

America the Beautiful Grant Program Request for Proposal 2017-2018

I am pleased to provide you with information concerning the America the Beautiful (ATB) Grant Program, which provides funding for urban forestry projects. The ATB Grants are made possible through the USDA Forest Service's State and Private Forestry Program. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Division of Forest Environment (DFE) is responsible for the administration of the ATB Grant Program and for the distribution of these funds to municipalities and non-profit organizations. This year \$30,000.00 in funding will be available through ATB Grants.

Please review the information package and grant application materials that follow.

The ATB is a competitive grant and we encourage applicants to submit carefully considered and complete applications.

The deadline for submitting an ATB Grant Application is December 30, 2016. Approved projects must be completed and all paperwork submitted by September 1, 2018.

Historically, ATB Grants have been awarded on a wide range of urban forestry projects. These projects must be reflective of the needs of the community and should demonstrate the community's commitment to urban forestry. It is our intention through the attached materials to direct focus regarding the types of projects that are most appropriate for funding through the ATB program.

The DFE has defined **3 focused categories** of ATB grants for this grant application period. When submitting an application, an applicant is **required** to identify one of these three categories as reflective of the proposal. Further details on these categories are contained within this document.

The three categories are:

1. Municipal Urban Forestry Planning and Tree Planting
2. Management of Urban Forest Woodlands
3. Education and Outreach

Descriptions of the Individual Categories:

Municipal Urban Forestry Planning

The purpose of this grant category is to encourage municipalities to better plan the management and maintenance of their urban forests so that proper growth and value of public trees will be increased. This category will also hope to promote and grow urban forestry at the local level, and engage communities in understanding the benefits of urban forestry, update them on what is happening around them, and encourage a personal pursuit of knowledge as it pertains to urban forestry.

Projects such as: Inventories and assessments, the creation of an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) management plan, survey, and/or detection program, a "notable tree program", the development of a comprehensive municipal forest plan, or other similar projects will be considered under this category.

Projects that include planting of new trees will also be included under this category with the caveat that they are planted in conjunction with an established Urban Forestry Master Plan, and can justifiably included into that plan.

Projects that promote the use of trees as green infrastructure, such as in reducing storm water runoff, air pollution reduction or the mitigation of the urban island effect, will also be considered in this category, as will those that make use of the US Forest Service i-Tree tools or that assess the state of the urban tree canopy cover (UTC).

Projects may also include capacity-building through the purchase of inventory software or GIS and computer hardware, or the contracting of professionals for urban forestry planning, etc.

Non-profit organizations may apply through this category, but they must demonstrate that they have the cooperation of the municipality involved and that the project will directly benefit the municipality's tree management program.

Tree Planting Project Guidelines:

- Plantings must conform to appropriate planting instructions and specifications.
- No invasive species will be permitted. *List available by request.*
- New tree plantings must be a minimum of 2" caliper, maximum 4" caliper. Funding for trees under 2" or over 4" by special exception only.
- Bare-root trees may be 1+" caliper.
- Planting stock should be purchased from firms in hardiness zones 5, 6, 7, and from State of Rhode Island certified nurseries, if available.
- There must be a five-year maintenance plan specifying maintenance activities and responsibilities.
- There must be a two-year watering plan.
- Monoculture plantings should be avoided.
- **Trees that reach a mature height of thirty-five feet or greater planted directly under utility lines will not be funded.**
- For **any** planting, information on tree species, size, and planting locations (street address and maps, if applicable) must be included in proposal.

Education and Outreach

Projects submitted under the Education and Outreach category must conduct education activities about urban forestry. The education component should be designed to give participants the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions and responsible actions about trees and urban forests.

Community projects, in the form of tree planting and tree care activities, shall be a vehicle for community members to learn about and practice environmental stewardship. Projects should be locally-based and centered on either tree planting or tree care.

Environmental education activities will vary by project and will depend on the audience served, but may include a webinar, workshop, presentation, classroom activity, or other educational methods.

Educational curriculum may be implemented prior to a community tree planting or tree care project, or concurrent with it, depending on the applicant's most effective way to reach a particular audience.

Additionally, all projects must address one of the 3 EPA strategic environmental priorities as listed:

Addressing Climate Change and Improving Air Quality: Projects focused in this area will utilize common-sense solutions for reducing GHG emissions through urban forestry and recognize that climate change environmental education is a core component of the effort. The EPA has already proposed stronger ambient air quality standards for ozone, which will help millions of American breathe easier and live healthier. Projects focused in this area will consider how urban forestry can help achieve emission reduction goals for CO₂, SO₂, NO_x, mercury and other air toxics through tree planting, tree care, and environmental education.

