

Advancing Co-stewardship in the National Park Service

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Introduction

This guide is a starting point for park managers seeking to commence or improve co-stewardship practices with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, Native Hawaiian Organizations and Communities, traditionally associated peoples, and indigenous communities ¹. This guide will use Tribal to refer to federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native entities; Native Hawaiian Organization (NHO) to refer to indigenous people of Hawai'i; and indigenous to refer to people who have always lived and live in the place of their ancestral origin, and is inclusive of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. The guide is intended to provide a framework and generate ideas or discussion about how to pursue successful co-stewardship arrangements, but it is not an exhaustive reference. The examples are intended to provide strategies for park superintendents and managers to consider to deepen their Tribal and indigenous co-stewardship practices. At the end of the day, park managers will need to chart a path that builds trust with associated Tribal governments, indigenous and traditionally associated communities, and is aligned with park resource needs, law, and policy.

What is Tribal and Indigenous Co-stewardship?

The first step in exploring co-stewardship opportunities is to understand the distinction between co-stewardship and co-management. Co-stewardship is the broader concept, while co-management is a specific form of co-stewardship authorized by law.

Co-stewardship definition

On September 13, 2022, the National Park Service released [NPS Policy Memorandum 22-03](#) which implements [Secretary's Order 3403](#) within the NPS. SO 3403 seeks to “ensure that the Department of

¹ “Indian Tribes” or “Indian and Alaska Native Tribes” means any Indian or Alaska Native Tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or other organized group or community, which the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian Tribe pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 USC 5130–5131). See also chapter 4 of part 512 of the Departmental Manual (512 DM 4); and chapter 1 of part 502 of the Departmental Manual (502 DM 1); “Alaska Native entities” means the regional and village corporations established under the authority of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, as amended (ANCSA), and their affiliated nonprofit organizations and Tribal consortia, and such other Alaska Native organizations created and designated by Tribes to represent their interests, consistent with ANCSA or with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, as amended; “Native Hawaiian Community” means the distinct Native Hawaiian indigenous political community that Congress, exercising its plenary power over Native American affairs, has recognized and with which Congress has implemented a special political and trust relationship (43 CFR 50.4); “Traditionally associated peoples” means contemporary park neighbors and ethnic or occupational communities that have been associated with a park for two or more generations (40 years), and whose interests in the park’s resources began before the park’s establishment (*Management Policies*, section 5.3.5.3); Indigenous people and communities shared historical continuity with a given region prior to colonization and a strong link to their lands; manage distinct social, economic, and political systems; have distinct languages, cultures, beliefs, and knowledge systems; are self-determined and maintaining and developing their identity and distinct institutions (www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/indigenous-peoples). People of Guam, American Samoa, the Freely Associated States, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other locations are considered indigenous.

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Agriculture and the Department of the Interior (Departments) and their component Bureaus and Offices are managing Federal lands and waters in a manner that seeks to protect the treaty, religious, subsistence, and cultural interests of federally recognized Indian Tribes including the Native Hawaiian Community; that such management is consistent with the nation-to-nation relationship between the United States and federally recognized Indian Tribes; and, that such management fulfills the United States' unique trust obligation to federally recognized Indian Tribes and their citizens."

Co-stewardship is a broad umbrella of working relationships with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native entities, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and indigenous communities and includes:

- Co-management authorities as described below;
- Engagement through contracts or real property transactions;
- Programs or projects via cooperative agreements or grants under the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act (31 U.S.C. 6305; 54 U.S.C. 101702);
- Self-Governance opportunities, including funding agreements under Section IV of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, as amended (25 U.S.C. 5361 et seq.);
- NPS-specific activities under:
 - General agreements or Memoranda of Agreement or Understanding (54 U.S.C. 100101),
 - Interpretive services and cooperating association agreements (54 U.S.C. 100804),
 - Concessions agreements (54 U.S.C. 101901 et seq.),
 - Cost-share agreements (54 U.S.C. 101701),
 - Museum loan or curatorial agreements (54 U.S.C. 102501 et seq.; 36 CFR Part 79),
 - Philanthropic partnership or design and construction agreements (54 U.S.C. 101101),
 - Volunteer agreements (54 U.S.C. 102301),
 - Special use permits (54 U.S.C. 100101; 103104),
 - among many applicable authorities; and
- other collaborative or planning activities that may occur without a written agreement based on a relationship between a park unit and a Tribal or indigenous entity.

