



## **Virginia Trees for Clean Water 2023 Grant Request for Proposal**

Through funds from Virginia Water Quality Improvement Funds and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) CB Rapp, Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) has developed the Virginia Trees for Clean Water (VTCW) program. The program is designed to improve water quality across the Commonwealth through on-the-ground efforts to plant trees where they are needed most, and to help meet the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan Phase III (WIP III) goals. Grants may be awarded to civic groups, communities, local governments, non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, public educational institutions, state agencies, tribal organizations and volunteer groups. The Environmental Justice Screening tool( <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/> ) will be used to prioritize planting projects approved for funding.

There is approximately **\$1,000,000** available to fund projects during the current grant cycle. The funding range for proposals is **\$1,000 to \$50,000** per project. **This cycle of grant funds will be used for projects occurring in the spring and fall of 2023. Applications will be accepted all year on a rolling basis until December 1, 2023 and ranked as they are submitted based on project need.** Applications must be submitted **30 days** prior to the estimated planting date and an award must be issued prior to beginning the project or incurring project expenses. Some project match is expected but a 50% match is not required and can include in-kind and volunteer hours.

You must register an account through [VDOF's System Access Portal](#) to apply. See the user guide for registering for an account and to complete an application.

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a **reimbursement basis** in accordance with a payment schedule agreed to in advance. **If you would like to complete a project but cannot cover the cost up front, contact the Urban and Community Forestry program contact. VDOF can directly pay costs on a limited basis and can also provide technical assistance on the project.**

Providing some match (including in-kind) is required for all projects, but not being able to match the grant project by 50% will not affect your ability to receive funding under this cycle. However, describe any match, including in-kind, you will be able to provide in both your narrative and budget. All applicants applying for a federally-funded award must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI); applicants applying for a state-funded award must have a FEIN.

### **Objectives of the Virginia Trees for Clean Water Program**

- Plant trees that restore and improve the waters for the benefit of current and future citizens of the Commonwealth.
- Achieve long-term improvements in water quality through long-lived tree cover and increased public involvement.
- Raise public awareness about the benefits of planting trees for the health of our citizens, streams, wildlife and rivers.

- Help the Commonwealth meet WIP III goals.

## Proposal Categories

Projects funded through the program include tree-planting activities of all types. A long-term maintenance plan **must be included** with the grant application. **Both trees and shrubs are allowable.** Projects are not limited to the following examples:

- **Riparian tree planting** in non-Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) areas, including urban areas and private lands. A maximum of 435 seedlings per acre will be paid for by the grant on a 10 x 10 spacing.
- **Community tree planting** projects include any tree plantings on public lands.
- **Street tree planting** projects including planting strips and cutouts. Proposed projects with planting strips or cutouts less than 3 feet wide will not be considered.
- **Neighborhood or NeighborWoods tree plantings** may be organized by local civic groups, neighborhood associations or community government. Projects should be located on common grounds or within 35 feet of the roadway.
- **Turf to Trees (T2T) projects** include conversion of regularly-mowed lawns greater than 0.1 acres to trees, usually using tree seedlings, saplings or small potted trees. The cost of tree protection is an allowable expense. Annual mowing between the seedlings is also allowed.
- **Tree Giveaways** using seedlings or small potted trees (up to 3 gallon) are eligible. Supplies (i.e., mulch) are also eligible. Locations of plantings must be provided to VDOF as a deliverable.

## Proposal Format

You must register an account through [VDOF's System Access Portal](#) to apply. You will be asked to provide short responses to the following:

- Brief description of project
- Scope of work
- Partnerships and participants
- Community engagement
- Desired tree/shrub planting list
- Tree maintenance plan
- End-product/deliverables
- Project budget

### Attached Documentation Required:

- Photos of site and/or site plan
- Virginia W-9 ( [W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification](#) )
- Signed Assurances ( [Form SF-424B Assurances for Non-Construction Programs](#) ).

## Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

### Eligible Reimbursable Costs:

The only costs eligible for reimbursement are those associated with one or more of the following:

- Fees charged by private contractors and/or consultants.
- Purchase of essential supplies and materials.
- Purchase and planting of trees (2 inches in caliper or less) and shrubs.
- Maintenance expenses, including watering, are eligible for reimbursement; however, VDOF cannot reimburse until after all deliverables/activities have been completed. Maintenance costs will be ineligible if submitted outside the approved grant period.
- Costs associated with site preparation and soil amendments.

### Eligible Non-reimbursable Costs (Applicant's Share or Match):

The following costs are NOT reimbursable BUT are allowed to meet the match for the project.

- Cash or in-kind donations and services.
- Salary and fringe costs for paid staff.
- Volunteer labor, machinery and equipment.
- Overhead and/or indirect costs.

### Ineligible Costs (NOT allowed for this grant):

- Purchase of machinery or equipment.
- Construction of any kind (e.g., sidewalks or roads).
- Purchase of food, snacks or beverages.
- Purchase of land or land charges.
- Purchase of plant material classified as invasive species (See provided list for ineligible plants - [Invasive Plants Species List](#)).
- Purchase and planting of ash species (*Fraxinus* sp.) due to the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*).
- Costs that are not incurred during the grant award period.
- Costs not approved by the U&CF program manager during the award phase or by grant modification.
- No vines or non-woody plants.

## Additional General Criteria

- All projects should include plant list, tree planting specs, site photos and a commitment to the project's long-term success.

