



REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program

Sponsored by USDA Forest Service

All applications must be submitted online by **9 p.m. EDT on November 3, 2023.**

Introduction

The **Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)**, in cooperation with the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service**, announces the Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Grant Program. This program is designed to encourage projects that promote the protection and enhancement of urban and community forest ecosystems.

Objectives of the Urban and Community Forestry Program

Legislative Authority

Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (a). State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) appropriated \$1,500,000,000 to provide multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants. Of this total allocation \$6,600,000 was allocated to Virginia to be distributed over a 4-year period. Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) is also covered under the Agency's Justice40 Initiative established through Executive Order 13985. To advance the mission of Justice40, proposals that deliver the benefits of IRA investments through established partnerships with local organizations working to support disadvantaged communities will receive priority consideration. USDA is a partner on the Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 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. 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.

Federal and State Program Objectives

The objectives of the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program are to:

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

Eligibility Information

Funds may be awarded to units of local governments (city, town, county), non-profit organizations, tribal entities, or educational institutions. Other organizations, such as volunteer groups, neighborhood associations or civic groups which are not 501(c)3 are eligible but must apply in partnership with a non-profit organization or with their local government. All applicants applying for a federally funded award must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on UEI provided here: <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update>.

Funding Sources

There are two sources of funding for this grant opportunity. One source is Virginia's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the second is non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance funds. Each opportunity has specific requirements so please read the details below. Both non-matching and matching opportunities are available in [System Access Portal for Forestry Grants](#) (SAP).

Non-Matching Grants

- IRA funding available for non-matching or match free grants. See non-matching opportunity in [System Access Portal for Forestry Grants](#). Grants can be funded up to \$250,000 per project.
- These funds **MUST be used in DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES** identified by the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST). CEJST is a geospatial mapping tool to identify 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, such as [EJScreen](#), may be considered for identifying disadvantaged communities, but priority will be given to those applications that use [CEJST](#). Projects or programs of work completed 100% in disadvantaged communities identified by [CEJST](#) will qualify for IRA funding.
- **IRA-qualified** projects will be eligible for funding up to \$250,000 per project for up to three years based on need and completed milestones. Please specify your desired grant timeline during the application process. All projects must be completed by December 1, 2026. In addition, **IRA-qualifying** projects do not have to provide project match. Up to 20% of the total ask can be used as administrative and indirect expenses are allowable but supporting documentation is required. Acknowledgement of IRA U&CF contribution is required for printed materials and signage.

Matching Grants

- Non-IRA funding is also available. See matching opportunity in [System Access Portal for Forestry Grants](#). Grants will be funded up to \$50,000 per project.
- These projects do not have to have an exclusive focus on disadvantaged communities but the potential amount that can be awarded is substantially less and requires match. **Projects which do not focus 100% on disadvantaged communities do not qualify for IRA funding.** Non-IRA projects may be selected to receive up to \$50,000 in non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance funds which require a dollar-for-dollar match. Match can be provided in the form of cash, services or in-kind contributions. Please specify your desired grant timeline during the application process. All projects must be completed by January 31, 2025. Reasonable administrative and indirect expenses are allowable but supporting documentation is required.

- **Example:** If the full project expenses are \$8,000, then the required match is 50% of that total, \$4,000. Grantees must match cost-share funds with non-federal funds and/or contributions. Matching cost-share funds or in-kind contributions cannot be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project.

Matching Requirements

IRA-qualified projects that provide 100% of the benefits to disadvantaged communities may qualify for a match waiver as per the IRA guidelines. To justify the match waiver, verification of the project's location on the CEJST tool must be provided along with a written explanation of how the project will impact a disadvantaged community. Non-IRA projects must provide a dollar for dollar (50/50) match with non-federal funds. These non-federal funds cannot be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project. The match may include in-kind contributions, volunteer assistance, and private and public (non-federal) monetary contributions.

Cash purchases are direct, out-of-pocket expenditures for eligible project activities that are supported by paid invoices, signed receipts or official payroll records. The use of in-kind (non-cash) match is valid and encouraged. In-kind match can take the form of volunteer hours, donated materials, donated services, donated office space or donated equipment associated with the project. Volunteer hours may be applied to the project at rates appropriate to the skill level of the volunteer and/or the nature of the work being performed. The base value for adult volunteer time on a project is **\$31.80** per hour.