See 502 DM 1; NPS PM 22-03; Current Land, Water, and Wildlife Authorities that can support Tribal Stewardship and Co-stewardship – Final Report, November 2022.²

Co-management as defined in SO 3342

According to [Secretary Order 3342](#), co-management is, “a situation where there is a specific legal basis that requires the delegation of some aspect of Federal decision-making or that makes co-management otherwise legally necessary.” Co-management authority **must** be derived from written legislation; in other words, there are a limited number of park units that will be eligible for co-management. Co-management falls under the umbrella of co-stewardship but is not universally applicable or possible across all NPS park units. There are currently four (4) parks which have co-management authority, Canyon de Chelly, Big Cypress National Preserve, Glacier Bay, and Grand Portage. Where co-management is applicable, the scope of that activity will be determined by the language in its authorizing statutory authority and through consultation with the relevant Tribal or indigenous entities.

² [Final Report on Co-Stewardship Authorities](#)

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Co-stewardship Strategic Development

Developing a successful co-stewardship arrangement depends on collaboration and the identification of priorities, needs, capacities, relationship alignments, and legal authorities available in the co-stewardship ecosystem. Co-stewardship relationships are dependent upon quality two-way communication; committed partnership and trust; and open, candid, and fair negotiations that include identified and agreed-upon expectations, roles and responsibilities, accountability, and desired outcomes. These are fundamental elements in the co-production of a mutually beneficial co-stewardship plan.

Park superintendents and managers should evaluate conditions as they assess co-stewardship opportunities with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations and indigenous partner(s) and communities. The baseline to any co-stewardship activity includes:

1. **Building or enhancing relationships** with Tribes, NHO's, indigenous communities, and traditionally associated people to achieve shared objectives through a co-stewardship framework.
2. **Maintaining shared vision, shared expectations, and shared success** through regular, open, and candid communication.
3. **Jointly developing strategies** to align shared goals, identify mutually beneficial outcomes, and formulate best practices for implementation and monitoring.

Evaluate success by regularly meeting with partners to review, discuss, and adjust methodologies that support co-stewardship strategies and desired outcomes. Each phase in the development of strategic design is important to the relationship and builds integrity into implementation.

Step one: Collaboration – Collaborate on a shared vision and objectives for Co-stewardship agreements and activities with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and indigenous communities.

In an ideal world, park units would all have established, sustained, and effective working relationships with traditionally associated Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Entities, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and indigenous communities to form the foundation for advancing any co-stewardship discussions. However, reality dictates that changes in NPS policy, park unit leadership, or even changes in tribal and indigenous government leadership may prompt periods of reinvestment in building or maintaining relationships with Tribal, NHO's, and indigenous partners. This reinvestment is a feature of the Federal trust responsibility that requires the NPS to uphold the government-to-government or government-to-sovereign relationships with Tribal Nations and indigenous communities.

Reinvestment starts with a commitment by park leadership to build and deepen relationships with Tribal, NHO's, and indigenous partners. As a park or program manager, it is important to understand how Tribal and Indigenous partners/communities want to be involved in co-stewardship. Here are just some recommendations to building, strengthening, and maintaining Tribal and indigenous relationships:

- Accessing Regional Native American Affairs liaisons ([Contact Us - Office of Native American Affairs \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)) as subject matter specialists and advisors;

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- Attending Tribal Relations and Tribal Consultation trainings such as the “Pathways to Confidence Tribal Consultation Training” and “Co-stewardship and Indigenous Knowledge Training”;
- Accessing online training offered in DOI talent;
- Attending the quarterly Co-stewardship Webinars offered by the Office of Native American Affairs (ONAA); and
- Attending the monthly Tribal Consultation Teams calls offered by the Office of Native American Affairs;
- Attending video calls sponsored by the Council for Indigenous Relevancy, Communication, Leadership and Excellence (CIRCLE), an employee resource group.

For certain, complex co-stewardship arrangements, if there is willingness and capacity from the Tribal and indigenous partners, it may be advantageous to develop an initial to codify vision, goals, and communication structures for co-stewardship. While this step is optional, general agreements are very easy to setup and establish agreement where there is no money or property exchanged (e.g., for consultation procedures, certain knowledge sharing, high-level relationship building, or even defining participation opportunities in park planning. They can help to refine shared goals and the resources or identify tools that will be needed as the relationship progresses. In some cases, a general agreement may be the best instrument to memorialize an entire co-stewardship arrangement, particularly where the arrangement emphasizes coordination, communication, knowledge sharing, or personal engagement. Note that a general agreement cannot be used to authorize the transfer of any goods, services, or legal liabilities, but the instrument can still be extremely useful in observing certain co-stewardship arrangements or commitments to advance work together.

