2027 CESU 5-Year Review and Renewal Guidance

Each Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) agreement has a term of five years from the effective date of execution. Each CESU agreement states that the activities of the CESU may be continued for a subsequent five-year period by mutual consent of the parties to the agreement (Article III. B.). The review and renewal process provides an opportunity for evaluation of each CESU every five years. The evaluation is conducted by the host university and its tribal and nonfederal partners, the participating federal agencies and designated external reviewers, and the CESU Council.

The objectives of the review and decision on renewal are to:

- assess mutual consent in continuing the activities of the CESU,
- evaluate the activities, strengths, and weaknesses of each CESU over the last five years, including collaborative responsibilities described in each CESU agreement, and
- renew each CESU agreement, as appropriate, including suggested or required changes.

In order to efficiently and effectively review the units, the CESU Council provides this guidance to the CESU host university and its tribal, nonfederal institution, and federal agency representatives to inform preparation and submission of the required elements in the CESU renewal package.

A complete CESU renewal package includes:

- Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment (i.e., letter of interest and intent, self-assessment report, compiled list of projects, up-to-date list of partners and contacts, additional supporting documents)
- Federal Managers Committee Report and Recommendation
- External Reviewers' Assessment Reports and Recommendations

ROLES DURING THE REVIEW AND RENEWAL PROCESS

The *CESU Council* comprises senior scientists and administrators from all participating federal agencies. The Council establishes policies guiding the activities of the CESU Network, including this renewal guidance. The Council reviews each renewal package to gauge performance and inform decision (via majority vote) for/against CESU renewal.

The *CESU Director* is a senior administrator from the CESU host university. The Director is responsible for coordinating and administering the activities of the CESU on behalf of its tribal, nonfederal, and federal partners. The Director drafts the letter of intent on behalf of the host university, coordinates the self-assessment on behalf of the host university and its tribal and nonfederal partners, and compiles the list of projects and other supporting documents. Upon approval for renewal, the Director works with the CESU Network National Office to coordinate review and gather signatures for a new CESU agreement effective for a subsequent five-year term.

The *CESU Federal Managers Committee* comprises technical and administrative representatives from each federal agency in a given CESU. The Federal Managers Committee provides to the CESU Director a list of CESU projects supported by their respective agencies over the previous five-year term, nominates at least two external reviewers, convenes the committee to discuss activities of the CESU, and jointly writes a report evaluating the activities of the CESU, including a specific recommendation to the CESU Council in support of or opposition to renewal.

External Reviewers are federal or nonfederal colleagues familiar with the CESU program but not actively engaged in the CESU under review. Each external reviewer reviews the Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment, seeking additional information as appropriate, to inform preparation of a brief report evaluating the activities of the CESU, including a specific recommendation to the CESU Council in support of or opposition to renewal.

The *CESU Network National Office* provides guidance and oversight to the CESU Directors, external reviewers, and Federal Managers Committee on behalf of the CESU Council during the review and renewal process. All materials should be submitted via email to the CESU Council, c/o Bret Meldrum, Acting CESU Network National Coordinator at *CESU@doi.gov*. Contact the national office staff with any related questions.

Steps and Due Dates

Action or Item	Responsible Party	Due date	Delivered via email to
Recruit and provide names of external reviewers	CESU Federal Managers Committee	January 20	CESU Network National Office
Provide list of federal agency-sponsored CESU projects	CESU Federal Managers Committee	January 20	CESU Director
Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment	CESU Director and tribal and nonfederal partners	January 31	CESU Network National Office
Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment – verified complete and distributed for review	CESU Network National Office	February 01	CESU Federal Managers Committee
	CESU Network National Office	February 01	External Reviewers
Federal Managers Committee Report and Recommendation	CESU Federal Managers Committee	March 01	CESU Network National Office
External Reviewers' Assessment Reports and Recommendations	External Reviewers	March 01	CESU Network National Office
CESU renewal package compiled, verified complete, and distributed for review	CESU Network National Office	March 15 (approximate)	CESU Council
Renewal package review, discussion, and renewal decision	CESU Council	April 15 (approximate)	NA
Council decision, including deficiencies or areas needing improvement	CESU Council (via National Office)	no later than June 01 (approximate)	CESU Host University
Draft and review new CESU Agreement (upon approval for renewal)	CESU Network National Office	May to July (approximate, per agreement effective date)	CESU Host University, tribal, federal, and nonfederal partners
Sign the new CESU Agreement	CESU Host University, tribal, federal, and nonfederal partners	Prior to expiration of current agreement	CESU Network National Office

