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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
 DIVISION OF FOREST ENVIRONMENT
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Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program

Request for Proposals

Please review carefully – the State has instituted a new Grants Management Portal.

1. OVERVIEW

The [Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program](#) (U&CF) provides cost-share grants to Rhode Island local governments, public educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. Funding for the program is provided by USDA Forest Service as authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-313). Urban and community forestry is broadly defined as the comprehensive management of trees, forests, and related natural resources in populated areas for the physiological, sociological, economic, and aesthetic benefits trees provide society.

This is a competitive matching grant, with funding available on a reimbursement basis only.

The deadline for submitting a grant application is March 31, 2023. Approved projects are expected to start in September 2023 and must be completed by September 30, 2024. All project paperwork and reimbursement requests must be submitted by October 30, 2024.

Program Authority

This grant program is made possible through the USDA Forest Service [State and Private Forestry](#) Program. The RIDEM Division of Forest Environment (DFE) is responsible for the administration of the grant program and for the distribution of these funds to municipalities and non-profit organizations.

As part of the [2020 Rhode Island Forest Action Plan](#) the following goals were established as the focus of the U&CF Program. Grant projects should be developed address at least one of these goals.

1. Promote active and sustainable management to **conserve** trees and forests where people live, work and play.
2. **Protect** trees and forests from threats through planning and response (invasive, catastrophic, climate, etc.).
3. **Enhance** the public benefits from trees and forests through improved management practices.

Program Goals and Objectives

Grants are awarded for a 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. There are **3 focused categories** and applications must identify which category best describes the proposal.

1. Municipal Urban Forestry Planning
2. Education and Outreach
3. Municipal Urban Tree Planting

Who Can Apply

Grant funds may be awarded to any unit of local or state government, public educational institutions, IRS approved non-profit 501(c)(3) and other tax-exempt organizations. **First-time municipal applicants and municipalities seeking Tree City USA status will be given priority for funding.**

2. FINANCIAL MATTERS & TIMING

Available Funds

Requests for assistance should range between **\$2,000 and \$10,000**. Funds are to be used to enhance or expand existing programs or to initiate new program development. Funding is for programs, projects, or activities not currently being funded and cannot be used to substitute for existing funds. Funds may be used within existing programs to initiate new program development or program expansion. **Funding is not available for entertainment, food/beverages, computers, tree maintenance, or construction or landscaping supplies.**

Funding is not available for the following:

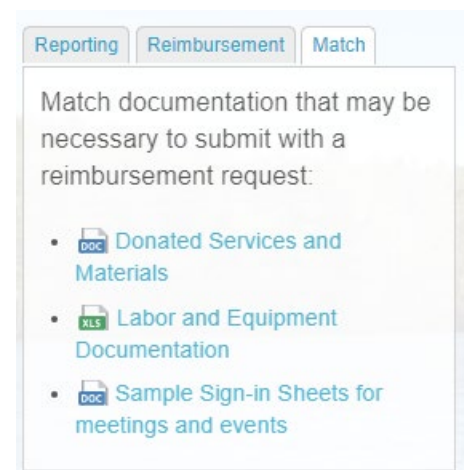
- Expenses incurred before or after the contract period (i.e. receipt of the DFE Purchase Order and the contract end date)
- Any expense not part of the DFE approved budget
- Food, drinks and refreshments for meetings, volunteers, etc. (also cannot count as match)
- Costs associated with preparing the grant application
- Salaries of current staff, although they may qualify as match, if appropriate
- General overhead and administration charges, although they may qualify as match
- Expenses not supported by proper documentation (e.g. paid receipts, cancelled checks, invoices, etc.)
- Website development or maintenance

Matching Contributions

The Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program funds **must be matched 50/50 with non-federal funds** – for example, a \$2,000 grant requires a \$2,000 minimum match requirement, for an overall project cost of \$4,000. Match may be in the form of *cash purchase or in-kind contributions*, and all such contributions must come from non-federal sources. Matching funds for this project may not be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project. All matching funds must be specifically related to the proposed project. Documentation of all matching support must be maintained and submitted with reimbursement.

Matching Funds Requirements and Guidelines:

- A matching grant is a conditional award, requiring the grantee to contribute a specified minimum percentage of the project's total cost – this is referred to as "minimum match."
- Minimum match – 50% of the total project required of grantee.
- Applicants may match grant funds with cash, in-kind contributions (municipality/organization personnel and equipment, volunteer labor), donations, and administrative costs directly related to the project.
- Adult volunteer labor may be estimated at \$28.24 per hour per person (per [Independent Sector](#)).
- All project expenses and matching fund/in-kind contributions must be fully and appropriately documented. Instructions will be provided to successful candidates.