To facilitate consultation and collaboration, parks have authority to support invitational travel or contract for Tribal experts to help facilitate exchanges with Tribal or indigenous partners using park funds. Depending on the fiscal year, the NPS may have authority to use park operating funds to support light refreshments for tribal consultation purposes upon receipt by the Office of Native American Affairs of a “Reception and Representative Expenses for Tribal Consultation Request”. To make such a request, contact your Regional Tribal Liaison.

Once there is agreement on a shared vision for co-stewardship, proceed to step two.

Step two: Co-stewardship Principles and Outcome Agreement - When the park and partners agree upon their shared co-stewardship principles and outcomes, then they can develop strategies that advance their shared co-stewardship objectives.

Implementing a successful co-stewardship arrangement requires candid analysis of the feasibility of available co-stewardship options, jointly choosing a path forward based on measurable data and shared vision and collaborating closely with the Tribal or indigenous partner in initial planning. The scale of your co-stewardship strategy and implementation is dependent upon several factors, including tribal and indigenous capacity; necessary environmental reviews; funding longevity and timing; and environmental and natural resource considerations. Selecting the appropriate scale in relation to these factors and more will help ensure success.

Please note: some strategies or methods of implementation may be applicable to only [Federally Recognized Tribes](#) such as Self-governance agreements, and some strategies may require more

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administrative oversight by either or both NPS and partner staff. Park managers should leverage Regional SME knowledge to understand pros/cons and discuss the best options with their Tribal partners and indigenous communities.

This guidance provides examples of successful co-stewardship arrangements below. Once a co-stewardship strategy is selected, proceed to step three.

Step three: Recurring Communication - Meet regularly with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and indigenous communities to discuss co-stewardship efforts, alignment to original intent, and adjust, as warranted.

Successful co-stewardship requires continuous communication to ensure that joint efforts are meeting shared objectives. It is critical that implementing a co-stewardship strategy is not viewed as the “finish line,” but the next step in an ongoing relationship.

Park managers should meet with Tribal partners and indigenous community members on a regular basis, discussing the following questions:

- What is working well? How should we continue to build on our success?
- What is not working? What do we need to change to meet our shared goals?
- What other ideas can we pursue to deepen our co-stewardship relationship?

Where communication with Tribal partners and indigenous communities become intermittent or irregular, consider reaching out to the Tribal or indigenous community point of contact to re-establish or adjust contact principals and methodology, and inquire with partners about reassessing their resource needs and current capacity realities. Perhaps emerging conditions necessitate a change in scope or timing for the continuation of the co-stewardship relationship.

Co-stewardship Strategies in Action: Examples from the Field

Below are some examples of co-stewardship arrangements that park managers and Tribal partners have engaged in. This list is not comprehensive but showcases some common opportunities and tribal and indigenous interest areas. Through consultation and collaboration with Tribal partners and indigenous communities, park units can discover and refine even further specialized, relevant, and innovative co-stewardship opportunities. These examples are presented thematically by topic area, and include:

- Interpretation and Education Programming
- Traditional and indigenous Arts and crafts
- Hospitality and Visitor Services
- Contracting and Service Acquisition
- Grants and Project Funding
- Human Resources and Hiring

Topic areas not appearing in this section, but worth further exploration include:

- *Museum programming and museum management options such as:*
 - *Indigenous museum loans to NPS museum facilities (e.g., for special exhibits);*
 - *NPS museum loans to Indigenous museums; and*

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- *Indigenous museum partnerships with NPS as repositories for holding Federal collections associated with that Tribal entity.*
- *Sacred Sites recognition, evaluation, and monitoring*
- *Co-production of Indigenous Knowledge pertinent to program and project design*
- *Fire Management*
- *Species recovery*
- *Cultural estate monitoring*
- *Climate adaptation planning and monitoring*
- *Local Housing Development*
- *Administration of recreational amenity sites as found in www.recreation.gov.*

Interpretation and Education Programming

Integrate first person experiences into the interpretation of a site(s) or resource(s).

Tribal or Indigenous partners and their community members may have personal experiences or perspectives on the significance and history of a place that adds depth and context to existing interpretive and education programming. Knowledge holders may also contribute indigenous data that is known to Native and Indigenous people but not known to a broader audience as it has been overlooked. Learning from their traditional and indigenous insights and information, and then sharing it in respectful and mutually agreed-upon ways, will improve content and directly enhance visitor experience and engagement. There are also several ways that the NPS can fund these projects or compensate partners and communities who support interpretation and education themes, which, depending on the circumstances, may include:

- Developing a cooperative agreement (CA) with a Tribal, Indigenous, or third-party partner to provide financial assistance and fund interpretation or education activities out of base or project funding; discuss with your Financial Assistance point of contact for more information.
- Collaborating with your relevant cooperating association to fund the initiative.
- Generating donor support and funding with a philanthropic partner (e.g., a Friends Group) to develop an interpretive program and fairly compensate participants.
- Treating cultural demonstrators as the professional subject matter experts they are, and using local purchasing authority (e.g., purchase card) to compensate participants professional contributors out of park funding; talk with your regional Budget Office to understand limitations on convenience checks and purchase cards.