CESU Renewal Application Review

The CESU Council will review and discuss the CESU renewal application package to (1) gauge performance over the current five-year term (i.e., excellent, full performance, satisfactory, unsatisfactory) and (2) inform the decision in favor/not in favor of renewal. The Council will notify the CESU Director of the decision regarding renewal, including specific information related to performance and identified deficiencies and associated corrective actions, as appropriate. If significant deficiencies are identified, the Council may recommend conditional renewal and require more substantial corrective actions or consequences.

Instructions for the Host University

The Host University is responsible for completing the Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment, which includes a letter of interest and intent, self-assessment report, and a compiled list of projects. Additional supporting documents (e.g., strategic plan, annual meeting agendas, meeting minutes) may be included, as appropriate, to explain the successes and challenges of coordinating the CESU. All review materials should be assembled electronically and emailed to the CESU Network National Coordinator by **January 31**.

1. Letter of Interest and Intent

A key part of the CESU review and renewal process is for the host university and its tribal and nonfederal partners to declare their interest in continuing the activities of the CESU. The host university should contact each of its current tribal, nonfederal, and federal partners regarding their intentions for continued participation in the CESU. Then, the host university shall prepare a brief letter of interest and intent to the CESU Council, addressed to the CESU Network National Coordinator that includes:

- the host university's interest in and intent to continue hosting the CESU;
- the interest in and intent of *each* partner to continue participation in the CESU; and
- the interest and intent of any other institutions that the current CESU host and partners have approved and would like to include as new additions to the CESU agreement.

The letter of interest should specifically identify partners that wish to continue and those that do not. Separate letters from each of the partners may be included, but are not required. If new members are joining, the host university should include the new member application(s) and approval documentation.

2. CESU Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment Report

The host university, working with its tribal and nonfederal partners, shall prepare a self-assessment that includes:

- a three to five page self-assessment report reflecting on the activities of the CESU over the current five-year term according to the CESU renewal criteria and questions provided (pp. 5-7);
- additional supporting documents related to the activities of the CESU (e.g., strategic plan, annual meeting agendas, meeting minutes); and
- additional information or insights (e.g., successes, challenges) deemed useful to share with the CESU Council for the development of the CESU and the CESU Network.

3. Compiled List of CESU Projects

Using the data provided by the CESU Federal Managers Committee, the CESU Director shall compile a list of agency-supported CESU projects conducted over the current five-year CESU term. The CESU Director may determine the extent of the data call but at minimum the fields should include:

- Federal agency
- Partner(s) (i.e., award recipient)
- Project title
- Period of performance (i.e., year, start date/modification date, end date)
- Amount of award

4. Compiled List of CESU Partners

The CESU Director shall compile an up-to-date list of CESU federal and nonfederal partners and their respective technical and administrative representatives (include full contact information – name, title, affiliation, address, phone, email) and authorized signatories (include name and title).

Instructions for the Federal Managers Committee

The Federal Managers Committee is responsible for recruiting external reviewers, providing the CESU Director with a list of agency-supported projects, and preparing the Federal Managers Committee Report and Recommendation. The CESU Network National Office recommends that the Federal Managers Committee designate one lead or two co-leads to coordinate completion of the required Federal Managers Committee activities for the renewal (e.g., emails, conference calls, data collection, engagement by all agencies).

1. External Reviewer Recruitment, Assessment Reports, and Recommendations

The Federal Managers Committee shall recruit two to three external reviewers and submit their names and contact information to the CESU Network National Coordinator by **January 20**. The external reviewers may be federal or nonfederal colleagues. They should be familiar with the CESU program, but not actively engaged in the CESU under review, and selected to avoid conflict of interest and unnecessary cost. All costs of the external review are the responsibility of the Federal Managers Committee and its respective agencies, and hence pro bono review is encouraged. The Federal Managers Committee should ensure that all external reviewers are appropriately briefed about (1) the CESU, (2) the purpose of the review, and (3) the renewal criteria and questions included in this guidance (pp. 5-7).

