



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Grants

Sponsored by USDA Forest Service and Tennessee Department of Agriculture

All applications must be submitted by **5PM CDT on September 27, 2024.**

INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry (TDF) announces that applications are being accepted for the Tennessee Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Assistance Program. This opportunity is provided by the Forest Service and Tennessee Department of Agriculture. This program seeks to promote the creation, enhancement, and protection of urban and community forest ecosystems and to support full-circle management of these valuable resources throughout Tennessee.

THE FOREST SERVICE: URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

Working in partnership with 63 state and territory forestry agencies, more than 30 national partners, and more than 150 community tree groups, the national Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) Program restores, sustains, and grows the more than 140 million acres of urban and community forest lands in the United States. By collaborating with our state partners to deliver information, tools, and financial resources, the program provides fact-based and data-driven best practices for communities of all sizes to sustainably manage urban and community forests and the benefits they provide. These benefits include social and environmental quality, recreation opportunities, and wildlife habitat. Well managed urban and community forests can also deliver concrete economic benefits, creating green jobs, increasing property values, and contributing to vibrant regional wood economies.

The health and vitality of the forests targeted by the U&CF program are critical to all our Nation's Forests. Communities often act as gateways for invasive pests and disease, and well managed community forests can slow or even halt the spread before they infect neighboring private, state, or National forests. In addition, the U&CF program provides opportunities for Americans to experience nature in their own neighborhoods, cultivating the stewards of our Nation's forests for tomorrow and ensuring they continue to deliver benefits to the next generation.

The Forest Service is a partner on the Interagency Memorandum of Understanding on Promoting Equitable Access to Nature in Nature-Deprived Communities, which seeks to reduce the number of people without access to parks and nature in their communities. Additionally, the America the Beautiful Initiative supports the prioritization of locally led conservation and park projects in communities that disproportionately lack access to nature and its benefits. Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) is also covered under the Justice40 Initiative established through Executive Order 13985.

The U&CF Assistance Program was authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (PL 95-313), Section 9, and amended by PL 113-79, effective February 7, 2014.

National Urban and Community Forestry Program Objectives

- Integrate Urban and Community Forestry principles into all scales of planning
- Promote the role of Urban and Community Forestry in human health and wellness
- Cultivate diversity, equity, and leadership within the Urban Forestry community
- Strengthen Urban and Community Forest health and biodiversity for long-term resilience
- Improve Urban and Community Forest management, maintenance and stewardship
- Diversify, leverage, and increase funding for Urban and Community Forestry
- Increase public awareness and environmental education to promote stewardship
- Prioritize projects focusing work on extreme heat mitigation, urban wood utilization urban food forests and workforce development

Tennessee Urban and Community Forestry Program Goals

- Facilitate the development of strong partnerships between and among other state government departments and programs; nonprofit organizations; city and county governments; civic organizations; affiliated businesses; and educational institutions.
- Increase awareness and practice of full circle management in urban and community forests.(Steps of Full-Circle Mgmt: Evaluate, Plan, Plant, Maintain, Manage & Utilize)
- Increase engagement with prioritized communities under the Justice40 initiative through outreach, education, technical, and financial assistance.
- Increase awareness of the numerous benefits of trees including those related to extreme heat mitigation, stormwater, and public health outcomes.
- Increase community preparedness for natural disasters by providing education and outreach, and assistance related to the Readiness, Response and Recovery program.
- Increase the number of communities participating in Arbor Day Foundation recognition programs.

ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS

Funds may be awarded to units of local governments (city, town, county), non-profit 501(c)3 organizations, and public educational institutions. Other organizations, such as community tree volunteer groups, neighborhood associations or civic groups which are not 501(c)3 organizations, are eligible but must apply in partnership with a non-profit organization or their local government. Non-profit organizations will need to upload a copy of their IRS 501(c)3 Letter of Determination with their application.

All applicants must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on obtaining a UEI can be found at SAM.gov. This video may also help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uv1YNAsINk&t=17s>.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Applicants can apply for amounts between **\$5,000 - \$40,000** in TN Urban and Community Forestry Assistance. TN Urban and Community Forestry Assistance funds will be awarded on a competitive basis. Awarded projects are meant to be completed in a single year unless prior approval is given. The Tennessee Division of Forestry reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to approve partial funding.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT CATEGORIES

The TN U&CF Assistance Program is intended to support new initiatives, programs, projects, staff positions or activities not currently being funded through other sources.

Potential Projects Include:

A. Urban and Community Forestry Management

Projects that implementing full-circle management of community forest resources. Full-circle management includes the following steps: Evaluate, Plan, Plant (has own category), Maintain, Manage, Utilize.