Update waysides, uni-grid brochures, museum exhibits, curriculums, and other public-facing educational materials, with Indigenous perspectives and language.

Increasingly, parks have strived to include the perspectives and languages of Indigenous partners and communities in their interpretation and education media. This practice deepens visitor understanding of a place and reinforces the significance and meaning of the park with its Indigenous partners and communities. Consult with the Harpers Ferry Center to understand options and costs. If the park has multiple affiliated Tribal or Indigenous communities, ensure that all partners and communities are included in the conversation and be respectful of presenting indigenous knowledge and protecting cultural or intellectual property interests in the content developed. Consult with the Solicitor's Office on any necessary licenses or permissions to incorporate legally protected indigenous input. Options for funding implementation of these upgrades include:

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- Developing a PMIS project to compete for appropriate project funding to update interpretive media.
- Collaborating with your relevant cooperating association to fund the project.
- Funding the project directly from ONPS funding.

Connect Tribal government/community teachers to NPS through Teacher – Ranger – Teacher program.

Teachers can participate in the Teacher – Ranger – Teacher (TRT) program, infusing professional skills in the development of educational programming while exploring rich stories and histories of a place that holds significant personal and community value. This can be especially powerful when teachers come from an associated Tribal or Indigenous community. The administration of the program, professional development hours, and graduate credit hours are made available through a Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU). The emphasis of the program is to engage teachers from schools with underserved student populations, including Tribal schools or Indigenous language-based charter schools. Participants receive stipends in the amount of \$3,000 from the CESU as well as graduate professional development hours. Next steps include:

- Connecting with [Regional Education coordinators](#) to understand the TRT program requirements and deadlines.
- Applying for a WASO-funded TRT and hosting a TRT member during the summer months.
- Park managers may also pursue using an [Intergovernmental Personnel Act](#) assignment if the teacher is an employee of BIA or Tribal government; refer to the section ‘Transfer Term/Temp positions from Tribal governments with Intergovernmental Personnel Act’ for more information.

Create a cultural demonstration program.

Many parks find it valuable to have Tribal or Indigenous community members and knowledge keepers participate in cultural demonstration programs, creating meaningful interaction with the public. This can be an effective way to share and support cultural practices, respect Indigenous ownership of those cultural practices and indigenous knowledge, while also educating the public about their significance and history. The program itself cannot operate at a profit, but individual participants can be compensated for their time and can also sell representative and appropriate arts and crafts that contribute to themes of the program. To compensate participants, consider:

- Working with a cooperating association, philanthropic partner (i.e., a Friends Group), or another third-party through a cooperative agreement; See the actions under “Integrate first person experiences into the interpretation of a site/resources.”
- Utilizing NPS’s Living Exhibits and Interpretive Demonstrations authority, under which arts and crafts, among other products, made from personal materials during an interpretive demonstration or living exhibit that contribute to park interpretive themes may be sold in park units, sometimes with proceeds kept by the artisan; refer to 54 U.S.C. §101702(c), Director’s Order 6, and [Management Policies 2006 \(nps.gov\)](#) for more information.

Traditional and Indigenous Arts and crafts

Develop an Artist-in-Residence program.

Artists from Tribal and Indigenous communities may serve as Artists-in-Residence in parks, supporting long-term, place-based arts engagement and the creation of new ways for the public to experience and understand park resources and spaces. Park units with interpretive connections to local Indigenous

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artists may be especially interested in this Artists in Residence ([AiR program](#)). Tribal governments, Indigenous communities, or community organizations may help in identifying artists or spreading awareness, though it is the individual artist(s) that participates in the program and receives any compensation. Compensation for Artists-in-Residence may be available if the program is supported by a cooperating association, philanthropic partner (i.e., a Friends Group), or another third-party partner. Compensating artists is appropriate out of respect for their time, expertise, and artform.

Refer to “Integrate first person experiences into the interpretation of a site/resources” for more detail about how to use Financial Assistance or Cooperating Associations to fund this type of program, or reach out to [IEV subject matter experts](#).

Encourage retail operations within parks to sell representative art and craft items.