Contracting Project Work - \$2,500 or more

Any project efforts being funded by this grant or being used as match by the grantee requires the submission of three quotes for any work being contracted out. Quotes must be written (copies of an email, fax, or formal bid are acceptable) and submitted with the application. Applicants are advised to contact the U&CF Coordinator prior to submitting their application to ensure that what they are submitting is sufficient.

Grant Program Timeline

Proposed projects must be able to be completed within **11 months**. Approved projects must sign and return DEM contract forms and can only be started after *receipt* of a Purchase Order (PO) from the U&CF Program Coordinator.

March 31 – Application Deadline. Proposals must be **submitted** through the Grants Management System by this date:

<https://accountscontrol.ecms.ri.gov/grants-management/grant-management-system-gms/subrecipients>

You can also register for a training introduction to the new system. If no trainings are scheduled, Lou Allard can provide access to a recording. We will eventually have something on our webpages.

July – Notification Date. All applicants are notified of the outcome of their grant application. Contracts are developed and sent to successful applicants to be signed and returned **within 30 business days**. [Exact dates that contracts will be received is subject to receipt of the USFS Federal award. Applicants will be kept notified.]

September – Begin Project. The anticipated start date, subject to timeliness of returning a signed contract to the U&CF Program Manager and the creation of PO by State Finance staff. No grant expenditures or grant match may occur before the receipt of the PO.

March 1 – Mid-Year Status Report due. Report covers grant activities from beginning of contract up to March 1. Form provided.

September 30 – End Project. Contract Period ends. No further work can be carried out for the grant, unless a time extension has been previously approved. Submissions of the Final Accomplishment Report and the Final Request for Reimbursement are due **within 30 days** of the contract end date (Oct 30), or approved time extension deadline.

The Division of Forest Environment reserves the right to pro-rate grant awards. Decisions on allocations by the Division of Forest Environment are final.

3. PROGRAM CATEGORIES & EXAMPLES

Category 1: Municipal Urban Forestry Planning

This category is provided to encourage improved management of a community's forest. Priority will be given to projects that enhance a local government's ability to maintain a comprehensive urban management program. This category is meant to advance urban forestry practices at the local level, engaging residents and staff in understanding the benefits of urban forestry and managing proactively.

Grant funding may assist with:

- Conducting a tree inventory and analysis
- Conducting an urban tree canopy (UTC) assessment
- Conducting an i-Tree Eco study (or similar type of analysis)
- Creating an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) management plan, survey, and/or detection program
- Promoting 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
- Initiating or completing a comprehensive municipal forest plan, or other similar project

Projects can be supported by the purchase of inventory software, GIS/computer hardware, and/or contracting of urban forestry planning professionals.

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*.

Category 2: Education and Outreach

Projects submitted under the Education and Outreach category should aim to advance skills and practical knowledge for municipal staff, local residents or other groups. Events may be associated with other events such as Arbor Day or Earth Day celebrations or a community tree-planting or tree-care event. Documentation of attendees must be included when requesting reimbursement, sample sign-in formats are available on the UCF webpage.

Grant funding may support:

- **Public Education/Workshops** – Funds may be used to conduct local seminars, training sessions and workshops regarding arboriculture and/or community forestry topics. Funds may cover brochure development, mailings, speaker fees, audio/visual equipment rental and related costs.
- **Youth and/or Environmental Equity Programs** – Funds may be used for educational and awareness efforts targeted to youth audiences or underserved groups and designed to enhance an understanding of community trees and forests.
- **In-House Training and Continuing Education** – Intended to enhance the technical skills of individuals involved in planning, development and maintenance of community forests. Proposals may include costs associated with attending an educational event (registration, travel, and lodging expenses) and/or the purchase of reference materials for self-study.

Category 3: Municipal Urban Tree Planting

This category is provided to facilitate *strategic* planting and maintenance of community trees for public benefits. Projects must show robust engagement with residents, community involvement, and public support. Priority will be given to projects with a community education and outreach component. The following is **required** when any tree planting funds are requested:

The proposal must be submitted by the municipality or by a closely allied organization partnering with the municipality. The following grant funding limits have been established for the purchase of trees:

Tree City USA Communities - **\$3,000 limit** for purchase of trees.

Other Communities and Organizations - **\$1,500 limit** for purchase of trees.

Tree Planting Project Guidelines:

- *A species list is required and must be approved by the U&CF Program Coordinator prior to start of an approved project.*
- No invasive species or monocultures will be approved. Trees that reach a mature height of thirty-five feet or greater planted directly under utility lines will not be approved.
- Include a site plan map or drawing showing the location of trees to be planted at the site. Include species, spacing between trees, existing features, and a general vicinity map or description.
- Container stock 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.
- There must be a three-year *maintenance* plan specifying maintenance activities and responsibilities submitted with the final documentation. Standard care and maintenance includes **supplemental watering for at least two years**, replenishing mulch, seasonal inspecting of all trees, early corrective pruning if needed, insect and disease control as needed, and removal of any guys, stakes, wraps and supports no later than one year after planting.

