



## Regional Centers of Excellence Application

### About the Regional Centers of Excellence Initiative

**The Regional Centers of Excellence Initiative, a program of the National Association of Regional Councils in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, promotes green infrastructure and Landcare work at the regional level by supporting communication and information sharing among regional organizations engaged in this work.** By identifying "Regional Centers of Excellence" that are regions with exemplary green infrastructure and Landcare practices, and facilitating mentoring and peer-to-peer exchange, the initiative hopes to strengthen existing green infrastructure projects and catalyze new efforts.

### Grant Opportunity

**The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) will award grants of \$5,000 to two regional organizations to enable such organizations to enhance their outreach activities and serve as national models.** As a Regional Center of Excellence (RCE), each award recipient will inform other regions about the benefits of green infrastructure and Landcare activities. Activities eligible for grant funds include website enhancement, presentations at meetings and conferences, writing and distributing case studies and project profiles, and/or other information-sharing approaches. Designation as an RCE will provide regions with national leadership opportunities, including promotion on NARC's website and at NARC conferences. NARC staff also will be available to assist Regional Centers of Excellence through technical assistance and informational support.

### Application Components

**All proposals must be submitted by email to Jenee Kresge at [jenee@narc.org](mailto:jenee@narc.org) by Thursday, April 9, 2009. Proposals should be no longer than five pages and include:**

- Description of the region's green infrastructure or Landcare project(s)
  - This should include a brief description of your existing green infrastructure and/or Landcare work, including project status (e.g., complete or ongoing), project scope, and existing or expected outcomes and impact. You may provide links to additional project materials and outputs.
- Description and qualifications of the region and regional organization
  - This should include the region's basic geographic and demographic information, as well as background on the regional organization (size, membership, relationship with localities, current staffing level, etc.). Please also describe existing relationships and partnerships, region-to-region information sharing, and grant administration experience that would qualify you to receive this grant.
- Outline of the proposed Regional Centers of Excellence (RCE) communication and information sharing project
  - This should include all tasks, products, and capital purchases and uses expected to be completed with the mini-grant funds.
  - The description should also include the RCE project's audience, whether in-person (conferences, workshops, presentations) or virtual (improved website, virtual event), proposed timeframe, and expected impact (how many regions could be reached, nation/state/region-wide effort, etc.).
- Budget for RCE communication and information sharing project
  - This budget should allocate costs to general categories (e.g. staff time, operating expenses, purchase of equipment, travel costs). Please note grant expenditures are guided by federal grant requirements. See page 2 for more information.





### Applicant Qualifications and Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Applicants must:

- Be a regional organization (e.g. COG, MPO, RPO, PDD).
- Administer a green infrastructure or Landcare project as defined by the U.S. Forest Service and NARC (see below). The project must be ongoing or have been completed within the last year.
- Have the ability to attend NARC's 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, June 1-3, 2009 in Denver, CO, to deliver a presentation on the existing green infrastructure or Landcare project. Note that travel costs to the conference for staff directly involved in the project may be built into the RCE project budget; exceptions may apply, please contact NARC with questions.
- Be able to complete the proposed communication and information sharing activities requiring NARC funding before November 30, 2009. While the project hopes to catalyze longer term efforts, Regional Centers of Excellence (RCE) should complete the activities listed in this grant application by this date. (E.g., for a project that requires the purchase of equipment, equipment must be purchased and utilized by this date.)

All proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Quality of green infrastructure/Landcare work to be shared
- Proposed RCE project's reach
- Relevant experience
- Geographic and demographic diversity
- Reasonable and creative use of funds (e.g. use of partnerships to achieve larger impact)

### About Green Infrastructure and Landcare

Green infrastructure is the network of natural lands, working landscapes and other open spaces that are strategically planned and managed to conserve their ecological functions while also providing associated benefits to human populations. Green infrastructure includes woods, meadows, forests, wetlands, farmland, animal habitat, etc., and plays an important role in reducing air pollution, filtering stormwater, maintaining ecological balance, and increasing the effectiveness of traditional infrastructure. Landcare, the community-based practice of holistic, cooperative and sustainable land management techniques is an integral aspect of maintaining green infrastructure. Please see [NARC's Green Regions Campaign website](#), the [U.S. Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry website](#), the [Conservation Fund's Green Infrastructure website](#), and [Landcare Central](#) for more information.

### About NARC and the Forest Service

For more than four decades, **NARC** has advocated for building regional communities through the representation of multi-purpose, multi-jurisdictional regional councils (RCs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) that develop strategies for addressing complex issues like transportation, economic development, homeland security and environment. NARC has an active membership within the network of over 500 organized RCs in the U.S. that are involved in regional planning, development and implementation. The **Forest Service** manages over 193 million acres of National Forests, has the world's largest forestry research organization, and facilitates the conservation of state and privately owned forest land across the country. The Forest Service promotes the use of Green Infrastructure and Landcare to help conserve and manage public and private forest land that spans the urban to rural continuum.

**Please contact Jenee Kresge at [jenee@narc.org](mailto:jenee@narc.org) or (202) 986-1032 ext. 215 with any questions.**

### Notes

NARC requests the right to summarize existing green infrastructure and Landcare project descriptions provided within an application for use on our Green Regions website, [www.GreenRegions.org](http://www.GreenRegions.org), and in other related NARC green infrastructure and Landcare work.

From the USDA Forest Service: The grant awardee will be subject to all the terms and conditions of the original grant made to the National Association of Regional Councils by the US Forest Service and all modifications made thereto. In addition, as this is an award of Federal Assistance it is subject to the Office of Management and Budget OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institution of Higher Education, Hospitals and Nonprofit Organizations, as implemented by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, 7 CFR, 3019; OMB Circular A-122, Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations; and OMB Circular A-133, Audits of Institutions of Higher Education and Other Nonprofit Organizations as implemented by USDA regulation at 7 CFR 3052. The OMB Circulars are available on the internet at [www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/grants](http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/grants).

Electronic copies of the CFR's can be obtained at the following internet site: [www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr](http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr). If you are unable to retrieve these regulations electronically, please contact the Acquisition Management Staff, Grants and Agreements Office at 703-605-4870.