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Mid-Atlantic Regional Seed Bank (MARSB) Federal Funding Request Memo

Executive Summary

[The Mid-Atlantic Regional Seed Bank](#) is seeking currently undisbursed funding from the Biden Administration to assist in its Six-Point Program (detailed below) to develop the native plant material (NPM) supply chain for the mid-Atlantic region. This last minute funding is essential to further MARSB's mission prior to a change in the federal administration.

MARSB has worked with the federal [Seeds of Success](#) (SOS) program since the signing of a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2008. Initially under the purview of the [Greenbelt Native Plant Center](#) program within the [New York City \(NYC\) Department of Parks and Recreation](#), MARSB is now an incorporated 501(c)(3). Despite growing, unmet demand and this long-term participation with Seeds of Success and federal partners, no regional seed supply chain has yet been established in the Mid-Atlantic.

Current Funding Concerns

MARSB has secured \$500k in funding through next year under a section of the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) (BIL), through the [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#) (USFWS), and the [National Seed Strategy](#), developed by the Plant Conservation Alliance Federal Committee, now chaired by USFWS. However, upon review of publicly available funding distribution data, of the approximately one (1) billion dollars allocated for Ecological Restoration (ER), including seed infrastructure, [only an estimated \\$450 million](#) has been disbursed. Projects west of the Mississippi River have received more than six times the amount of money than those in the East.

While \$23.9 million of BIL-ER support is going to western tribes, a similar analysis of BIL-ER funding to-date shows no disbursements have been made to eastern tribal nations despite praiseworthy native plant supply initiatives. As an example, the [St. Regis Mohawk](#) Tribe has started a native plant nursery and greenhouse in northern New York.

While MARSB has secured substantial USFWS funds, those monies are limited to assisting wildlife refuges by collecting seed for future needs and are not adequate to grow a Mid-Atlantic regional seed

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supply program. Given its more than 30 years of supply chain development experience, MARSB, with appropriate funding, could immediately initiate and deliver a sustainable, regional, native plant materials program within 5 years. As few regional programs across the U.S. have formed or have as comprehensive an understanding of the supply chain, MARSB's program could serve as a national model. At the moment, if the Department of Interior's information is correct and up-to-date, substantial BIL-ER funds remain in the program that are uncommitted. To-date, federal agencies have moved cautiously to develop regional Native Plant Materials Development programs. MARSB is ready to immediately implement its comprehensive Six-Point Program in keeping with federally established goals. Federal agencies have the opportunity to benefit significantly from having a functioning supply chain model in place in the Mid-Atlantic.

Meeting New York State's Commitments

The [recent fires in NYC's Prospect Park](#) and neighboring New Jersey and Connecticut highlight the restoration needs the Mid-Atlantic currently faces. This need, and subsequent demand for native plants, will only increase as climate change worsens. Luckily, NYC has recognized this for some time and has been collecting, propagating, and increasing locally sourced seeds through its [Greenbelt Native Plant Center](#) (GNPC) for nearly 40 years. In a recent letter to Governor Hochul expressing support for [A9043](#), which is NYS legislation supporting the development of seed supply chains, Mayor Adams stressed that the GNPC is not enough to meet the current and growing State-wide demand for large-scale land restoration and reclamation projects. Such projects were necessary after the devastation of Hurricane Sandy and will be needed again to meet New York State's climate goals, its 25 million tree initiative, and NYC's plan to expand canopy coverage to 30% citywide. Federal support of MARSB's program now will aid in fulfilling New York State's commitment and will be key to establishing a regional seed supply chain for the Mid-Atlantic.

MARSB's Six-Point Program

MARSB is seeking the equitable release of currently undisbursed funds from various federal funding resources prior to the commencement of the next administration to implement a Six-Point Program to Develop a Native Plant Material Supply Chain throughout the Mid-Atlantic. MARSB recognizes that only by addressing all aspects of the supply chain together can it form, develop, and sustain itself. The six parts are:

- Develop ecoregional species lists across the Mid-Atlantic to identify and focus the need for use in ecological restoration;
- Establish an online marketplace to organize and manage demand and to monitor supply;
- Collect wild seed based on the species lists and documented demand;
- Clean and bank the collected seed; warehouse increased seed;
- Provide technical assistance to growers and suppliers; and,
- Lead a communications network of all participants to facilitate discussion and resolve on-going issues in operating a regional supply chain.

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