Protecting America's Waters: Projects will help protect and restore waters to ensure that drinking water is safe and sustainably managed, and that aquatic ecosystems sustain fish, plants, wildlife, and other biota, as well as economic, recreational, and subsistence activities. Projects focused in this area will respond to these challenges through urban forestry practices that capture storm water, improve flood control, promote groundwater recharge, or increase local water supply.

Clean-Up Our Communities and Advancing Sustainable Development: Using all the urban forestry tools at our disposal, Rhode Islanders can make a significant impact in transforming blighted neighborhoods into clean, healthy communities that provide children and residents with safe, shaded places to walk or play. Projects focused in this area will spur environmental cleanup through urban forestry and may also address efforts to maximize job creation in disadvantaged communities through tree planting and tree care. *Locations must include trees, or be replanted with trees for project to be applicable.*

The Management of Urban Forest Woodlands

Many urban woodlands, such as those found in public parks, suffer from extensive neglect and abuse. The purpose of this grant category is to assist municipalities and others in addressing the problems found all-too-commonly in these woodlands. In this category, projects such as urban woodland clean-up and restoration control of invasive plants will be considered.

Projects that encourage the use of these lands in a manner compatible with their remaining as woodlands are welcome provided that there is an urban forestry benefit in this use (e.g., forestry education). Funds may be used for the development of a plan that will establish a maintenance and management program on these woodlands. However, grants cannot be used to fund revenue-producing activities, such as forest harvesting. If an established management plan already exists or a planning component is included in the proposed project, this will be viewed favorably in the review of a grant application.

WHO MAY APPLY?

- All units of government.
- Non-profit organizations.
- Recognized community groups.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES:

- The certification form must be signed by an authorized signatory of the organization/municipality.
- All projects must be on public property.
- Only grant requests from \$2,000 up to \$4,000 will be considered. Final selections will be announced by the end of January 2017.
 - Some Grants may be partially funded as funding allows.
- Funds will be sent when the project has been satisfactorily completed with final reports received and approved.
- A representative of the grantee will attend a grant reimbursement workshop if deemed necessary by RIDEM.
- Technical assistance is available throughout the application process and the project from the Division of Forest Environment.
Call the Department of Forest Environment at (401) 222-2445 x2059 for further information.

COMPREHENSIVE TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN:

The aim of a comprehensive tree management plan is to influence future decision making to improve the community's forest resources. The plan should integrate the economic, environmental, political and social realities and values of the community.

- A Comprehensive Tree Management Plan should include the following components:
 1. Program Development Plan
 2. Tree Inventory & Assessment Plan
 3. Tree Planting Plan
 4. Tree Maintenance Plan
 5. Tree Risk Management & Removal Plan
 6. Storm & Emergency Response Plan
 7. Tree Preservation Plan
 8. Public Education & Outreach Plan

MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES:

- Minimum match – 60% of the total project required of grantee.
- Applicants may match grant funds with cash, in-kind contributions (volunteer labor, municipality/organization personnel and equipment) donations, and administrative costs directly related to the project.
- Volunteer labor may be estimated at \$23.53 per hour per person (per Independent Sector RI State Value as of 2013).
- All project expenses and matching fund/in-kind contributions must be fully and appropriately documented. Instructions will be provided to successful candidates.

JUDGING CRITERIA:

- Applications will be evaluated by representatives of the RIDEM Division of Forest Environment and the Rhode Island Tree Council.
- Project must demonstrate a substantial capacity for developing or extending a sustainable community forestry program.
- Project description must demonstrate that the proposal is a component of a comprehensive tree management program.
- Project must evidence it will produce results leading to sustainable forestry.
- Project must incorporate the involvement of volunteers, partners who will be advocates for sustainable forestry practices.
- Application must be technically consistent and complete.

REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO RIDEM URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM:

- September 30, 2017 AND May 31, 2018 – INTERIM PROGRESS REPORTS REQUIRED.
- September 4, 2018 – FINAL PROJECT REPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORT MUST BE SUBMITTED TO RIDEM.

****DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION Is December 30, 2016 by 3:00 PM****