Eligible expenses include:

- Professional staffing or services – Full, part-time, or as needed employment (staff or contracted) of a community forestry professional to assist in community forestry program management. A draft position description and qualifications must be submitted with the application
- Technical assistance – Projects that collect data and/or create plans needed for efficient and effective growth, management and utilization of community forestry resources. Examples: Canopy mapping/assessments, tree inventories, tree management plans, greenspace master plans, storm readiness plan, and/or urban heat island mapping.
- Invasive species removal – projects that address invasive plant species that adversely impact community forests.
- Developing a plan for an emerging municipal or utility urban and community wood program.
- Contracting with a company to plant and maintain trees.
- Cost of removing and stump grinding diseased, high risk or invasive trees to create planting spaces for new trees.

B. Tree Planting

All projects funded under this category must be for the purpose of addressing tree equity; mitigating the effects of extreme heat and climate change; replacing storm damaged canopy; creating greenspaces; reducing stormwater runoff; improving air quality; creating wildlife habitat; and/or increasing the environmental and social benefits of trees.

Projects and expenses allowed under this category include:

- Creation of food forests (It is recommended that food forests use mostly native species that require less maintenance such as pecan, mulberry, pawpaw and persimmon).
- Cost of shrubs if part of a larger planting that is mostly trees

Eligible tree planting projects must:

- Take place on non-federal public property such as city/county parks, schools, playgrounds, greenspaces, rights-of-way, business districts, parking lots, and downtown areas.
- Include a list of tree species planned for planting.
- Include a tree planting site plan and map using aerial photography or GIS. Locations (addresses, zip codes or GPS coordinates) of all trees must be provided by the end of the project. If applicable, include details of impervious surface removal.
- Include a 3-year maintenance plan.
- Include a letter of support from the local government or from the Department of Transportation, if applicant is not the property owner.

C. Program Development or Capacity Building

- Tree Board Creation/Development/Training - Projects to organize a new tree board/commission or provide training or planning assistance for existing tree boards. A new tree board or commission should be charged by ordinance to act on behalf of local government in coordination with the community's urban forestry program.
- Non-profit Program or Advocacy Group Development – Projects that develop or enhance a non-profit 501(c)3 or advocacy group's ability to support tree planting, tree maintenance, tree education efforts, etc. Ex: nonprofit program establishment; tree care training program (Tree Stewards, etc.); staff position to conduct tree planting and education programs; outreach and education staff position focused on disadvantaged neighborhoods or groups.

D. Workforce Development

Projects that help move towards a more diverse and inclusive workforce in urban forestry and arboriculture. Grant funding may be used to build programs, conduct outreach activities, increase capacity, or provide training and education to support community workforce development efforts. Examples: youth development programs, training programs, internships, apprenticeships, preparation for professional certification acquisition.

Note: All funding for staffing is expected to be used as seed monies to help establish a program or build capacity. Applicants are strongly encouraged to identify and secure other future sources of funding to maintain staff positions and to provide this information in the grant narrative. Grant funding for subsequent years is not guaranteed and, if awarded, may be reduced.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Beautification projects
Research projects
Construction projects
Trail design, construction and/or maintenance
Property acquisition

GRANT TIMEFRAME

All applications must be submitted online by 5PM CDT on September 27, 2024. Applicants will be notified of proposal status in November. Approved projects can begin only after a grant agreement and Federal Assurances are signed by the grantee. Projects are expected to be completed within one (1) year. The one-year project period will begin once the agreement is fully executed.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Purchase of equipment
- Purchase of food, snacks, or beverages
- Purchase of gift cards
- Purchase of land or land charges
- Purchase of plant material classified as exotic invasive species in TN. TN Invasive Plant Council linked [here](#).
- Construction expenses
- Costs that are not incurred during the grant award period
- Costs not approved in the contract or by the TN U&CF Program Coordinator via submission of a grant modification request.

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

A 50/50 match requirement is expected. However, applicants may request a match reduction or waiver. To justify the request for a match reduction, applicants must demonstrate how the 50/50 match is prohibitive and request the match rate that fits with their needs (75/25; 80/20; etc).

To request a match waiver, two things must be included in the proposal. (1) Verification that the project is located within a prioritized community. Demonstrate eligibility by taking screenshot(s) of the census tracts via the CEJST. (2) A written explanation of how the project will impact these targeted areas.

REPORTING

A mid and final report are required of the grantee. The schedule and content of these final reports will be shared prior to the project's initiation. Final reports must be submitted within 30 days of project completion. Final invoices will not be paid until reports are submitted.