Applications without the required information listed above will not be considered for funding.

Additional Tree Planting Standards and Requirements:

- Plant materials must, at a minimum, meet the American Standard for Nursery Stock.
- Planting must be in accordance with standards described in Watson, G.W. and Himelick, E.B. Principles and Practice of Planting Trees and Shrubs or an alternate source approved by the U&CF Program.
- Trees must be planted on non-federal **public** property.

Tree Planting Priorities and Considerations:

- The use of volunteers in tree planting is highly encouraged.
- Planting of small maturing or ornamental or non-native trees is considered a low priority.
- Tree planting without a well-planned education, public awareness, demonstration, or volunteer component is a low priority.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Contract Requirements

Sub-grantees must comply with all applicable state and federal regulations. Project records must: (1) comply with generally accepted accounting principles; (2) document allowable costs; (3) be supported by source documentation such as canceled checks, paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records and contracts; and be maintained for 5 years following the end of the contract period. A Purchase Order initiated by the State of Rhode Island is required to initiate all funded projects. ALL applicants are referred to the following documents for federal administrative standards, cost principles and auditing standards:

- 2 CFR 200: www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl

Unique Entity ID Requirement – replacing DUNS

The federal government has shifted from DUNS to track how federal grant money is distributed. The new UEI is maintained through the www.sam.gov site. Any applicant with a DUNS number was automatically updated to a UEI April 2022. Like the DUNS number, all sub-grantees must maintain the active status of their registration. Check the status at the time of application and prior to any reimbursement requests. <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>

Evaluation Criteria

Funds are allocated on a competitive basis, subject to an evaluation system developed by the Division of Forest Environment with input from the RI Tree Council. The following criteria will be used in evaluating proposals:

- Consistent with program objectives and addresses an identified need
- Long-term benefit of the project beyond grant period
- Technical merit/competency
- Creativity and innovative approach
- Goal oriented, clearly defined purpose or objective of the project
- Promotion of volunteerism, partnerships and community support
- Visibility/public awareness and educational value
- Budget: cost effective, supports project objectives, complete, appropriate match
- Clearly defined plans for site-specific projects, particularly tree planting projects
- Clarity and completeness of application and budget
- Support of culturally diverse values and needs/support to under-served populations.

Payment Process

Grant payments are made on a **reimbursement basis**. Sub-grantees must file a request for reimbursement; submit documentation/records for all grant-funded expenditures, all cash and all in-kind matches, including salary and time reports. The funds being requested for reimbursement must be accompanied by at least an equal amount of match. Partial reimbursement may be considered under extenuating circumstances.

Standards and Verification of Accomplishments

For tree planting and other field projects, standards for site selection, site preparation, planting stock care and selection, planting methods and overall care and maintenance must be reasonable and customary. Physical accomplishments for site-specific projects will be verified by site visits in addition to project documentation.

Finished Products

A **minimum of two (2) copies of all finished products** funded or otherwise developed under the grant must be furnished to DFE when the final request for reimbursement is submitted. (Costs to send the two copies of materials may be included in the proposed budget.) These include copies of reports and publications produced, such as: tree inventory reports, master plans, landscape plans, brochures, publications, etc. **ALL other grant documentation requires one (1) copy:** the actual reimbursement request form, all expense/match/volunteer documentation (invoices, receipts and proof of payment), and workshop/training registration lists (with attendee's names and business or organization name).

Publications

All publications created for distribution to the public for informational or educational purposes must be submitted to DFE for approval *prior* to printing (excluding announcement flyers) and include a statement of non-discrimination and **must** recognize the funding support of this program by including the following statement:

“Funding for this project was provided in part through Urban & Community Forestry Grant from the RIDEM Division of Forest Environment, in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region.”

Requesting Time Extensions & Grant Modifications

Grantees are expected to complete their projects as outlined in their original grant proposals, subject to any terms, conditions or modifications outlined by U&CF, in the “Scope of Work” attached to the contract. Requests for changes to the approved timeline (or contract extension) or budget must be submitted in writing – no later than 60 days prior to the end of the contract (by June 30), and will be reviewed by the U&CF Program Coordinator Program Coordinator, who will provide a written response approving or denying the request.

A written request must include:

1. Brief summary of accomplishments completed to date.
2. Account of expenditures to date.
3. Reason additional time, or budget adjustment, is needed.
4. Adjusted Timeline/Schedule form for the proposed completion date.
5. Proposed budget modifications, if applicable.





