

U.S. Endowment launches funding opportunity to assess closed wood products facilities for bioenergy development

New initiative offers up to \$500,000 to test the renewable energy and economic potential of idled industrial sites in forest-dependent regions

GREENVILLE, SC, UNITED STATES, June 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities](#) today launched a Request for Proposals (RFP) to assess the feasibility of repurposing closed wood products manufacturing facilities, including pulp and paper mills, for bioenergy. The initiative will make available up to \$500,000 in pre-development funding to support one or two facilities across the United States.

Across the country, idled wood products facilities have left behind industrial infrastructure, utility connections and skilled workforce capacity at a time when forest-dependent regions are urgently seeking new economic anchors. Since 2015, more than 40 U.S. pulp and paper mills have closed, removing roughly 60 million green tons of annual wood demand from rural communities.

The Endowment's market initiative seeks to determine whether these sites can be reactivated as biopower generation or biofuel production facilities, creating new markets for low-value wood fiber and supplying renewable energy to a growing economy.

"Working forests depend on working markets," said Pete Madden, president and CEO of the U.S.



Project team members tour an industrial wood products facility. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities.



U.S. Endowment
for Forestry and Communities



We are funding this work to show if these sites can transition to a biopower or biofuel production facility.”

Pete Madden, president and CEO of the U.S. Endowment

Endowment for Forestry and Communities. “When a mill closes, a rural community loses a piece of its economic future, and the low-value wood that mill used to buy, has nowhere to go. These sites still hold the infrastructure, grid connections, and workforce that bioenergy needs. We are funding this work to show if these sites can transition to a biopower or biofuel production facility.”

What the Funding Will Support - Selected projects will

conduct pre-development assessments equivalent to a Front-End Loading Level 2 (FEL-2) analysis, producing the technical, economic and market data needed to support investment and development decisions. Analyses will address:

- Site-level due diligence and engineering feasibility
- Economic and financial viability
- Infrastructure requirements and financing structures
- Project risks and mitigation strategies
- Community and workforce considerations

Funding will be structured as a Program-Related Investment (PRI) or a grant, repayable if the project proceeds to construction financing or forgiven as a grant if the project does not advance.

Who Should Apply - Eligible applicants include U.S. based private companies or other organizations with proven experience in energy project development, wood products manufacturing, data center development, or closely related infrastructure projects. Applicants must demonstrate site control or authorization to evaluate the facility and should be able to show that the project can realistically advance to implementation.

Key dates are:

- RFP Posted: June 15, 2026
- Questions Due: July 17, 2026
- Responses Posted: July 24, 2026
- Proposals Due: August 6, 2026, by 5:00 PM EDT
- Contracting and Project Initiation: September 2026

Proposals must be submitted via the Endowment’s online application portal at <https://usendowment.my.site.com/grants>. Full application details and the complete RFP are available at www.usendowment.org/funding-opportunities.

About the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities is a not-for-profit public charity collaborating with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and enduring change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities. To learn more about the Endowment, please visit our website at www.usendowment.org.

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