PAYMENT PROCESS

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a reimbursement basis no more frequently than monthly. Grant recipients must submit a Request for Reimbursement (included in award paperwork package) and include records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs. The TN Division of Forestry reserves the right to make partial payments subject to completion of scheduled milestones and proper documentation of grant expenses. The Urban and Community Forestry Program Coordinator will evaluate the progress of the project to determine eligibility for full payment. Projects must maintain records for at least 3 years following final payment. TDF assumes no liability for any contractors, volunteers, or local government employees working on any projects.

APPLICATION FORMAT

Applications will be completed online. Proposals should be clear and concise; address an urban and community forestry need; and meet one or more of the objectives of the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program. Applicants can upload maps, photos, letters, etc. to support their proposal. The information requested in the online application includes:

- A summary of the proposed project.
- Purpose and objectives of project
 - Why is this project important/needed?
 - What will be done to address the identified needs?
 - Where is the project focused? (Communities? Census blocks?)
 - How will what is being proposed impact the target area(s)? What are the benefits?
 - Why is the applying entity the right fit for successfully completing project? Are they already connected to community where project is proposed? Have they done projects such as this before?
- Partnerships and Participants –List project personnel, volunteers, participating organizations, etc. and explain their roles in the project.
 - Administration – Specify who will be responsible for project management and record keeping. Who will submit reports – programmatic and financial?
- Project Details:
 - Activities – List all the activities involved in the project; who will complete the activities? What is the timeline? Are there associated metrics?
- Timetable – Show project start date, project milestone/activity completion dates, and total project completion date.

- End Product/Result – What will be the final results/impact of the project? Who will benefit? A table or bulleted list is acceptable.
- Community Engagement – Explain the strategies the project plans to use for community outreach, education and engagement.
 - *ALL communications and signage must acknowledge source of funding. Example language will be provided to awardees.
- Sustainability -- Are there plans for the project's results to be sustained after the project's end?

Budget Narrative

How will the funds requested be utilized to support the proposed project? (Narrative should align with budget worksheet). A maximum of 15% of the total award can be used towards administrative/indirect expenses. The budget will be compared to the project narrative to determine if proposed expenditures are reasonable and allowable.

Categories that can be used in the budget include:

- Personnel* – List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period.
- Fringe Benefits – Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included.
- Travel – Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips, and other costs for each type of travel. Please visit www.gsa.gov/perdiem to determine the appropriate federal rates.
- Supplies – All tangible personal property other than “equipment” which is valued at \$5.00 or greater. Supplies must not exceed \$5,000 per individual item. The budget detail should identify supplies to be purchased.
- Contractual* – Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose, nature, and estimated cost.
- Other – List each item in sufficient detail for grant administrators to determine the reasonableness of the cost.
- Indirect – only 15% is allowable towards the total award.

*State assumes no liability for any contractors, volunteers, or local government employees working on any projects.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The TN Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program will determine awards on a competitive basis. ONLY APPLICATIONS THAT MEET GRANT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS WILL BE REVIEWED.

Evaluation will be based on whether the proposed project:

- Meets a demonstrated urban and community forestry need
- Aligns with federal and state program objectives
- Has a realistic timeline for completion
- Shows demonstrated ability of the applicant to follow through on project completion
- Plans to use qualified personnel
- Involves various partnerships
- Is cost effective
- Has a plan for long-term benefits/sustainability
- Is submitted by a first-time applicant (they are prioritized)

The Tennessee Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program encourages proposals that benefit disadvantaged communities as identified by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST).

CEJST is a geospatial mapping tool that assists with identifying census tracts that are overburdened by climate change, pollution or other environmental or socioeconomic factors. These communities identified through CEJST are considered disadvantaged because they are overburdened and underserved. Other government sanctioned data sources may be considered for identifying disadvantaged communities.

GRANT PREPARATION ASSISTANCE

Assistance in developing proposals is available to all potential applicants. Program staff will also provide guidance as to a project's suitability under this program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss potential projects before proposal submission.

Contact Ashley Kite-Rowland, TN Urban and Community Forestry Program Coordinator with any questions or concerns. Email: Ashley.Kite-Rowland@tn.gov

ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- USDA Forest Service: fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf
- Vibrant Cities Lab: <https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/>
- Justice 40 Initiative: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>
- Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/>
- EPA Environmental Justice Screen and Mapping Tool: <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>
- Tree Equity Score: <https://www.treeequityscore.org/>
- Nation Integrated Heat Health Information System: <https://www.heat.gov/>
- International Society of Arboriculture: www.isa-arbor.com
- Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA Program: www.ArborDay.org

All applications must be submitted by 5PM CDT on September 27, 2024, through the online grant portal.

Paper applications will only be accepted by prior approval. To make this request, please contact Ashley Kite-Rowland at Ashley.Kite-Rowland@tn.gov or call 615-