
OPEN FOREST IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK CHARTER

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE FRAMEWORK CHARTER

The Open Forest Framework Charter outlines a comprehensive scope and overarching implementation strategy for the full life cycle of the Open Forest system. The Charter describes the product vision and mission outcome, and it highlights processes for prioritizing work, connecting with existing federal systems, proper governance, and transparent communications. It provides a structure for implementation and outlines organizational information related to the pace and scale of execution, including key roles, resource requirements, risks, and decision processes to determine system permitting functions.

The Framework Charter scope includes:

- defining a vision for Open Forest that identifies the potential range of permits and authorizations to be included within the system,
- identifying criteria for prioritizing a product roadmap and scaling the implementation of Open Forest across the Forest Service,
- establishing a governance structure that determines product implementation priorities and validates resource commitments needed to achieve desired outcomes,
- identifying the organizational structure and roles necessary to ensure national, regional, and unit support for implementation,
- providing a framework that allows for scalable resource commitments to determine the pace and scale of implementation, and
- creating a model relationship between the Forest Service, National Forest System (FS NFS, business owner) and Natural Resources and Environment, Assistant Chief Information Officer (NRE ACIO, system owner) that exemplifies the shared commitment required to implement flexible iterative business solutions.

PRODUCT VISION

Open Forest is an interactive online system that provides end-to-end online permitting focused on customer service and a positive user experience. Open Forest is for public, partner, and private business customers who want or need a permit in order to recreate or do business on National Forest land. It will offer a “basket of products” for recreation, lands, forest products, grazing and minerals permits.

Implementing this vision will be a multi-year, long-term initiative. It will be based on partnerships with regions and units that enable shared responsibility, and it will leverage the expertise, knowledge, and customer relationships that exist throughout the Forest Service.

MISSION OUTCOME

The goals of Open Forest are to: (1) provide a high-quality, customer-focused experience in applying for and purchasing permits, and (2) improve business processes for managing permit sales and administration. Benefits include a faster, more convenient online service; transparent, intuitive, easy-to-use permitting services; reduced workload for Forest Service employees involved in the permitting process; and standardization of certain aspects of permitting across forest units.

OPEN FOREST OVERVIEW

As a platform, Open Forest will be comprised of a suite of products that provide electronic permitting services for a variety of permit types offered to the public through a web interface. NFS will evaluate numerous permits and authorizations in special uses, special forest products, grazing, and minerals for the opportunity to enhance customer experience and streamline business processes. Existing permitting solutions that have been developed will be integrated into the Open Forest system, recognizing that unique solutions will require collaboration to minimize disruptive transitions and ensure seamless customer service.

Open Forest products will use modern principles and practices that focus on providing high quality customer experiences and adaptable solutions. High-quality customer experiences will be achieved through ongoing user engagement while not overbuilding a solution based on assumptions, invalidated needs, and cultural norms that may not serve the interests of the public or the workforce. Key adaptable solution principles and practices that underpin the design and development of Open Forest will include:

- Human Centered Design,
- iterative, modular, and portable construction,
- Agile framework development,
- open source technology,
- cloud-based solution lifecycle,
- integrated Development-Security-Operations (Dev/Sec/Ops), and
- shared services.

In addition to a foundational set of solution principles, Open Forest will include a core set of design criteria for cyber security and accessibility requirements that ensures system compliance is designed up front and harmoniously with program and user needs in mind. This will be achieved with an emphasis on flexibility to meet the needs of internal and external customers, while keeping pace with changing technology.

Open Forest is being initiated through a pilot phase where the purpose is to:

- introduce modern solution principles and practices in an applied way,
- determine how best to apply new modernization practices in the organizational structure and culture of the Forest Service,
- establish the Open Forest system as an approved investment through the USDA and Forest Service IT governance processes and obtain Authority to Operate (ATO), and
- design, develop, and implement a customer-focused electronic permitting system that serves as the foundation for an enterprise platform that offers a range of permits and authorizations.

With the conclusion of the initial pilot project, the Forest Service will begin the next phase of system implementation. This charter establishes the framework for expansion based on a phased approach that is prioritized and scaled through enterprise and system governance.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Open Forest meets multiple USDA strategic goals including:

Strategic Goal 1: Ensure USDA programs are delivered efficiently, effectively, and with integrity and a focus on customer service.

Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate rural prosperity and economic development.

Strategic Goal 6: Foster productive and sustainable use of our National Forest System Lands.

Open Forest also closely aligns with the objectives of the USDA IT Centers of Excellence (CoE) Initiative. <https://coe.gsa.gov/index.html>

Open Forest is an element of Forest Service program direction and the mission to deliver benefits to the public, provide excellent customer service, and enhance access to National Forests and Grasslands, and improvements in permit/authorization processing.

OPEN FOREST PRODUCTS

Table 1 identifies a range of product categories (permit types and services) that will be considered for inclusion in the Open Forest system.

Table 1. Open Forest Products*

Permit Types	Agency Sponsor	Customers
Recreation Special Uses	Recreation	Individuals, Outfitter Guides, Businesses, Education, Partners
Lands Special Uses	Lands	Utilities, Individuals, Businesses, Partners, Education
Special Forest Products	Forest Management	Individuals, Businesses, Partners, Education
Grazing	Range Management	Ranchers, Farmers
Locatable Minerals	Minerals and Geology Management	Businesses, Individuals

*These potential products are separate from and do not conflict with Recreation.gov services.

ROADMAP

The Product Roadmap is a living document that what will drive the implementation of Open Forest. The Product Roadmap is a schedule of events and milestones that communicate deliverables across a timeline. It also provides visibility to stakeholders throughout a planning deliverable period. The Roadmap generally has more detail in the immediate term and less detail further out as result of the implementation of Agile practices. The Roadmap will show both Business Milestones (i.e. permit workflow development) and System Milestones (i.e. authentication and cybersecurity development). A sample version of the current Open Forest Pilot Roadmap can be found at the following link [Open Forest Pilot Roadmap](#).

PRODUCT PRIORITIZATION

Establishing and adapting a Product Roadmap based on product priorities enables strategic planning outcomes desired and supported by Open Forest. Prioritizing product implementation over a multi-year planning horizon is the basis for determining the schedule and resource requirements that drive the pace and scale of implementation. The prioritized Roadmap will also serve as the basis for a communication plan that facilitates transparency and sets expectations with customers and the product teams.

The following criteria will be considered in establishing Open Forest product priorities:

- public and unit demand,
- customer service improvement,
- public/workforce safety improvement,
- process streamlining,
- feasibility, and
- region/unit readiness.

SCALING OPEN FOREST

As the Forest Service determines the “basket of products” to offer customers, it is important to understand how the Agency can scale up Open Forest services, and the decision criteria associated with that scale-up effort.

The dimensions shown in Figure 1 provide a preliminary framework for the scale-up of Open Forest. They include:

- More forests – the current (2018/2019 pilot) approach with Christmas Trees
- More permit types – possible approach for special uses and forest products, grazing
- More feature modules – customization, mapping, reporting