This is the updated rate by the *Independent Sector*, which is posted on their website, www.independentsector.org, under the research tab. Staff time applied as either grant share or match must be valued at the employee's regular rate of pay. Fringe benefits are also allowable. All matching funds must be specifically related to the proposed project. Documentation of all matching funds must be provided before reimbursement of the grant award will be issued. *Assistance provided by federal employees or DOF may not be claimed as part of the match.*

Grant Timeframe

All applications must be submitted online by **9 p.m. EDT on November 3, 2023.**

Applicants will be notified of proposal status in December 2023. Approved projects can begin only after a grant agreement and Federal Assurances are signed by the grantee. All Non-IRA projects and most IRA-qualified projects must be completed by January 31, 2025. IRA-qualified projects may be eligible for multi-year funding. Applications for multi-year funding must justify the need for an extended project term and define activities, timeline and deliverables for each year of the project term. Multi-year projects may be renewed each year based on successful completion of project milestones. All IRA projects must be completed by December 1, 2026.

Proposal Format and Funding Availability

You must register an account in [System Access Portal for Forestry Grants](#) to apply. You will be asked to provide short (up to 1,000 character) responses via the portal for each question. There are two available opportunities (matching grants up to \$50,000 and non-matching grants up to \$250,000 per project.)

- Brief Description of Project
- Activities/Scope of Work
- Partnerships and Participants
- Organizational Experience completing Similar Projects
- Public, Educational Benefits and Community Engagement
- Disadvantaged/Underserved Justification (only for non-matching grants to justify waiver)

- Administration
- End Product/Deliverables
- Project Budget
- Personnel
- Fringe
- Travel
- Supplies
- Contractual
- Other Expenses

Attached Documentation Required

- Virginia W-9
- Screenshot of disadvantaged area via CEJST tool for non-matching grants

The Department of Forestry (DOF) reserves the right to reject and approve partial funding for any and all proposals. Records must be maintained for at least 3 years following final payment. The DOF assumes no liability for any contractors, volunteers or local government employees working on any projects.

Eligible Projects

Eligible Projects must meet federal and state program objectives. The U&CF Grant Program is intended to support new initiatives, programs, projects, staff positions or activities not currently being funded through other sources.

CATEGORY 1 –

SUPPORT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAMS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFFING – Local governments can apply for funding to assist in the support of staff engaged in urban forestry activities for a **limited duration**. Funds can be used for either full-time or part-time employees. Example: Professional staff such as an ISA-certified arborist on contract rather than a full-time employee. Grants can also be used to support professional certification of existing employees.

TREE MAINTENANCE – Funding can be used to conduct tree maintenance (pruning, removal, IPM, etc.) in the care of their urban forest. Maintenance expenses in disadvantaged areas, emergency routes and to prepare for new tree planting projects will be prioritized. Example: Funds can be used to remove *Fraxinus* (ash) trees due to their susceptibility to emerald ash borer or can be used to properly maintain a Champion Big Tree. All removals must occur on public lands.

INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL - Funding can be used to conduct invasive plant removal and habitat restoration for localities. All removals must occur on public lands. Example: Funds may be used to remove Privet (*Ligustrum spp.*) along a major trail in town. Native trees and shrubs can be installed after successful removal.

STORM READINESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT – Natural disasters happen but there are ways to manage the urban forest so that the trees are better prepared for disasters. Funding can be used for developing a community forest resilience plan or debris management plan, pre-negotiated storm contracts, and necessary municipal pruning within critical zones on public lands.

TREE BOARD OR TREE COMMISSION DEVELOPMENT – Projects to organize a new tree board or commission to develop or to administer an urban forestry program will be funded. The 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.

CATEGORY 2 – EDUCATION

CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS – Non-profit organizations, local governments and educational institutions may apply for funds to assist with the planning and implementation of a conference that has, whole or in part, an urban and community forestry focus. Grant funds can support printed materials, speakers, publicity and administration. Grant funds can also be used to offer scholarships to those events. Scholarships should go to students or others with limited means to attend. Food and beverage costs cannot be funded.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER – Projects that demonstrate and/or make information on new urban forestry technology or research available to a wider audience of potential users are eligible for funding. This includes but is not limited to new urban forestry-focused curricula at schools.

CATEGORY 3 – DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL TREE RESTORATION PROGRAM – Local governments may apply for funding to do demonstration projects involving the removal of trees conflicting with electric utility lines and replanting with appropriate species.

DEMONSTRATION COMMUNITY GRAVEL BED – Non-profit organizations and local governments may apply for funding to develop a demonstration community gravel bed or *Missouri Gravel Bed* to safely hold bare-root or washed containerized trees or shrubs for 3 to 6 months on public land. Grant funding may be applied to building materials, supplies, labor, education and outreach materials. Proposals should include a site and design plan, site photos, maintenance plan, and a commitment to the project's long-term success from specified personnel or individuals.

PILOT URBAN WOOD RECYCLING PROGRAMS – Non-profit organizations and local governments may apply for funding to develop demonstration projects that increase knowledge, awareness and visibility of urban wood utilization and recycling. Grant funding may be applied to education and outreach materials, demonstration of specialized equipment and techniques for working on smaller interface woodlots, and assessments of the feasibility of recycling and processing urban waste wood. Funds can also be used to develop business plans for an emerging urban wood program.

