

# INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING STRATEGY

v. 3.11.25

Indigenous peoples (IPs), local communities (LCs), and Afro-descendant Peoples (ADs) are among the most **effective guardians of ecosystems critical to combating climate change and protecting biodiversity**. However, their ability to do this work **depends on strong, well-resourced institutions capable of addressing growing threats**.

Through our 2030 strategy, Rainforest Foundation US (RFUS) is prioritizing the **strengthening of IP, LC, and AD partners' institutional capacities as a core element of our work to protect territories and secure rights**.

This document outlines how RFUS is advancing these efforts. For **over 35 years, RFUS has maintained close, long-term partnerships, and has deepened our understanding of the main challenges and the complexities of the institutional strengthening work**. Lessons learned—including those from mistakes—continue to inform RFUS's approach.

**RFUS combines tailored technical assistance with funding to help partners in different regions and operating at different scales to strengthen their institutions, manage larger funding streams, and achieve their goals.**

## Our Approach

### Partner-led

Our support is based on **partners' goals and priorities**, and is co-designed and implemented in a way that ensures **partners exercise ownership and leadership over their institutional strengthening processes**. We encourage partners to coordinate the various elements of these processes, and to identify and **allocate resources to sustain these efforts in the long term**.

### Comprehensive

We go beyond compliance—**adopting a holistic, partner-driven perspective of institutional strengthening**—so partners can pursue their goals and long-term vision. We foster a critical understanding of the funding ecosystem, **assisting partners to meet funding requirements while advancing their broader institutional strengthening priorities**.

### Collaborative

We work alongside partners to actively **leverage diverse resources and expertise within the support ecosystem**, building collaborations with a wide range of actors to support their strengthening processes. Furthermore, we promote peer-to-peer learning and facilitate knowledge exchanges among partners, donors, and allies to share good practices, **fostering a supportive environment for them to achieve their goals**.

## 2030 Targets

Increase the number of partners strengthened from **30 to 70+**

From **\$6.4M to \$20.5M+ USD in funding facilitated** to support land rights and territorial management

Support expanded from **2 to 3+ Territorial Funds**, with disbursements increasing from **\$400K to \$5M+ USD**

# What We offer

## Provide technical support

We work with partners to visualize what strong and successful institutions look like to them and to determine what priorities to invest in. Our support includes proven methodologies and tools to enhance key areas such as strategy, governance, project management, fundraising, finance, and administration. This assistance is delivered by our team or by trusted local experts through various methods, including hands-on technical support, mentoring, peer exchanges, workshops, and more. Additionally, we help partners design and manage their own capacity-strengthening programs, so they can lead these efforts independently and locally.

## Facilitate funding

We help partners access funding by jointly applying for grants or by serving as a re-granter or fiscal sponsor, reducing compliance burdens for partners and administrative hurdles for donors. We aim to ensure a continuous flow of funding, core and flexible whenever possible, so partners can strengthen their capacities, build a solid financial track record, and be ready for direct funding opportunities. We also support partners in developing financial mechanisms such as Territorial Funds or local fiscal sponsorship arrangements to manage and distribute resources effectively at the grassroots level.

# Our Partners

Our partners operate across diverse geographies, and at all levels—from local and subnational institutions implementing projects on the ground and coordinating across communities to national and international institutions running broader programs and advocacy at higher levels. We connect and reinforce efforts across these levels so that partners can amplify their collective impact.

- 2 global level partners
- 4 regional level partners
- 5 national level partners
- 19 sub-national level partners



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