to make your office more open to the underserved: include providing sign language interpretation; providing adequate accommodations such as parking and ramp accessibility, assistive listening devices, and signs marked in Braille; and formatting presentations to ensure effective communication with all members of

the audience. The USDA publication, *Making USDA Events Accessible*, is an excellent guide for accomplishing these and other outreach goals and provides contact information for obtaining help, such as locating interpreters. This document is available at <http://www.saced.usda.gov>. Click on SACED Publications to find this document.



Tip: A Quick Lesson in Adult Education

1. People learn more effectively when education focuses on problems that they have experienced.
2. People are more willing to learn after they see that a problem exists.
3. People usually draw on past experience, knowledge, and beliefs to understand and solve a current problem.
4. Learning is enhanced when new information confirms existing knowledge, experience, or beliefs.
5. People are more likely to learn new information in an atmosphere of respect. When new information conflicts with existing knowledge, experience, or beliefs, people may resist the new information or require more time to learn it. Acknowledge and respect the experience of others.
6. People have many demands on their time and budgets and want to learn new information in the fastest and least expensive way. Provide learning opportunities at times that are convenient to participants and keep the cost as low as possible.

Remember that you can also learn from your participants. Communication is a two-way street. Careful listening to the needs and problems that your customers face is key to informing them about the ways that Cooperative Forestry programs can help them.

The information in this tip comes from the USDA publication *Unlocking the Barriers—Keys to Communicating with Under-Served Customers*. For more information on choosing the right outreach method, see the complete text of the publication (available at <http://www.usda.gov/da/cr/finals.htm>). This is an excellent resource on the various types of media, how to write brochures and fact sheets, and other suggestions for improving communications.



STEP 6: DEVELOP A TIMELINE

An essential part of your Public Outreach Plan is a timeline for implementing the ideas for outreach that you have generated. Your outreach efforts will become an ongoing, dynamic part of your working life. If you do not have these processes in place now, budgetary or other concerns may require you to phase them in over time. Prepare your staff to carry out efforts such as identifying the underserved populations or translating communications material. Find money in your budget to hold special meetings or print a brochure. To successfully implement the goals of your Public Outreach Plan, you will need to establish times to begin your efforts and then hold to your timeline.

STEP 7: MONITOR YOUR PLAN AND FOLLOW UP

To evaluate your Public Outreach Plan, return to Steps 1 and 2 periodically and compare the diversity level of current program participants to the potential participants in your service area. Make adjustments to your plan accordingly.

Case Study #7: Cooperative Agreement Between the USDA Forest Service, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture—Forestry Services, and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

The USDA Forest Service and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture have agreed to identify traditionally underserved forest landowners within the Cherokee Nation and provide landowners with technical assistance for better management of their forested land holdings. To carry out the agreement, the Oklahoma Department of Forestry Services has made arrangements with Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma, to conduct a workshop on working with underserved landowners. In addition, a meeting was held with the Oklahoma Landowners and Tenants Association, which is made up of minority landowners, to inform them about USDA Forest Service programs.

Once you have brought new participants into your programs, it will be important to maintain these relationships. Emphasize that you are always available as a resource to provide additional assistance or advice as their own projects take shape. Further, survey your participants to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of your programs and whether your training sessions met their needs. Ask for suggestions for improvement.

A good system of monitoring your Public Outreach Plan will ensure that you continue to meet the USDA Forest Service requirements for public outreach.

PUBLIC OUTREACH IQ

Assess your office's public outreach efforts by answering the questions below.

- Can information and awareness of program assistance be improved in our office through customized education and outreach efforts?

- Do our brochures and applications contain the USDA Non-discrimination Statement as directed by Department Regulation 4300-3, "Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy"?
- Do we understand the demographics of our State and region?
- Do we understand how to communicate with the diverse populations and potential participants in our areas? Does our traditional means of communication work for all of our potential participants?
- Do we understand the varied needs of our potential participant base?
- Are we effectively using nontraditional means, networks, or partners to reach out to nontraditional populations?

Case Study #8: Mississippi Underserved Landowner Workshops

In 1998 and 1999, the Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Service, in partnership with local county forestry associations, State and Federal agencies, and others sponsored 21 county-level workshops for the benefit of landowners. This new workshop program was designed to address the needs of Black, female, and other underserved landowners in a State with over 60 percent forest coverage. Conference planners used State tax rolls to identify a comprehensive list of all forest landowners. A total of 2,018 people attended the workshops. Of these, about 75 percent of the attendees were categorized as "underserved." The workshops covered topics such as legal and ownership issues, marketing and environmental issues, the economics of forestry, and sources of assistance. While only about 30 percent of the landowners involved in the workshops had previously used a professional forester, after the workshops 95 percent said that they planned to use one in the future. Thanks to the dedication of the MSU Extension Service and their partners, previously underserved landowners from all over Mississippi now understand the full benefits of land ownership.

FOREST SERVICE GUIDANCE

All-Employee Letter on Program and Outreach Materials (August 26, 1998). USDA mandated the implementation of Recommendations 23, 24, and 25 of the Civil Rights Implementation Team Report, *One Year of Change*. This mandate requires that all line and staff offices integrate the following elements into unit program delivery.