- Applications should include a letter of permission/support for the planting if the project is not on the applicant's personal property. This letter should designate the organization responsible for the long-term maintenance of the project. Please include as an attachment within the online application.
- All projects must have a direct community engagement component. Please describe how you have engaged or are going to engage with the residents or local community where the tree planting is going to occur. Community engagement must be completed prior to tree installation to receive funding in hopes of empowering local citizens to take an active role in the development and maintenance of their urban forest. It can take many forms such as virtual town halls, volunteer training, educational outreach or distributing flyers to name just a few. Please reach out if you have any questions on this requirement.
- Projects should educate participants of the water quality benefits of tree planting.
- We require local VDOF staff to review the project prior to proposal submission. The local VDOF forester should provide a letter of recommendation for the project to be submitted to the U&CF program manager directly prior to proposal submission. Use the "Find a Forester" feature on the VDOF website (<https://dof.virginia.gov/>) to find the appropriate staff to assist with your project.
- All projects must be maintained for a minimum of 15 years. Awardees must sign a maintenance agreement.
- Grant funds will not be approved for projects that are initiated as a requirement of zoning, mitigation, etc.
- All eligible costs listed above must be deemed reasonable, necessary for the project and be approved by the U&CF program manager during the award phase.
- Successful applicants cannot commence work or incur any expenses towards the grant until an agreement between VDOF and the authorized agency/organization has been signed. Expenses incurred outside the agreement period shall be deemed ineligible for reimbursement.
- Trees for riparian projects should generally be seedlings.
- Any street tree planting should provide the square footage of planting space, such as the dimensions of the tree pit or planting strip for each site.
- NeighborWoods projects must be carefully planned and technically sound, and involve the assistance of qualified technical experts, agencies or organizations.
- No large shade trees shall be planted under power lines.
- No monocultures of trees will be funded under the program.
- Tree planting events **cannot** occur between May 1<sup>st</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Contact Information

If you have any questions or want to discuss a potential project, contact:

Lara Johnson, U&CF Program Manager

900 Natural Resources Dr., Suite 800

Charlottesville, VA 22903

(804) 239-0813

[Lara.Johnson@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:Lara.Johnson@dof.virginia.gov)

## Filing for Reimbursement

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a **reimbursement basis** in accordance with a payment schedule agreed to in advance. Funds awarded under the grant are available once satisfactory work has been completed within the contract period as described in the original scope of work, and after verification of expenditures and match. Grantees must upload records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs through the System Access Panel.

**If you would like to complete a project but cannot cover the cost up front for the grant, call to discuss with the U&CF program manager. VDOF can directly pay costs on a limited basis and can also provide technical assistance on the project.**

In addition, a planting quality inspection must be conducted, and projects must be logged using the VDOF My Tree Counts application before the final reimbursement will be issued and the grant closed. Details will be provided in the award paperwork. The U&CF program manager will evaluate the progress of the project to determine eligibility for full funding. A final report with photographs of the completed project is also required for all entities receiving a grant before reimbursement can occur. The entity receiving the grant must keep all expenditure records for up to 5 years and submit copies as part of the reimbursement request.

## Guidelines for Budget Categories

### Project Budget Form

VDOF uses a form in the System Access Portal that meets federal requirements. This information is used to record a summary of all expenditures and matching funds. Guidelines for budget categories for project expenses are below.

- **Personnel and Fringe:** Eligible to include on a limited basis but must be 10% or less of total project budget.
- **Travel:** Mileage traveled directly related to the project. Travel reimbursements are for actual costs based on organization policies and may not to exceed those included in the *Commonwealth of Virginia Policies & Procedures, Topic No. 20335, State Travel Regulations*. A vehicle mileage rate of \$.655/mile is used.
- **Supplies:** Include all the following subcategories (added separately).

- **Trees:** This category covers the cost of the trees and woody shrubs that will be planted for the project. We recommend that applicants obtain quotes for the cost of trees from nurseries so estimated budgets are more accurate. Tree expenses can be entered as a total or individually by species in the budget column. Tree costs must be listed in the application narrative, in sufficient detail to determine if they are reasonable and allowable.
- **Supplies:** This category includes the supplies needed to plant the trees such as tree protectors, mulch, etc. These items must be listed in the application narrative, in sufficient detail to determine if they are reasonable and allowable.
- **Contractual:** Contractual costs include subcontracted work to be completed by those other than the project sponsor. This may include design and engineering services. We recommend that applicants obtain quotes for needed contractual services so estimated budgets are more accurate. However, contractor names should not be disclosed as part of the application process. Contractual costs must be listed in the application narrative, in sufficient detail to determine if they are reasonable and allowable.
- **Other Expenses:** Include all of the following subcategories and should be added separately.
  - **Labor:** Costs associated with hiring private contractors/consultants to assist or complete a turn-key tree installation are allowable. Costs associated with site preparation and soil amendments are also allowable. We recommend that applicants obtain quotes for the cost of installation and/or site preparation so estimated budgets are more accurate. However, contractor names should not be disclosed as part of the application process. Labor costs must be listed in the narrative, in sufficient detail to determine if they are reasonable and allowable.
  - **Maintenance:** Maintenance expenses, including watering, are eligible for reimbursement during the grant period; however, VDOF cannot reimburse until after all deliverables/activities have been completed. Maintenance costs will be ineligible if submitted outside the approved grant period.
- **Match:** Include any subcategory listed above and additional ones provided below to this section.
  - **Volunteers:** The use of volunteer hours as an in-kind match is acceptable and encouraged; however, volunteer hours must be appropriately documented. Directions for submitting volunteer time will be provided if awarded a grant. Volunteer hours are valued at the current rate established by the independent sector, which is \$29.95 per hour.
  - **Donated Supplies and Services:** Any donated supplies or services should be itemized with value of time or supply on approved letterhead and signed.