



Hello SNC Board Members and Area Representatives,

We are hoping that you can provide your area expertise to jumpstart a new rural community-focused grant program in the Sierra. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Sierra Institute recently signed an agreement for a project called “Building Capacity for Rural Development across Sierra Communities” funded by the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund. For the next two-plus years, Sierra Institute will be working with rural communities throughout the Sierra to build institutional capacity and create plans for developing a brownfield or greenfield to meet community needs, or to build up forest-related businesses. Our goal is for communities to develop infrastructure or enterprises that can utilize woody biomass so as to contribute to local forest management efforts while meeting other community goals, such as job creation, housing, or providing public services. Biomass utilization can be direct (creation of wood product businesses) or indirect (building a structure heated by a biomass boiler, or providing electricity with a biomass-powered micro-grid). If the community wants to develop a brownfield, such as an old mill site (which we encourage), we will work with them to secure funding from the US EPA Brownfields Program for site assessment and, if necessary, cleanup.

We are now looking for partner communities to join this program. This is where you can help, by identifying potential partners. Eligible partners include Tribes, fledgling or otherwise low-capacity NGOs, and small communities that may still lack a suitable organizational structure for receiving or managing funds. Partners may have already started the process of trying to develop a site or merely be talking about it. Developing goals and building community buy-in will be part of this grant program. What we are not looking for are county governments or well-established organizations or companies that already have a long track record of receiving funding and managing projects. Our goal is to build capacity in rural communities through this program so that individuals and organizations in these places can continue to do good work in the future.

We are particularly seeking partners in rural, underserved parts of the Sierra, where biomass infrastructure and forestry capacity is low. The Southern Sierra is of particular interest, as are areas struggling to recover from wildfire or the long decline of the timber industry.

Please send contact information and a brief introduction for potential partners to Tracy Hruska at Sierra Institute (thruska@sierrainstitute.us). If you have questions or want to talk further about the program, email Tracy or give him a call at 530-284-1022.

Many thanks,
-Tracy