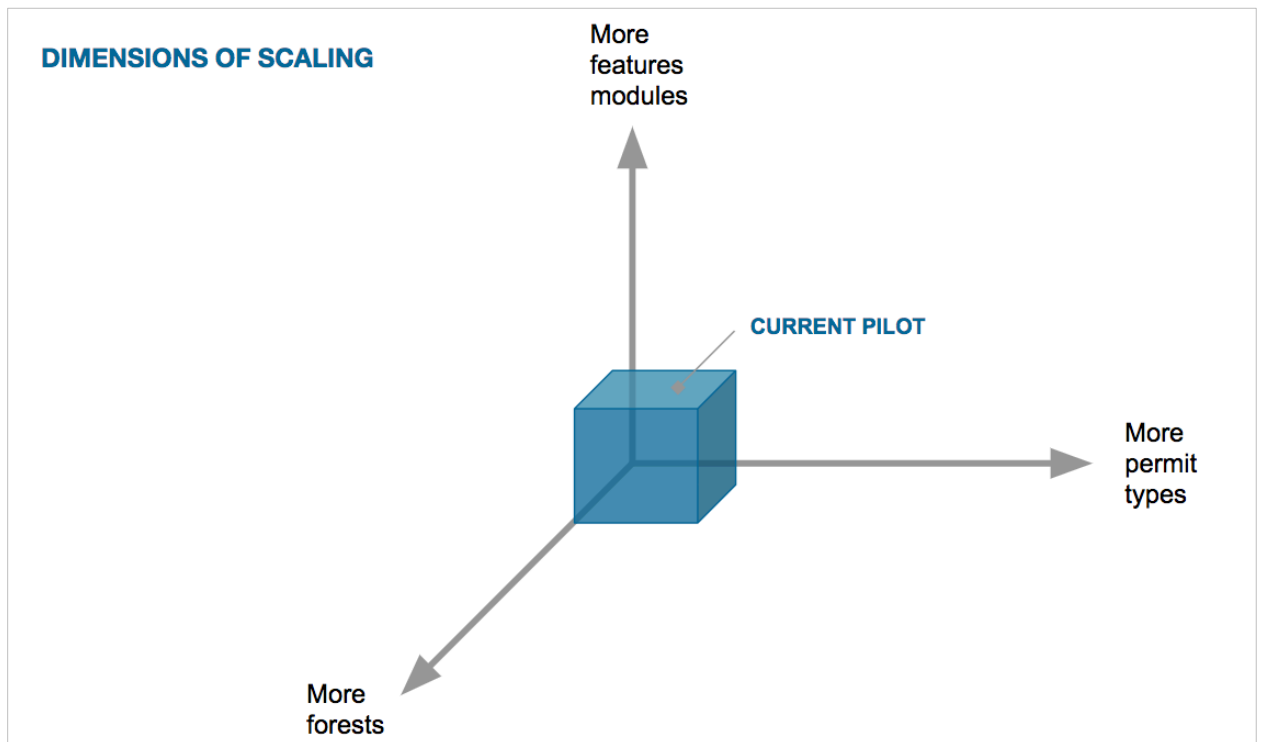


Figure 1. Dimensions of scaling.

The following are also important considerations while evaluating decision criteria.

- **Customer Benefit** – How many customers will be served? How many transactions can be automated? Will we improve customer access (e.g., less driving to offices to do business)? Will we reduce burden on frontline staff, and by how much? How will the customer benefit be measured?
- **Business Readiness** – Are we ready to change? Is the program area properly staffed and committed to the effort? Is there regional and unit demand and resource

support for a pilot? Is there appropriate funding? What are the priority drivers (e.g., Congress, public, policy, targets, performance measures)? Is a change in policy or direction necessary to facilitate a scale-up? Where is the most benefit for the smallest investment? Where is the best place to pilot? How will the outcome be measured?

- **System Readiness** – Does a similar permitting workflow already exist? Do we need to build a new workflow? Do we need to build a new module(s)? Do we need to reduce cyber security risk? How can we best integrate with existing systems? Do legacy systems need to be updated before we can scale-up with certain products? What are the options, and what are the costs of each option? How will success be measured?

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING SYSTEMS

Open Forest will maintain a dynamic site architecture with connections to several systems. This information is maintained on the Open Forest Wiki [Open Forest Ongoing Site Architecture](#). There are several key dependencies ranging from Department and Agency financial systems to shared services with the Treasury Department and USDA. Shared services and their significant architectural coordination needs are key to efficient delivery of modernized services.

GOVERNANCE

ENTERPRISE IT GOVERNANCE

Open Forest is considered one of the two USDA systems approved as an enterprise level permitting system. Open Forest will continue to adhere to the USDA Integrated Information Technology Governance Framework ([IITGF](#)) from both a business owner (USFS NFS) and system owner (NRE ACIO) perspective through the relationship established in this Charter between USFS NFS leadership and NREACIO leadership.

Open Forest is sponsored by NFS and governed through the USFS Information Resources Direction Board (IRDB). Prioritization and funding as an investment in IT is determined through IRDB governance process in conjunction with the Agency budgeting process.

OPEN FOREST PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

Open Forest implementation is governed by NFS deputy area leadership that will make strategic business decisions regarding product priorities. Decisions include prioritization of products (types of permits), location and scale of implementation, and pace of implementation. The Open Forest business governing body is comprised of the Associate Deputy Chief, relevant staff Directors, and the Resource Information Manager. The Open Forest governing body will consider policy and business process issues and identify resolution approaches to address barriers and conflicts.

OPEN FOREST SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

Operational management of the Open Forest system will be implemented under the NRE ACIO as the system owner in coordination with the NFS product manager and Open Forest product owner.