Sourcing artistic works from associated Tribal artisans, Indigenous communities, and traditional practitioners supports genuine work and practices, illustrating a commitment to authenticity, consistent with the [Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990](#). Visitors have shown great interest in purchasing arts and crafts that are associated with the cultural significance of a place.

- Concessioners must conduct due diligence in offering authentic native handicrafts by using the [DOI Indian Arts and Crafts Board](#) list of approved vendors; authentic native handicraft sales, when appropriately labeled and denoted as such and reflect the cultural, historical, and geographic characteristics of the relate park, are not subject to franchise fee payment to encourage their sale per regulations at [36 CFR 51.83](#)
- Concessioners, as well as Cooperating Associations, can also connect with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) of the associated Tribal government(s) to research artists and products (depending on THPO resources). See [Tribal Historic Preservation Office Program - Historic Preservation Fund \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#).
- Encourage artisans in associated Indigenous communities to register through [Indian Arts and Crafts Board](#) as a first step.

Encourage artisans to sell art and craft items through a cultural demonstration program.

As noted in the ‘Create a cultural demonstration program’ section, artisans participating in a cultural demonstration program may be permitted to sell art and crafts, among other products, as part of a living exhibit or interpretive demonstration that contributes to program themes. Refer to the ‘Create a cultural demonstration program’ section for more information.

Hospitality and Visitor Services

Encourage Tribal governments, Indigenous communities, artist consortiums or businesses with extensive industry experience to compete for concessions contracts.

Encouraging Tribal and Indigenous businesses to participate in the solicitation process can bring in new ideas and create greater competition which is beneficial to the visitor. Some Tribal partners and Indigenous business entities may have extensive experience in the hospitality industry, which could lead to quality, local business relationships. Tribal partners and Indigenous business entities that successfully compete can generate secondary economic opportunities for their members and communities.

- Consider inviting a Regional or WASO concession specialist to discuss how the NPS goes through the solicitation process to inform potential participants about what it takes to submit a responsive offer.

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- Refer to the [Work with Concessioners](#) information page.
- Refer to the [Concessions information](#) page for contacts and information about contract, asset, and financial management for concession contracts.
- Refer to the [Concessions Management Improvement Act](#), Sec 418.
- Consider developing an outreach strategy to build connection with Tribal partners and Indigenous business entities.

Consider offering transportation services to increase additional interpretation opportunities for Tribal partners, Indigenous communities, and traditional practitioners.

Some Tribal partners and Indigenous entities may have experience promoting tourism and education through transportation-based services. For NPS, this service might address both transportation issues and lack of first-person interpretation opportunities that can lead to an enhanced visitor experience. Parks that have limited parking or high congestion may especially benefit from this approach if a Tribal partner or Indigenous community has experience offering transportation services.

- There are multiple legal instruments that *may* be appropriate to accomplish this objective, depending on the circumstances. But there is no one size fits all approach; each instrument has its own sets of advantages and disadvantages and should be chosen after thoughtful analysis and consultation with Regional and WASO offices, as well as in coordination with the relevant Tribal partner and Indigenous entity. Options may include:
 - Concessions Contract
 - Procurement Contract
 - Commercial Use Authorization
 - Cooperative Agreement
- It may be beneficial to first enter into a General Agreement or MOU to establish a mutual, overarching, government-to-government, government-to-sovereign understanding of the nature of such a relationship and the shared goals regarding this service.

Contracting and Service Acquisition

Use government-to-government transaction invoices to pay for services.

With Tribal, NHO's, and indigenous community partners, some services can be acquired more easily and efficiently through a government-to-government transaction invoice, with the added benefit of employing a Tribal partner to provide the service. This method allows for a very efficient transaction that is more flexible than using charge cards or other acquisition techniques. This type of invoice can be an appropriate method when a Tribal partner is a [Federally Recognized Tribe](#) acting in an official capacity (e.g. Tribal monitoring).

- There are various mechanisms for contracting and providing compensation to Tribal and indigenous SMEs, such as Indigenous knowledge keepers providing specialized information for interpretation programming and design, program presenters and demonstrators.³
- The partner will need to write the invoice on official government letterhead and submit it to the park.

³ See DO#71C, Section 7.1

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- The park manager can submit an associated convenience check authorization to the Regional Office, citing the transaction as Tribal and Indigenous SME services provided.
- Confer with your Regional Budget office to understand appropriate next steps.

Sole source various contracts with Tribal and Indigenous community businesses with 8(a) Business Development certification

Sourcing contracts with Tribal or Indigenous businesses can support a range of potential partners and increase local expertise and investment. It can sometimes be more efficient for the NPS. DOI's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization maximizes contracting opportunities for 8(a) businesses. Once certified, businesses can compete and receive set-aside and sole-source contracts. Selected businesses receive one-on-one business development training, as well as mentors and expert connections for the length of the certification (nine years).

