Tree Equity RI Grant Program
Request for Proposals

1. OVERVIEW

The Tree Equity RI Grant Program provides cost-share tree planting grants to Rhode Island local governments, public educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. Funding for the program is provided by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

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

The deadline for submitting a grant application is January 15, 2026. Approved projects are expected to start by late February/early March and must be completed by December 31, 2026. All project paperwork and reimbursement requests must be submitted by January 31, 2027.

Program Authority

This grant program is made possible through funding by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The RIDEM Division of Agriculture & Forest Environment (DAFE) is responsible for the administration of the grant program and for the distribution of these funds to municipalities, public educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.

Program Goals and Objectives

This grant program is designed to focus tree planting efforts in the areas that need it most. Tree Equity Score measures how well the benefits of trees are reaching communities living on low-incomes, communities of color and others disproportionately impacted by extreme heat and other environmental hazards. Applicants will use the Tree Equity Score Analyzer, a map based application developed by American Forests, to develop their planting project proposal.

Applicant Eligibility

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.

Grant applications must be submitted through the state's Grant Management System (GMS). Successful applicants will need to complete the following steps. These steps are NOT required to apply but are necessary to receive grant funds.

- Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), available at SAM.gov for no cost. If your entity is registered in SAM.gov, you have likely already been assigned a UEI. This is a one-time requirement.
- Register in Ocean State Procures (OSP) on the website by clicking here for no cost. If your entity has done business with the state in the past, you are likely already registered. This is a one-time requirement.
- Complete/update your GMS Annual Organization Registration, including a self-risk assessment. This is an annual requirement.

2. FINANCIAL MATTERS & TIMING

Available Funds

A total of $150,000 in funding is available. Requests for assistance should range between **$10,000 and $50,000**.

Funding is not available for the following:

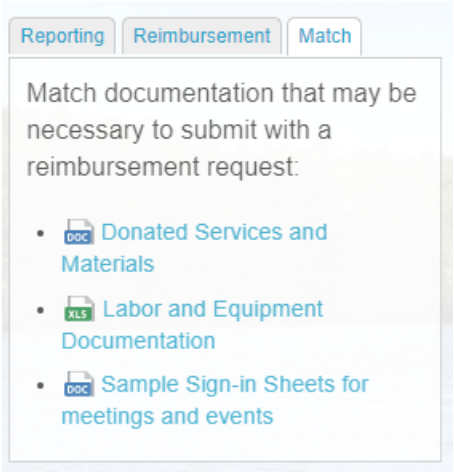
- Expenses incurred before or after the contract period (i.e. receipt of the DFE Purchase Order and the contract end date)
- Any expense not part of the DFE approved budget
- Food, drinks and refreshments for meetings, volunteers, etc. (also cannot count as match)
- Costs associated with preparing the 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.)

Matching Contributions

The Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program funds **must be matched 75/25 with non-federal funds** – for example, a $20,000 grant requires a $5,000 minimum match requirement, for an overall project cost of $25,000. 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 – 25% 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 $35.02 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 UCF Coordinator prior to submitting their application to ensure that what they are submitting is sufficient.

Grant Program Timeline

January 15 – Application Deadline. Proposals must be **submitted** through the Grants Management System.

February 1 – 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**.

February/March – Begin Project. The anticipated start date, subject to timeliness of returning a signed contract to the UCF Program Manager and the creation of a PO from the Grant Management System. No grant expenditures or grant match may occur before the receipt of the PO.

December 31 – End Project. Performance 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 performance period end date (January 31, 2027), or approved time extension deadline.

3. PROJECT GUIDELINES

This grant 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 proposal must be submitted by the municipality or by a closely allied organization partnering with the municipality.

Tree Planting Project Guidelines:

- *A species list is required and must be approved by the UCF 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 UCF Program.
- Trees may be planted on **public** or **private** property (with a signed agreement from the property owner).