All time extension requests must first be approved by DFE and then forwarded to Grants Management. Once approved, a contract amendment is issued. Reimbursements **cannot** be made for non-approved modifications. Reimbursements **cannot** be made for expenditures made after the contract terminates. Contracts **cannot** be extended or modified after they terminate.

5. PROPOSAL FORMAT

The proposal includes 4 parts: 1. Application Form, 2. Budget Proposal, 3. Project Timeline and 4. Proposal Narrative; plus any additional supplements required. *Unless absolutely necessary, all proposals and copies should minimize or eliminate use of non-recyclable or non-reusable materials such as plastic report covers, plastic dividers, vinyl sleeves, and GBC binding.* Binder clips, paper clips, and staples are acceptable.

Proposals not formatted according to these instructions may be rejected without notice. This Request for Proposals (RFP), the Application Form, the Budget Proposal Form and the Project Schedule/Timeline form are available on the U&CF grant webpages: www.dem.ri.gov/programs/forestry/urban-forestry/grants-apply.php

GRANT APPLICANTS must download the following forms for the application process:

-  Request for Proposals
-  Application Form
-  Budget Proposal Form and Sample
-  Schedule/Timeline with Sample

All forms and information can be downloaded from the Grants Management Application Portal.

1. **Application Form** Complete the Application Form and be sure to fill in your organization's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.
2. **Budget Proposal** Using the form and example provided, provide an itemized budget of all grant expenditures requested **and** for the match – indicate amounts for cash and in-kind contribution values, as well as what they will provide. Each major project component from the proposal narrative **must** have a corresponding budget component, such as tree inventory and analysis, tree ordinance, Arbor Day Festival, educational brochure, etc. Budget estimates and match values must be reasonable and directly related to accomplishing the project objective. All expenditures must occur during the grant period, whether funded by the grant or with matching funds, and should be represented in the timeline.
3. **Project Schedule/Timeline** Using the form provided, provide the project outline, with the project steps: what will be done, who will do it, when it will be done, and accomplishments upon completion of each step (that is, significant events, deadlines, responsible parties, and measurement of success). All major activities listed must occur within the grant period whether funded by the grant or with matching funds and should be represented in the budget.
4. **Proposal Narrative** The narrative section is limited to **a maximum of 4 typewritten, double-spaced pages**, not including supplements and additional information required for tree planting and other site-specific projects. The narrative should be specific and to the point.

Project Title: A short, but descriptive title.

Background: Briefly describe your community, agency or organization's current community forestry program/activities.

Objectives: Briefly describe what you plan to accomplish. List the objectives in order of priority. Objectives should be realistic, measurable and attainable within the contract period.

Statement of Need: Briefly explain why this project is important **and** justify how it will enhance the community forestry program. Public relations, education, and the potential for continuation of the project should also be included.

Strategy/Methods: If further detail is necessary beyond the Project Schedule/Timeline form, describe in detail the activities (or steps) that will take place to achieve the stated objectives. For projects with multiple objectives, this section may be divided into the major components and organized around specific activities or measurable objectives, such as tree inventory and analysis, tree ordinance, Arbor Day Festival, educational brochure, etc.

Visibility and impact: Explain how this project will be communicated to the public, stakeholders, public officials, targeted groups, etc. Describe the long-term impact this project will have in the community, any impact the project will have on public education concerning urban forestry, and what future plans or projects will arise from this project.

Project Coordinators, Partners and Cooperators: Provide a primary contact (name, title and brief description of qualifications), for each individual responsible for: (1) overall project coordination, (2)

financial/contractual matters, and (3) technical matters. List any partnering/cooperating organizations/agencies and describe their role. Describe any volunteer involvement/partners.

Final Products and Accomplishments: Provide a bulleted list of measurable accomplishments and/or final products which will result from completion of this project, and which will be submitted in the final report.

Outreach: Describe any specific strategies to reach out to and include underserved populations and those with the greatest need, and how they will benefit from this project.

Supplements (if applicable): *Do not count toward 4-page narrative limit*

Location Map and Site Plan: This is required for all site-specific projects, including tree planting. Include a general location map and a site plan for all on-the-ground projects. The site plan may be a sketch but should be detailed enough to show what you propose to accomplish.

Supporting Documents (Optional): This includes letters of support from active project partners (such as volunteer organizations, community groups or schools). Sample documents, photos, etc. may also be included.

VI. CONTACT INFORMATION AND SUBMISSIONS

For additional information about this program or for assistance in developing a proposal contact the Urban Forestry Staff:

Robert 'Lou' Allard, Urban Forestry Program Coordinator

E-mail: robert.e.allard@dem.ri.gov

Phone: 401.222.2445 extension 2772056

Visit our website to obtain copies of this document, project ideas and appropriate forms:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/forestry/urban-forestry/grants.php>

APPLICATION DEADLINE
3:00 pm, 31 March 2023

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