Each external reviewer shall independently prepare a brief report (3-5 pp.) evaluating the activities of the CESU over the current five-year term according to the criteria and questions provided. The CESU Network National Office will provide to the external reviewers a copy of this guidance along with the Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment to inform preparation of their reports, and they should be encouraged to seek additional information (e.g., CESU web site, document review, discussion with partners), as appropriate. The report should include a specific recommendation to the CESU Council that clearly states whether the reviewer supports or opposes renewal of the CESU for a subsequent five-year term. External reviewers should submit their reports via email to the CESU Network National Coordinator by **March 01**.

2. Federal CESU Project Data

Each participating federal agency shall provide to the CESU Director by **January 20** a list of CESU projects conducted over the current five-year CESU term. The CESU Director may determine the extent of the data call but at minimum the fields should include:

- Federal agency
- Partner(s) (i.e., award recipient)
- Project title
- Period of performance (i.e., year, start date/modification date, end date)
- Amount of award

3. Federal Managers Committee Report and Recommendation

The Federal Managers Committee shall prepare a brief report (3-5 pp.) evaluating the activities of the CESU over the current five-year term according to the criteria and questions provided (pp. 5-7). The committee will receive a copy of the Host University and Nonfederal Partner Self-Assessment to inform preparation of the report. The report should include a specific recommendation to the CESU Council that clearly states whether the committee supports or opposes renewal of the CESU. The committee should plan to convene one or more times (e.g., conference call) to discuss the renewal criteria and questions, and preparation of the report, allowing adequate time for drafting, review, and approval by all agencies prior to submission. The committee should submit its Federal Managers Committee Report and Recommendation via email to the CESU Network National Coordinator by **March 01**.

CESU Renewal Criteria and Questions

For each question listed below, indicate "**YES**" or "**NO**" (as appropriate) AND provide additional details and/or examples in support of your answer (e.g., participation statistics, student involvement on projects, tangible and intangible benefits, challenges, best practices). Questions were derived from Article II of the CESU agreement.

Category A: Federal Responsibilities

Did <u>each</u> federal agency in the CESU…

1. Provide opportunities for coordinated, collaborative scientific and scholarly activities (i.e., research, technical assistance, and education) that inform stewardship of, and education about, public trust heritage resources in alignment with CESU, agency, and partner mission goals, programmatic objectives, and authorities? *Provide details, including reference to agency-support (or lack thereof) and activities over the current five-year term (e.g., number of projects; types of projects; management issues, topics, or subject matter areas).*
2. Provide funds for basic support and salary for CESU host university (or other nonfederal partner institution) faculty/personnel, as appropriate? How have federal partners provided support to the host university over the current five-year term (both financial and in-kind) specifically to support CESU operations? *Provide details regarding support (e.g., support by agency, fiscal year, instrument/mechanism) and associated expenditures.*
3. Make available federal personnel to serve on the CESU Federal Managers Committee? Did all federal technical representatives actively participate in CESU Federal Managers Committee activities, CESU partner meetings, and other CESU activities (e.g., communication, planning, reporting)? *Provide details, including reference to consistent agency participation (or lack thereof) over the current five-year term (identified by agency, as appropriate).*
4. Comply with CESU Network, host university, and nonfederal partner institution rules, regulations, and policies (e.g., professional conduct; health and safety; use of services and facilities; use of animals, recombinant DNA, infectious agents or radioactive substances) and ensure its employees follow the Code of Ethics for U.S. Government Employees? *Provide details, including examples of best practices or areas of concern (identified by agency, as appropriate).*
5. Did federal agency employees actively participate in the activities of the host university and nonfederal partner institutions, including serving on graduate student committees or teaching courses? *Provide details, including examples of courses or other service activities.*
6. Take responsibility for their respective agency's role in administering the CESU agreement, transferring funds, and supervision of agency employees? *Provide details, including examples of best practices or areas of concern (identified by agency, as appropriate).*
7. Provide administrative assistance, as appropriate, necessary to execute the CESU agreement and subsequent amendments or modifications (e.g., timely processing, signatures)? *Provide details, including reference to consistent and/or effective assistance (or lack thereof) over the current five-year term (identified by agency, as appropriate).*
8. **Federal Agency Response Only:** What percentage of projects were conducted successfully (e.g., project tasks completed, products/outputs accepted by the sponsoring agency)? What percentage of projects were unsuccessful (e.g., project tasks incomplete, products/outputs not accepted by the sponsoring agency)? *Provide details (e.g., what factors influenced/contributed to project success or failure)?*