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*

Payment Process

Grant payments are made on a **reimbursement basis**. Grantees must submit a financial report in the GMS to request 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 the required amount of match.

Standards and Verification of Accomplishments

For tree planting, 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

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. Submission of the financial report must include 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).

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 UCF, 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 January 30) and will be reviewed by the UCF 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 3 parts: , 1. Budget Proposal, 2. Project Timeline and 3. Proposal Narrative; plus any additional supplements required.

1. **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. 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.
2. **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.
3. **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.

   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: ***Do not count toward 4-page narrative limit – Please upload as 1 document***

Tree Equity Score Analyzer Scenario Report: This report will provide the number of trees estimated to be planted within each census block within targeted planting area and with the estimated benefits of the tree planting project.

Tree Species List, Site Plan, and Maintenance Plan: As noted in the Project Guidelines in Section 3.

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: 401.537.4067

Visit our website for the link to apply:

https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/agriculture-and-forest-environment/forest-environment/tree-equity-grant-program

APPLICATION DEADLINE
4:00 pm, 15 January 2025

Evaluation Criteria

Project Description & Impact

Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
The applicant provided a detailed description of project site, the # of trees and a list of the species selected and a list of alternative species in case of Nursery supply shortage. The applicant included the impact report generated by the Tree Equity Score Analyzer (TESA) which demonstrated the project will be in a high priority area and will have high climate and/or health impacts. Priority will be given to projects that incorporate private properties.	Provided some details of the project site and some description of tree species that were selected. Applicant also included the TESA report, which demonstrated that the project is in a high priority location with high to moderate climate and health impacts.	The project site is not in a priority area based on the TESA analysis. Little details provided on the site location, # of trees to be planted and the species that were selected. Applicant included the TESA report, which demonstrated that the project is in a low-moderate priority location with low-moderate climate and health impacts.	No details on the project site provided and no TESA report included in the application.

Project Planning & Timeline

Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Applicant provided a detailed description of the preparation activities, how they will be conducted, and who will be conducting each activity. All project deliverables are included in a detailed timeline that will be successfully implemented by December 31, 2025.	The project plans are missing some details, but most deliverables are included on a timeline and will be completed in time.	Details are missing and the plan is very general. Not apparent how all deliverables will be completed in time. Timeline provided but very sparse.	Project plan is missing, or it does not have a timeline.

Collaboration & Resources

Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Very clear explanation on who the project partner(s) are, their credentials, their role in the project and any resources or expertise that they will bring to fill gaps. Letter(s) of support and resume(s) provided and description of how this partner will advance the work.	Some details provided on project partner(s); some explanations as to how partnerships will work and what types of resources and expertise these partners will bring to the table. Letter(s) of support and resume(s) from partners are provided.	Partners listed but did not provide details on their roles. Letter of support is not descriptive. Little mention of expertise and resources that partner(s) will provide.	Partner(s) not identified and there is no letter of support.

Community Engagement & Project Promotion

Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Detailed explanation of how community members will be engaged in the preparation and day-of planting event. Outline of how the project will be promoted in the community.	Some details describing how community members will be engaged but could be expanded on more. A detailed plan for promoting the project in the community is provided.	Outline of community engagement strategy provided but lacking details. No details for project promotion either.	Missing community engagement strategy and project promotion plan.

Maintenance Plan

Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Provided a detailed maintenance plan for 3 years after trees are planted and included expenses in the budget and identified management roles and responsibilities.	Provided a general outline with some details for the maintenance plan for 3 years after trees are planted and included most expenses in the budget.	Simple outline with few details on how trees will be maintained after planting. Not clear who will be responsible for maintenance.	No management plan provided.

Budget

Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Budget is complete and contains all required information including the cost to purchase the trees, labor, tools, supplies, maintenance programming and any staff or volunteer compensation. Budget is cost effective and linked to activities and outcomes.	Budget is complete but there are few areas that are unclear.	Budget lacks required information or includes unallowable expenditures.	Budget not included.