- Consider that certain eligibility restrictions apply:
 - Tribal businesses may have not previously participated in the certification.
 - Tribal businesses must have a net worth of \$750k or less, AGI of \$350k or less, and assets totaling \$6M or less.
 - Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs) who meet the eligibility restrictions are also able to apply.
- Refer to [DOI's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization page](#).
- Direct potential Tribal partner to the [8\(a\) information page](#); the [8\(a\) application](#); and the ["Am I Eligible?" Tool](#).

Use a Reimbursable Service Agreement for direct service provision.

In some instances, a Tribal partner or indigenous community may already have a funding agreement through another federal government entity (e.g., BIA, USFS, BLM) to perform certain types of work or service. NPS can take advantage of this arrangement by providing funding to that agency through a [Reimbursable Service Agreement](#) or Interagency (for agencies outside of DOI) or Intra-agency Agreement. The receiving agency may then transfer that money to the Tribal partner to execute the work on behalf of NPS. This is more efficient and supports local Tribal and indigenous partners.

- Park managers should consult with Tribal and indigenous partners on when this might apply, as this technique may only be used in specific cases.
- Close coordination with the partner agency and Tribal and indigenous partner is required.
- Contact your Regional Budget Office if you think this may be a possibility - they can help you understand your options under Reimbursable Agreements.

Grant and Project Funding

Heritage Grants

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 authorizes NPS to provide grants to Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations⁴ for cultural and historic preservation projects. The NPS may coordinate with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations and directly source services from those partners on joint projects. This approach assists Tribal partners and

⁴ [Consultation with Native Hawaiian Organizations In The Section 106 Review Process: A Handbook](#)

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others such as NHOs in protecting and promoting their unique cultural heritage and traditions. Eligible Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations may apply directly to this funding source. Consider:

- Application packages must be submitted using [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) in response to a notice of funding opportunity number under Assistance Listing (formerly CFDA) 15.904.
- The grant request range is \$15,000-\$75,000.
- Eligible projects include oral histories, identifying plant and animal species information important in traditional knowledge, sacred and historic places, and the establishment of Tribal historic preservation offices.
- For more information, refer to the [Tribal Heritage website](#), or [program fact sheet](#).

Other general grant sources

Tribal and Indigenous partners may be eligible for several additional grants through other avenues. Requirements and application processes vary, but some grant opportunities may be relevant for Tribal or Indigenous partners to help fund co-stewardship activities.

- [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) is the general source for all Federal grants, including grants administered by other agencies (e.g., Bureau of Indian Affairs), or NPS programs that grant funds exclusively to state programs for further distribution. In some instances, Tribal or Indigenous partners have received funding through the NPS State and Local Assistance Programs working through state partners. See [State and Local Assistance Programs Division \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#).
- [NPS under-represented community](#) grants provide project funding for surveys, inventories, or nominations of historic places associated with communities underrepresented in the National Register.
 - This grant program supports the survey, inventory, and designation of historic properties that are associated with communities currently underrepresented in the National Register of Historic Places, and among National Historic Landmarks.
 - THPOs, Federally Recognized Indian Tribes (as defined by 54 U.S.C. § 300309), Alaska Native Villages/Corporations, and Native Hawaiian Organizations are all eligible applicants.
 - Nonprofit organizations, with or without 501(c)3 designation, are also able to apply, making this a good opportunity for non-profit Tribal and Indigenous partners that may not be Federally recognized.
 - Applicants may partner with other partner organizations.
- [National Park Foundation](#) (NPF) grant funds are less restricted than federal funds and can be used and distributed efficiently.
 - Funding is available for interpretation and education projects, such as a Tribal or Indigenous community speaker or film series.
 - Tribal and Indigenous community members may engage in park projects directly without complex hiring or funding mechanisms.
 - Refer to [NPF grant application information page](#) for more information.

Develop an annual funding agreement with Tribal governments.

[Federally Recognized Tribal governments](#) participating in the Self-Governance Program can manage projects and programs administered by NPS under funding agreements that allow parks to provide Tribal

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governments direct funding to conduct specific functions or activities. Refer to [Tribal Self-Governance Agreement Regulations](#) . Opportunities for self-governance arrangements are listed annually in the Federal Register. A funding agreement can be a very efficient approach for Tribal partners to carry out relevant projects or programs, from facilities work to resource protection.