OPEN FOREST ACCOUNTABILITY

The Open Forest team will provide a monthly report that includes costs/expenditures, product progress, and implementation monitoring. Categories for financial reporting may include (but not be limited to) costs related to governance, cyber security compliance,

operations & maintenance, and new product/feature development. The Open Forest system operational outputs will be integrated into NRE dashboards when appropriate. Regular progress reporting through a transparent communication process will ensure stakeholders have immediate access to information related to the product roadmap, deliverables, milestones, and their associated outcomes.

COMMUNICATION

Open Forest will focus on providing a transparent communication model that provides stakeholders and partners access to all information including budget, roadmap priorities, and day-to-day operations. Communication resources will be designed to meet the needs of a wide range of stakeholders. The information will be presented in a tiered and discoverable fashion to allow stakeholders to easily find the level of detail they need.

Beyond communication tools, Open Forest will focus on the relationship between NFS and NRE ACIO. The Open Forest Framework establishes roles that create the organizational relationships needed for shared leadership and integrated operations necessary to deliver business and technical outcomes. This will be accomplished through routine interaction between product management and system management during implementation, and through regular monitoring of resources, deliverables, and outcomes by NFS and NRE ACIO leadership. Defined communication processes will relate to an approved product roadmap driven by the needs of public customers and internal customers in the field.

The Open Forest approach to working with our public customers ensures continuous input and engagement opportunities that guide future product development.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

Design, development, and implementation of the Open Forest platform and the permitting services (products) is an iterative process that is best suited to a phased approach shown in Figure 2 below. This approach allows for the close coordination across unit/regional/national levels and ensures outcomes that focus on the customer.

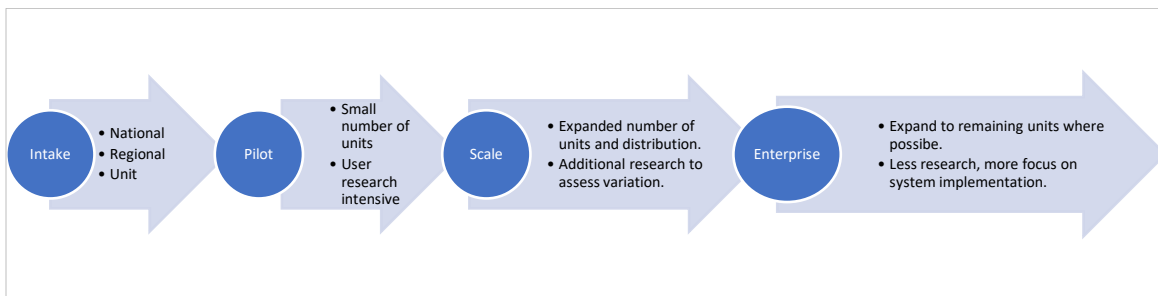


Figure 2. Phases of Open Forest implementation.

The range of locations, landscapes, and communities served by the Forest Service results in many unique operational environments. The Open Forest pilot has demonstrated that understanding these environments, the workforce, and the public customer results in better system implementation and customer experience. The phased approach seeks to balance the need for strong progress in system implementation with the time needed for user engagement that drives product effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

Each phase is focused on a distinct permit type (product). Given appropriate prioritization and resource availability, multiple products can be in various phases of implementation, allowing for progress on multiple permit types simultaneously. It is expected that as Open

Forest expands there will be knowledge and technical components that are applied from previous products, increasing development efficiency and speed of implementation.

ORGANIZATION

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Table 2 outlines the key roles and responsibilities that will support the Open Forest system and product development and implementation.

Table 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Position & Organization	Project Role	Project Responsibilities
CIO –Mission Support Systems	System Owner	Owns all applications and ensures they have a valid ATO. CIO Enterprise Application Development Branch provides technical staff for the design, development, and production of Open Forest applications.
Resource Information Manager	Portfolio Manager	Oversees Open Forest investment and relationship to USDA and Forest Service governance processes. Provides strategic technical leadership to NFS.
SES Level/Staff Director(s)	Business Owner	Owns the specific product(s) of the Open Forest platform related to program business processes and permits.
NFS Deputy Chief's Office	Product Manager	Provides overall guidance and direction to development team, support personnel, and field units to execute the project. Coordinates with national and regional leadership on policy and strategic prioritization issues.
Business Owner	Product Owner	Provides the overall subject matter expertise to implement components of the project. Manages operational coordination with the units during the design, development, testing, and production phases.
Regional Forester	Regional Oversight	Ensures regional staff support and appropriate priority level.
Forest Supervisor	Forest Unit Oversight	Ensures unit staff support and appropriate priority level.
Unit SME(s)/POC(s)	Point of Contact	Serves as unit subject matter experts and points of contact for development team.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