URBAN ORCHARDS – Projects that develop urban orchards to address food insecurity on public lands are eligible for funding. If you are applying on behalf of a local government organization, **a written approval letter from the landowner must be submitted as part of the grant application and prior to funding approval.** Proposals should include site plan, plant list, tree planting specs, site photos, and a commitment to the project's long-term success from specified personnel or individuals. A liability will be required during award phase of project.

NURSERY DEVELOPMENT – Non-profit organizations and local governments may apply for funding to develop a demonstration tree and shrub nurseries to be used in public tree planting and/or giveaways. Funds may be used to pay staff, purchase necessary supplies (planting pots, irrigation hoses, potting mix, seedlings, etc.) not to exceed \$5,000 per item and outreach/education materials. Trees may not be sold for profit but used for community improvement.

EXTREME HEAT MITIGATION – Non-profit organizations and local governments may apply for funding to develop demonstration heat mitigation projects that require the removal of asphalt/concrete. Expenses can include hiring contractors, renting equipment, soil rebuilding supplies or local staff time support to remove asphalt/concrete as needed to provide a reasonable rooting area for tree establishment and sustained health of the tree. DOF staff are willing to provide technical assistance on rebuilding soil and

tree species selection for these projects. Please reach out to the program contact for advice. A liability will be required during award phase of project.

CATEGORY 4 – NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION SUPPORT – Non-profit organizations may apply for funds to hire part-time or full-time staff to assist with program development, volunteer coordination, project field work, etc. These funds should be viewed as start-up funds and not be relied on in subsequent grant cycles for continuation of the position.

PUBLICATIONS AND COMMUNICATION – Projects that develop new and unique publications, exhibits, videos, websites, etc. that increase public awareness and understanding of the benefits of urban forests are eligible.

CATEGORY 5 - PLANNING

GREENWAY/TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING – Projects related to the planning and development of community greenways are eligible for funding. Grant funding may be applied to corridor and resource assessment, feasibility studies, maps and drawings, promotional and educational materials, and organizational development and staffing.

CATEGORY 6 – WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

URBAN FORESTRY/ARBORICULTURE SECTOR WORKFORCE PROGRAM – Projects that help groups move toward a more diverse and inclusive workforce in urban forestry and arboriculture are eligible for funding. Grant funding may be used to build leadership, youth programs, conduct outreach activities, increase capacity, or provide training and education to support local community development efforts.

CATEGORY 7 – MISCELLANEOUS

Projects that meet the objectives of the Urban and Community Forestry Program and that do not fit into any of the previous categories may be submitted under category 7. The maximum funding for any project approved in this category will depend upon the nature of the project.

CATEGORY 8 – COMMUNITY PARTNER GROUPS

DOF is seeking partners to assist with providing turn-key services for Virginia localities via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding from the USDA Forest Service. Please describe in your scope of work pertaining to which services you can provide and in the proposed budget general costs. We are seeking partners for the following categories.

| Data/Plan/Project | Purpose | Deliverables |
|---|---|--|
| DATA: Tree Canopy Maps & Benefits Urban Heat Island Maps and Planting for Cooling Ecosystem Services Map | Generate spatial data on canopy cover, distribution of trees by using various data sources (publicly available and provided by localities) including but not limited to income, utilities, public spaces, neighborhoods, existing planning docs, etc. Also, identify hot spots with low canopy and help communities calculate the value of urban forestry benefits. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-resolution canopy map (paper report/ArcGIS data) - Analysis of urban heat (paper report/ArcGIS data) - Analysis of ecosystems services (paper report/ArcGIS data) - Use data to set realistic community goals for attainable canopy percent. - 3-4 virtual meetings with community - 2-3 in-person meetings with community |

| Data/Plan/Project | Purpose | Deliverables |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| PLAN: Urban Forest Master Plan | Use spatial analysis to create a data-informed plan for where to plant trees, to address social-equity and long-term resiliency, urban wood needs and adaptations to climate change. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A community-approved urban forest master plan that includes goals, schedule for implementation, responsible parties, and maps for where to plant trees and retain trees. The plan will also focus on addressing social-equity and long-term resiliency. - 3-4 virtual meetings with community - 2-3 in-person meetings with community |
| DATA: Tree Inventory | Survey and geolocate urban trees, including species, size and condition. Determine species diversity, identify trees for further care, and create a list to inform future work orders and management needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inventory of trees by species (genus/species and common name), DBH (diameter at breast height), health condition, maintenance recommendation, vacant wells, and location (street address and GPS) for public trees in areas approved by program contact after meeting with DOF and community. - Work will be completed by ISA-certified arborists and all data packed and provided to the locality in a format that they can access and utilize. - A tree inventory report/database to use in decision making and planning for tree care or planting diverse species. |
| DATA: Codes Audit | Review a locality's codes and policies that focus on forest and tree management including those that drive imperviousness versus open space. Also, ensure right codes and standards are in place for public tree siting, planting, land development, tree protection, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A codes audit report recommending language and codes to update, new codes recommended and priority next steps for implementation. |
| PROJECT: Urban Wood Program | To establish full-circle urban forestry management, we must work cooperatively from arborist to consumer to create a cohesive plan that focuses on supply and demand of urban wood resources. Partners will assist with plan development, establishing connections with urban wood processors and developing strategies for localities, nonprofits and educational institutions to use their urban wood. Includes educational access to a solar wood drying kiln and associated training to assist with the processing of public urban wood resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban wood program management appendix - Public educational program focused on urban wood use. - 3 virtual meetings with community - 2 in-person meetings with community |