- It may be beneficial to have a signed General Agreement in place to memorialize the overarching, shared goals of the parties before working through an Annual Funding Agreement.
- Refer to the [Foundational Policy Memo on Tribal Self-Governance](#) and [regulation \(25 CFR 1000\)](#) regarding annual funding agreements.

Partner with a Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) to execute Tribal and Indigenous community projects.

When Tribal or Indigenous partners are not be eligible to use funding agreements under the Self-Governance Program, NPS may consider using a cooperative agreement with a Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) as the vehicle to provide funding to the partner to execute projects, so long as they are aligned with NPS and Tribal/Indigenous partner co-stewardship goals. CESUs are pre-approved for funding for certain projects when there is a public benefit.

- Refer to the [CESU SharePoint](#) to learn more about CESUs.
- Discuss ideas for using Cooperative Agreements with your Point of Contact for [Financial Assistance](#) for more information and next steps, including when a Cooperative Agreement must be competed versus sole-sourced.

Partner with a Research Learning Center (RLC) to execute natural, cultural, or biocultural resource preservation projects.

RLCs generally have missions to support parks on natural, cultural, and biocultural resource projects and research and may have experience engaging with Tribal partners and Indigenous communities, community Leaders, or cultural practitioners on specific projects. Tribal partners and Indigenous communities bring unique knowledge and skill sets that are valuable to project execution. RLCs draft projects that parks are generally eager to apply for. Often these projects are already funded by grants secured by the RLC, reducing the administrative burden on park managers and Tribal or Indigenous community partners.

- If a project is not already funded by a grant, a park may need to use its own funding source (e.g., ONPS, project funding, revenue, or donations) to finance the project through other mechanisms.
- RLCs can compensate Tribal and Indigenous community practitioners and partners using these funds to execute these projects.

Encourage Tribal partners to apply for 501(c)3 or CESU status to facilitate easier project funding.

As a long-term strategy, some Tribal and Indigenous partners may be interested in achieving 501(c)3 non-profit status or CESU status themselves. Achieving 501(c)3 non-profit status allows Tribes and indigenous communities to access NPS funding more easily through cooperative agreements, without relying on a third-party partner. Equally, NPS benefits from imparting and integrating local indigenous knowledge and traditional practices into deliverables. Funds obligated to a cooperative agreement are not subject to the same fiscal year expiration dates, and may be more flexible, but projects must have a clear public benefit and substantial NPS involvement.

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- Refer to the [CESU SharePoint](#) page and contact Regional CESU leads for more information on how a Tribal government, Native Hawaiian organization or Indigenous entity can apply for CESU status.
- Discuss ideas for using cooperative agreements with your point of contact for [Financial Assistance](#) for more information and next steps, including when a cooperative agreement must be competed versus sole-sourced.

Human Resources and Hiring

Use Federal authorities to hire Tribal and Indigenous community members into the NPS.

While not considered direct co-stewardship, hiring Tribal and Indigenous community members into the NPS shows a commitment to working with Tribal partners and increases the diversity of perspectives and backgrounds of the NPS workforce. The Federal hiring process can be difficult to navigate, but there is often more flexibility than park managers are aware of. Refer to the [Federal Hiring Flexibilities](#) to understand a full range of options and benefits when using special hiring authorities, including:

- Veteran hiring authorities and eligibilities.
- Qualifying program authorities and eligibilities, including direct hire authority through resource assistant internships.
- Alaska local hire program.
- Other hiring authorities, such as Peace Corps and Overseas service, persons with disabilities, Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act.

Employ Tribal and Indigenous community youth through Public Land Corps or Indian Youth Service Corps programs.

Employing Tribal youth through the Public Land Corps is a powerful way to connect a new generation to Tribal heritage and conservation. The Public Land Corps are part of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, a [youth and young adult program](#) that provides teens and young adults with opportunities at National Park sites supporting conservation goals and outcomes. Partner providers, funded through NPS funding or grants, support Tribal and Indigenous community youth in implementation of conservation projects. Partners, such as the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps (ALCC), work with young adults from local Indigenous and Tribal communities to provide internship opportunities in historic preservation, traditional agriculture, interpretation, conservation, and trail construction, generally. Participants receive non-competitive hiring status into the NPS for two years from the date of project completion.

- Contact [Youth and Young Adults Programs](#) for more information on how to participate.

Allow Tribal and Indigenous community members to use park address when applying for positions.

In remote areas, supporting the use of the park unit address on resumes for community members who are applying for a federal position and lack a physical mailing address may be helpful. Some park managers have found that allowing those individuals to use the park address removes barriers to employment and builds trust with Tribal partners.

- Park managers who find that this is an important consideration for their partners may need to identify informal systems to make this possible, including communication channels, mail tracking and collection processes, and other considerations.

