



Date: February 07, 2019

Subject: Letter of Support: Americas for Conservation and the Arts (AFC+A) Partners and Collaborators

To Whom it May Concern,

The USDA Forest Service (USFS) has partnered for over three years with the Americas for Conservation and the Arts (AFCA) in a variety of conservation education and grassroots community engagement efforts driven to empower diverse youth and communities through knowledge and action around natural resource conservation and stewardship. This partnership focuses on bringing ideals of public land stewardship, community engagement, and health-focused education to youth and family programs aimed at engaging underrepresented communities, with a strong focus upon Latino community engagement. AFCA's 5-year Participating Agreement with the USFS includes a variety of sub-agreements that support a strong model of engaging youth and community members in conservation/stewardship training and implementation, while creating avenues of development for career pathways. These various models engage multi-generational individuals in stewardship, restoration and sustainable natural resource management, with a strong focus on pollinator positive tree canopy/forest restoration that will support community health and pollinator health, while also providing environmental benefits, improved food resources and security and ecosystems services to recovering communities. In addition, AFCA has been engaging communities in Nature and Forest Therapy sessions that have supported cultural repair and deep connections to the land.

The USFS Washington Office Headquarters and Region 2 Regional Office has financially supported the Promotores Verdes program, as an innovative extension of the Woodsy Owl Conservation Corps youth engagement program in 2017 and 2018, and continues to support this program's expansion to include Latino families from diverse backgrounds (English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Afro-Latino and individuals with indigenous heritage) in critical areas throughout Puerto Rico. The national office has also supported the Promotores Verdes program with professional guidance, printed materials and professional development opportunities. The USFS supports events and education surrounding healthy forests connections that stress health benefits that nature provides, promoting preventative and restorative health for families adversely affected by health risks such as cardiovascular disease, asthma, diabetes, stress and depression. Nature and Forest Therapy activities have advanced through this incredible work, providing participants with opportunities for increased connections with self, others and the land.

AFCA has proven to be an excellent partner in helping the USDA Forest Service in advancing the mission of reaching diverse and underserved communities with meaningful and relevant educational programs and opportunities for action around stewardship and conservation, while



establishing avenues for career pathways in arboriculture, natural resource conservation and public health. AFCA has achieved a great deal over the past several years of partnership, through leveraging the seed funding and financial resources that the Forest Service has been able to provide. We are proud of the many incredible accomplishments and growth that we have witnessed in the expansion of many important programs and initiatives driven by AFCA and their dedicated partners. This partnership has helped to advance community resiliency and capacity building for communities at large to become involved and engaged in civic and environmental leadership through nature-based connections.

AFCA exhibits a wonderful track record of detailed reporting, meeting all compliance-related aspects of the official USFS partnership. In addition, AFCA leadership has engaged in opportunities to share the many stories of success, while also sharing challenges with USFS leadership and staff, as well as associated partners and communities around the nation through online webinars and in-person visits to the USFS Headquarters, to share these important accomplishments.

Thank you for considering Americas for Conservation and the Arts as a leader in this important realm as they work to create a model of resiliency, focusing on individual, community and environmental health, while establishing opportunities for sustainable recreation, conservation leadership and stewardship and natural resource career pathways.

If you have questions about the grant qualifications of AFCA, or the specifics of our partnership, please do not hesitate to contact me at tkconway@fs.fed.us or 202-731-5952.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Conway', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Tamberly Conway
Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist
U.S. Forest Service – Headquarters
Washington, DC