FUNDING MODELS

Open Forest funding decisions are determined through the enterprise IT governance process and are currently based on the use of appropriated funds. Consideration may be given to supplementing or replacing appropriated funds to support system development and operations through authorities that allow for the use of transactional fees. The model used by Recreation.gov for similar types of services may be relevant to sustainable, use-based funding of Open Forest. It is also important to note that Open Forest is a modular system that can allow for multiple business workflows to be developed simultaneously.

PERSONNEL

The Open Forest system is based on contemporary IT practices that require specific roles to ensure business expertise is paired with technical expertise to deliver customer-focused solutions. Business roles include portfolio manager, product managers and product owners that work closely with IT roles that include user experience (UX) researchers and designers, system engineers, software developers, architects, and cybersecurity experts. Establishing and filling these roles represents a shift from the traditional approach to solution development in the Forest Service and aligns with best practices identified by professional standards [Agile](#), [Agile and Lean Framework](#), [Lean](#) and federal guidance on transforming government IT.

Successful implementation of Open Forest across the Forest Service is dependent on coordination that spans deputy areas as well as coordinated efforts performed by national programs and field units. The Open Forest framework presumes National Headquarters alone will not meet the needs of the public and the field or have the customer knowledge and capacity to deliver effective solutions. Both national, regional, and unit level resources and direction are needed fill necessary roles and provide essential skills.

RISKS

As Open Forest moves forward, identification and management of risk is a key activity. The initial pilot phase identified a number of technical, organizational, resource, and administrative risks. Monitoring and mitigating these risks is critical to the success of Open Forest. Table 3 provides a high-level characterization of risks along with potential mitigations.

Table 3. Open Forest risk awareness and management.

Risk	Mitigation
Lack of product governance	Implement proposed Open Forest Framework Charter
Lack of NFS organizational support due to organizational change and restructuring. Could negatively impact delivery of scheduled functionality and value.	Establish a Portfolio Manager in NFS at the Resource Information Manager level, and a Product Management Team in NFS.

Leadership and staff do not understand the system due to high rates of turnover in key positions. Could result in reduced investment understanding and support.	Establish appropriate governance and communication planning that provides effective communication for leadership staff as part of their orientation.
Insufficient engagement by business areas. Could negatively impact delivery of scheduled functionality and value.	Establish a single POC in each business area that serves as a coordinating force to engage appropriate SMEs and business leadership as needed. Define clear roles to implement the Agile processes with emphasis on SME engagement, Product Owner, and Product Manager roles
Cyber process schedule and Resource Constraints	Follow strategy built by NFS and ACIO to work with USDA to streamline process to improve cyber stance and delivery of services to create a “Path to Innovate.”
Expectations for product delivery that exceed capability	Implement a thorough communication plan that provides timely and transparent information related to priorities, schedule, and cost.
Shared service dependencies (Pay.gov, eAuth etc.)	Ensure resources are available to monitor and support all shared service agreements and changes that impact Open Forest.
IT services transition	Document IT service accountability (e.g. SLA’s). Ensure IT governance model is followed to establish clear business priorities and resource commitments.

PROJECT CHARTER APPROVAL

The undersigned acknowledge they have reviewed the Open Forest Framework Charter. Changes to this Charter will be coordinated with and approved by the undersigned or their designated representative(s).

Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Print Name: Chris French
 Title: NFS Leadership
 Role: Business Owner

Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Print Name: Joe Powers
 Title: ACIO Leadership
 Role: System Owner

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Print Name: _____
Title: _____
Role: _____

DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY

Version No.	Version Date	Modified By	Description of Changes
1.1	September 23, 2019	Brian Schwind	Document creation
1.2	Final Draft October 2019	Brian Schwind, Aaron Burk	Final document for submission