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- This technique can be effective when combined with making an on-site computer available as a dedicated workstation where community members can access and apply to positions on [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov). Generally, the park site is often equipped with internet connectivity which can be limiting in remote locations.

Recruit for vacancies through local Tribal and Indigenous community newspapers, radio, and Tribal colleges and universities.

This strategy gives park managers the ability to reach tribal and indigenous community members outside of the standard USAJobs posting. Diversifying recruitment methods will increase the chances of a diverse applicant pool and may generate trust with local indigenous communities and tribal partners.

- Park managers should be aware that some outlets may require an advertising fee to promote positions and using NPS funding may not be possible.
- THPOs may have good insight into the best hiring channels.
- Refer to [American Indian Higher Education Consortium](#) for a list of educational institutions that may be local to your park and able to assist with recruitment.
- Utilize native student and professional societies to share opportunities such as the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES); Society to Advance Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS); Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP); Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC).

Transfer Term/Temp positions from governments with Intergovernmental Personnel Act

Some Tribal and indigenous government employees may be interested in temporarily joining NPS staff for the execution of a certain role or project, bringing specialized experience to the assignment that would otherwise be unavailable to the NPS. Park managers can use the [Intergovernmental Personnel Act](#) for the temporary assignment of skilled personnel between the NPS and Tribal governments. IPA assignments may be used for full-time, part-time, and intermittent positions. The term length of the IPA arrangement is undetermined and could serve a variety of functions, such as community outreach, project management, Tribal liaison, park management, as well as other hard-to-fill positions or temporary needs (e.g., Teacher-Ranger-Teacher positions).

- NPS may enter IPA assignments on a reimbursable or non-reimbursable basis, allowing for flexibility for the agency, Tribal governments, and indigenous community organizations – it is up to relevant parties to establish agreement terms.
- Park managers do not need OPM approval to make assignments; however, NPS staff should consult with their Servicing Human Resource Officer (SHRO) to understand the suite of options.
- Refer to the OPM site on [Intergovernmental Personnel Act](#) assignments, [NPS HR Bulletin 11-12](#), and contact your SHRO for more information.

Conclusion

This guide is intended to highlight the importance of communication, collaboration, and consultation with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and Indigenous communities in the development of unique co-stewardship strategies. Developing and implementing co-stewardship arrangements with Tribal and indigenous peoples and communities, expressed in a myriad of ways, is

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part of the core mission of the National Park Service. For further assistance, please contact the Office of Native American Affairs, WASO Business Services, Regional leadership, and Regional Tribal Liaisons.

Resource Guidance

Executive Order # 13007: Indian Sacred Sites (1996)

Executive Order # 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (2000)

36 CFR § 2.6: Gathering of plant or plant parts by federally recognized Indian Tribes (2016)

Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships (2021)

Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Interagency Coordination and Collaboration for the Protection of Tribal Treaty Rights and Reserved Rights (2021)

Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Interagency Coordination and Collaboration for the Protection of Indigenous Sacred Sites (2021)

Executive Memorandum: Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Federal Decision Making (2021)

Executive Memorandum: Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge (2022)

Memorandum on Uniform Standards for Tribal Consultation (2022)

Best Practices for Identifying and Protecting Tribal Treaty Rights, Reserved Rights, and Other Similar Rights in Federal Regulatory Actions and Federal Decision-Making (2022)

Executive Order # 14112 Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations To Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination (2023)

Best Practices Guide for Federal Agencies Regarding Tribal and Native Hawaiian Sacred Sites (2023)

Joint Secretarial Order No. 3403 on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters (2021)

Departmental Manual, Part 502, Chapter 1 (502 DM 1): Collaborative and Cooperative Stewardship with Tribes and the Native Hawaiian Community (2022)

Departmental Manual, Part 512, Chapter 4 (512 DM 4): Department of the Interior Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes (2022)

Departmental Manual, Part 301, Chapter 7 (301 DM 7): Departmental Responsibilities for Consideration and Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in Departmental Actions and Scientific Research (2023)

Management Policies (2006) §§ 1.11, 2.3, 5.3, 6.3.12, 8.2.6, 8.5, 8.6.10

Director's Order # 71C: Consultation with Indian and Alaska Native Tribes (2024)

Director's Order #20: Agreements (DRAFT)

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Director's Order #12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making and NPS NEPA Handbook

Policy Memorandum 22-03: Fulfilling the National Park Service Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters (2022)

Policy Memorandum 24-01: Guidance for Implementing 36 CFR 2.6—Plant Gathering by Federally Recognized Tribes for Traditional Purposes (2024)