- The *And Justice for All* poster, which includes the nondiscrimination statement, is to be displayed according to DR 4300-3.
- Secretary's Memorandum 4360-1 (March 1998) calling for the establishment of a National Outreach Council, State Outreach Councils, agency outreach coordinators, and outreach plans.
- *Unlocking the Barriers—Keys to Communicating with Under-Served Customers* (March 1998). This is a 16-page publication, which includes DR 4360-1, on communicating with the underserved. It also provides practical information on how to improve those communications.
- *Simple Justice*, a 13-minute videotape with companion discussion guide, was developed to help managers understand program delivery discrimination and the program complaint process.

The USDA Forest Service Tax Information Transfer Program

The USDA Forest Service provides tax training, monitoring, estate planning, and technical assistance to nonindustrial forest owners, tax accountants, consulting foresters, private conservation groups, and State forestry agencies.

The national tax team is made up of specially trained foresters from the USDA Forest Service's State and Private Forestry and Research and Development branches and selected University personnel.

Workshops, symposia, and other presentations are held throughout the year. In addition, updated information is distributed to interested parties, and a Timber Tax Web site (<http://www.timbertax.org>) is maintained in cooperation with Purdue University.

Reviewed by the IRS, the definitive timber tax publication, *Forest Landowners' Guide to the Federal income Tax*, is published periodically by the Forest Service.

IV. RELEVANT LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND DIRECTIVES REQUIRING OUTREACH

Numerous Federal directives require outreach efforts by any agency or group that receives Federal funds. A summary of relevant points from each regulation is provided in this section. Refer also to the *USDA Forest Service Interim Strategic Public Outreach Plan* for a comprehensive listing of laws, regulations, Executive orders, and directives to promote collaboration and outreach. You can view this document on the Forest Service Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us>. A search for “FS-665” will bring up a link to the document. Refer to this listing periodically, guidance is often updated or changed.

NATIONAL DIRECTION
Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964. This title applies to federally-assisted programs, including State programs funded by Cooperative Forestry. It states that every Federal agency that provides financial assistance through grants, loans, or contracts is required to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in these programs.

President’s Executive Order on Environmental Justice. This order includes the mandate to ensure effective public participation in Federal programs and to provide access to information.

Council on Environmental Quality Guidance on Environmental Justice. Consider the following guidelines from this

directive when determining whether a Federal activity might disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations.

- Determine the composition of the area and how proposed actions will affect underserved populations that live there.
- Identify any interrelated cultural, social, occupational, historical, or economic factors that may amplify the natural and physical environmental effects of the proposed action.
- Develop effective public participation strategies. Strive to overcome linguistic, cultural, institutional, geographic, and other barriers to meaningful participation. Find new ways to reach your customers where past methods have not been successful.
- Assure meaningful community representation and encourage participation as early as possible in the planning process.
- Seek tribal representation in the process in a manner that is consistent with the government-to-government relationship between the United States and tribal governments, the Federal Government’s trust responsibility to federally-recognized tribes, and any treaty rights.

USDA DIRECTION
7 CFR Subtitle A, Subpart A:
Nondiscrimination in federally
assisted programs of USDA. No
one in the United States will be
denied participation in, or the receipt
of benefits from Federal programs,
nor will anyone experience any other
discrimination in these programs on
the grounds of race, color, or national
origin. This applies to any program or
activity of an applicant or recipient of
Federal financial assistance from the
United States Department of
Agriculture.

Civil Rights Policy for the
Department of Agriculture
(Departmental Regulation
4300-6/June 30, 2000). All
customers must have equal access
and equal treatment in the delivery
of USDA programs and services.
Equal opportunity must be promoted
in procurement and contracting
opportunities to minority, women-
owned, and small and disadvantaged
businesses.

Equal Opportunity Public
Notification Policy (Departmental
Regulation 4300-3/November 16,
1999). No person shall be discriminat-
ed against on the basis of race, color,
national origin, gender, religion, age,
disability, political beliefs, sexual ori-
entation, or marital or family status in
employment or in any program or
activity conducted or funded by the
Department.

Images and other visual and sound
public-information materials must
provide examples of employment and
program participation by minorities,
women, and other protected groups.

The current version of USDA's nondis-
crimination statement must be posted
in all offices and included, in full, on
all materials produced by USDA and
its agencies for public information,
public education, or public distribu-
tion. See USDA Departmental
Regulation 4300-003 at
[http://www.usda.gov/ocio/
directives/DR/DR4300-003.htm](http://www.usda.gov/ocio/directives/DR/DR4300-003.htm) for a
copy of the current version of the full
text of the USDA nondiscrimination
statement and the recommended
abbreviated version of the statement
for States and other partners.

USDA Forest Service Strategic Public Outreach Plan. The outreach plan, developed by the USDA Forest Service for its own operations and programs, outlines our goals for program and community outreach. The USDA Forest Service mission, which calls for “caring for the land and serving people, ” establishes the goal of public involvement in decisionmaking, planning, and implementing programs, and ensuring that information is accessible to all citizens. The Outreach Plan also outlines several specific activities, such as increasing program participation by underserved populations by 20 percent and conducting an inventory of and improving heritage resources.

The USDA Forest Service began conducting environmental justice and public-involvement training for employees in 1996. Partnerships are being developed between the USDA Forest Service and colleges, universities, Federal agencies, and other educational and outreach consortiums throughout the country. Through different methods of outreach, the USDA Forest Service strives to achieve the overall goal of its outreach plan—***Increased participation rates of underrepresented and underserved populations in USDA Forest Service programs through aggressive outreach efforts.***



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Forest Service



Forest
Stewardship
Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.