| Data/Plan/Project | Purpose | Deliverables |
|---|---|---|
| PLAN: Facilitation and Engagement | Get support from professional facilitators and to readily engage residents and/or staff in your community via a co-creation process in planning for an engaging in on-the-ground implementation efforts including but not limited to tree planting, plan development, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 virtual meetings with community - 2 in-person meetings with community - Notes provided for each meeting. - Plan of implementation strategies approved by stakeholder group |
| PROJECT: Demonstration Outdoor Learning Spaces | Exposure to the natural world and trees has a positive effect on learning. It's become clearer that children who have frequent and positive interactions with trees and nature throughout their formative years are more likely to care for the environment as adults. Only public spaces are eligible for this category. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community led conceptual design with landscaping plan for outdoor learning space per community. - Co-sponsor at least one nature-based/urban wood and tree focused educational program/year per community. - Develop partnerships for multi-organizational installation of the outdoor learning areas focused on landscaping of trees and shrubs. |

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible Costs (NOT allowed for this grant)

- Purchase of machinery or equipment
- Construction
- Purchase of food, snacks, or beverages
- Gift cards
- Purchase of land or land charges
- Purchase of plant material classified as invasive species
- Costs that are not incurred during the grant award period
- Costs not approved by U&CF program manager during award or grant modification
- Overhead and/or indirect costs are not allowed

Funding Criteria and Proposal Review

Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program funds will be awarded on a competitive basis by category. Grantees are encouraged to submit projects involving multiple categories as one application but specify the category of greatest need. A committee composed of Department of Forestry personnel and members of the Trees Virginia non-profit organization will evaluate proposals. Proposals ranking is based on the following criteria:

- ✓ Clearly defined purpose or objective of project
- ✓ Goals, purpose, or mission statement of the applicant is clear
- ✓ The degree to which the project meets a local need and provides community improvement
- ✓ Level of volunteer involvement
- ✓ Local visibility or awareness of the project
- ✓ Sustainability of the project after the grant period
- ✓ Long-term benefit of the project
- ✓ Clarity of budget presentation
- ✓ Cost effectiveness
- ✓ Appropriate proposed time frame for completion of the project

- ✓ Demonstrated ability of the applicant to follow through on project completion

Note for Non-IRA Funding: Applications from current certified Tree City U.S.A. or Tree Campus Higher Education locations will be awarded additional points during the review of applications. For more information about the Tree City U.S.A. and Tree Campus programs see [Arbor Day Foundation](#) for more information.

Payment Process

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a reimbursement basis after verification of match and in accordance with a payment schedule agreed to in advance. Grantees must file a Request for Reimbursement (included in award paperwork package) and send records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs to the Virginia Department of Forestry.

Reports

Periodic progress reports and a Final Report are required of the grantee. The schedule and content of final and periodic reports will be set in advance of initiating the project. Final Reports must be submitted within 30 days of project completion.

Federal and State Regulations

The party of the second part agrees to comply with the federal cost and administrative regulations found in the OMB Uniform Guidance published December 26, 2014.

Administrative regulations can be located at: http://whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_default/ Cost principles can be located at: <http://gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>.

Forms can be found at http://www.ocio.usda.gov/forms/ocio_forms.html or <http://search.usda.gov>.

State and local government agencies must adhere to guidelines of the Virginia Public Procurement Act revised July 1, 2003, *Code of Virginia* Section 2.4300 - 2.2-4377 and the Agency Surplus and Procurement Manual updated in September 1998.

All applicants applying for a federally funded award must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on UEI provided here: <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update>

Grant Preparation Assistance

Assistance in developing proposals is available to all potential applicants. We will also provide guidance as to a project's suitability under this program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss potential projects before proposal submittal. Contact information is below to reach out with any questions.

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Questions about registering for an account or issues with the [System Access Portal for Forestry Grants](#), please reach out to the Department. Contact information below.

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