Category B: Host University Responsibilities

Did the host university…

1. Allow and encourage its faculty to engage in participating federal agency sponsored research, technical assistance and education activities related to the CESU objectives? *Provide details, including description of faculty engagement and two highlighted/example projects.*
2. Provide basic administrative and clerical support over the current five-year term (i.e., in support of CESU operations)? *Provide details (e.g., nature and level of support).*
    a. How much did it cost the host institution to support the CESU over the current five-year term? *Provide details (e.g., CESU-specific costs, Director and/or staff time, % FTE, travel, facilities, administrative services, equipment, supplies, communications, printing, web hosting).*
    b. Where is the CESU Director's office officially stationed within the host institution (e.g., Office of the President, School of Natural Resources, Department of Forest Resources)? *Provide details (e.g., location relative to other departments, schools, greater organization), as appropriate.*
3. Provide access for CESU federal agency personnel (e.g., CESU Research Coordinator) to campus facilities, including library, laboratories, and computer facilities? *Provide details and examples.*
4. Provide suitable office space, furniture and laboratory space, utilities, computer network access and basic telephone service for CESU federal agency personnel (e.g., CESU Research Coordinator) to be located at the Host University? *Provide details (e.g., challenges, successful approaches, examples).*
5. Offer educational and training opportunities to participating federal agency employees, as appropriate? *Provide details (e.g., number of trainings, number of people, course dates, course descriptions).*
6. Coordinate activities, as appropriate, with the CESU federal, tribal, and nonfederal partners and develop administrative policies for such coordination? *Provide details.*
    a. Was a CESU Managers Committee maintained and convened, at least annually? *Please provide details (e.g., meeting dates, meeting agendas, number/affiliation of participants, meeting minutes).*
    b. Were periodic meetings of the CESU partners convened, at least annually, for the purpose of collaboration and coordination of CESU activities? *Provide details (e.g., meeting dates, meeting agendas, level of participation, affiliation of participants, meeting minutes).*
    c. What efforts were made to communicate each tribal and nonfederal partner institution's strengths and expertise to the federal partners (e.g., listing investigators on the CESU website, expertise database, meetings)? *Provide details (e.g., challenges, successful approaches).*
    d. How were federal funding announcements and/or other opportunities communicated to partners across the CESU? *Provide details (e.g., challenges, successful approaches).*

Category C: Participation of all Partners

1. What efforts did the host university, tribal, nonfederal, and federal partners undertake to engage students in projects and other activities of the CESU? *Provide details (e.g., challenges, best practices, statistics for graduate and undergraduate student involvement, example projects).*
2. Did all partners actively participate in CESU activities (e.g., meetings, phone calls, signing amendments, strategic planning, reporting)? *Provide details (e.g., if not, why not? participation statistics, challenges to participation, successful approaches, best practices).*
3. What percentage of partners received funding through the CESU over the current five-year term? *Provide details (e.g., partner funding statistics, notable barriers, successful approaches).*
4. What efforts were made to encourage and broaden participation in the CESU by all partners (e.g., HBCUs, tribal colleges, small academic institutions, state and local government agencies)? *Provide details (e.g., participation statistics, challenges to participation, successful and/or novel approaches).*
5. What is the date of the most current version of the CESU's strategic plan? How well do the activities of the CESU reflect the priorities and objectives outlined in the plan? *Provide details (e.g., challenges, best practices, example projects).*
6. Did the participating federal agencies, host university, tribal, and nonfederal partners develop and follow annual work plans to guide the activities of the CESU? *Provide details (e.g., challenges, successful approaches, example projects).*
7. Have partners successfully obtained the tribal, federal, state, or local government permits and/or permissions from private landowners necessary to execute projects under the CESU agreement over the current five-year term? *Provide details (e.g., challenges, successful approaches, examples).*
8. What instances exist where projects, programs, or partners have derived benefit as a result of the established CESU relationship, independent of federal awards administered through the CESU (i.e., where simply being a partner in the CESU aided furtherance of other efforts; without/outside direct funding through a CESU project award)? *Provide a brief description of any such examples.*