

URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM CHALLENGE GRANT

INTRODUCTION

Urban area expansion and inner-city decline is a national problem that continues to impact basic ecological functions essential to a healthy and productive society. Healthy trees and forests in urban areas contribute to improved air and water quality, watershed function, energy conservation and social well-being. The quality of life in cities and towns will be enhanced by effective State programs that foster cooperative efforts to plan for, plant, protect and maintain community trees, forests and related natural resources. Partnerships created through such programs will lead to an engaged citizenry committed to building healthy and viable communities for themselves and future generations. An effective urban and community forestry assistance program provides a foundation for meeting these goals.

The Forest Service provides national Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program leadership and coordination. Program delivery occurs primarily at the state level, through State Foresters and key partners. State U&CF Councils advise the State Forester on program direction and priorities. Other partners play an important role in expanding public and private partnerships that promote the management of urban and community forests.

PURPOSE

The specific purposes of Urban and Community Forestry Assistance are to:

1. improve understanding of the benefits of preserving existing tree cover in urban areas and communities;
2. encourage owners of private residences and commercial properties to maintain trees and expand forest cover on their properties;
3. provide education programs and technical assistance to State and local organizations (including community associations and schools) in maintaining forested lands and individual trees in urban and community settings and identifying appropriate tree species and sites for expanding forest cover;
4. **provide assistance through competitive matching grants awarded to local units of government**, or approved non-profit organizations that meet the requirements of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;
5. implement a tree planting program to complement urban and community tree maintenance and open space programs and to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, conserve energy, and improve air quality in addition to providing other environmental benefits;
6. establish demonstration projects in selected urban and community settings to illustrate the benefits of maintaining and creating forest cover and trees;
7. enhance the technical skills and understanding of sound tree maintenance and arboricultural practices involving the cultivation of trees, shrubs and complementary ground covers, of individuals involved in the planning, development, and maintenance of urban and community forests and trees; and,
8. expand existing research and educational efforts intended to improve the understanding of tree growth and maintenance, tree physiology and morphology, species adaptations, and forest ecology; the value of integrating trees and ground covers; the economic, environmental, social and psychological benefits of trees

and forest cover in urban and community environments; and the role of trees in conserving energy and mitigating urban “heat islands.”

STATE SUB-GRANT (CHALLENGE GRANTS) – NATIONAL GUIDELINES

States are encouraged to offer sub-grants that involve partnerships with local governments and non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations for the purpose of establishing effective community forestry programs. Where State programs provide funding of grants, the following requirements must be met:

1. States will establish criteria and comply with U&CF Program direction, appropriate Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, and applicable Federal and State regulations.
2. While tree planting is an allowable use of funds, the states shall establish limits on the percentage of funds available for tree planting.
3. Tree planting projects must include a work plan and a maintenance plan approved by the State Forester or his/her designee. Other U&CF projects must have a work plan and a defined product or measurable outcome.
4. Plant materials used in tree planting must, at a minimum, meet the American Standard for Nursery Stock, and tree protection and maintenance must meet American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards.
5. Sub grantees are required to adhere to all Federal rules and guidelines of the State pursuant to this program.

NATIONAL MEASURES

A community must show that they are moving toward accomplishing the following national performance measures through their grant proposal:

1. Management Plans: The communities must have a current and active urban and community tree and forest management plan supported by professionally-based resource assessments/inventories.
2. Professional Staff: The community relies on the services of individuals who have one or more of the following credentials, and who are directly employed or retained through written agreement to advise and/or assist in the planting, protection, and maintenance of urban and community trees and forests:
 - a. Degree in urban forestry or a closely related field (e.g., forestry, horticulture, arboriculture, etc.)
 - b. International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborist or equivalent professional certification.These requirements are intended to ensure that the person with the primary responsibility for program management has the training and experience to properly and professionally manage the urban forest resource and advance the community's U&CF program.
3. Ordinances/Policies: The community has adopted and can present documentation of local/statewide ordinances or policies that focus on planting, protecting, and maintaining their urban and community trees and forests.

4. Advocacy/Advisory Organization: The community has local citizen's groups, and these groups serve as a catalyst for active local urban forest resource management within the community.

STATE CRITERIA FOR CHALLENGE GRANTS

The state has developed a "challenge grant" program that involves increased commitment and effort from communities. A community may develop a grant using any one of six criteria outlined below. The maximum amount that any community can receive is \$5000 and that must be matched by the community.

The criteria for a challenge grant are outlined below:

REQUIREMENTS

1. General Grant Requirements
 - a. Projects must be on public lands or in public right of ways.
 - b. All projects require a 50/50 match. This match must be shown in the application. The grant will reimburse the applicant for no more than 50% of the documented expenses.
 - c. To be eligible for a grant, you must obtain professional advice from the Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry (RCF). Our assistance will ensure the tree species selected are suitable for the site and the planting plans are compatible with the parameters of the grant. **Please include a species list and cost estimate, in your proposal.**
 - d. Following grant notification and prior to project implementation, a brief planning meeting between the grantee and a RC&F Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) team member must be arranged. This will ensure that proper planting and maintenance procedures are followed.
 - e. A RC&F forester must be present the first day of ground work on the grant.
2. CRITERIA - This grant has 6 specific sections (criteria) and funding limitations. All grant funds must be matched by the applicant on a reimbursable basis. The community must document all expenses.
 - a. **Professional Services** (\$5000) – The costs associated with the procurement of professional services may be covered by this grant. These expenses must be matched by actual (hard dollar) expenditures by the community - no soft match can be used. Grant funds must be used for professional tree care advice and planning efforts.
 - b. **Tree Inventory/Assessment** (\$5000) – The costs associated with community tree inventory projects may be covered by this category. Grant funds must be used for the development and implementation of a community tree inventory.
 - c. **Existing Tree Care & Maintenance** (\$5000) – Tree pruning and tree care costs associated with existing trees may be covered under this category (ANSI A300 - 2005). Grant funds must be used for the care and maintenance of existing trees in a community.
 - d. **Education/Training** (\$5000) – The community may use this portion of the grant to cover the cost of educational or training opportunities for community staff, advisory board members, or local officials to receive training on urban forestry.

Grant funds must be used for educating and training tree advisory groups, staff, and local officials in the proper care and management of urban forestry.

- e. **New Tree Planting** (\$1000) – **A community may only receive a maximum of \$1000 per year for new tree planting.** New trees may be planted in a community to augment or replace existing trees lost to disease or other factors. Trees must, at a minimum, be at least 1” in caliper and a minimum of 8’ tall to meet the American Standard for Nursery Stock. Tree protection and maintenance must meet American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards (ANSI Z60.1 – 2004). Click [here](#) for the standards. Grant funds may only be used to purchase trees. All labor and other supplies needed to plant trees must be provided by the community. Community expenses for supplies and planting qualify as match for this grant.

- f. **Other Activities** (\$5000) – This category may be used to fund such activities as the development and implementation of a community website, specific to urban forestry. This category may also be used to develop any other projects specific to urban forestry and or arboriculture.

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Grant recipients shall document and report expenditures and accomplishments.

NATIONAL FUNDING STANDARDS

1. The Federal share of these grants shall not exceed 50-percent.
2. Applicants must match the federal funding with direct expenditures, in-kind labor and other expenses. These matching funds must be documented.
3. No federal funds or in-kind services provided by federal agencies may be used as match for these grants.
4. The federal funds must be used for activities identified in the applicant’s plan of work.
5. Federal funding provided by these grants is not intended to substitute for local urban and community forestry funds.

STATE REVIEW PROCESS

The South Dakota Urban Forestry Advisory Council will review all UCF Challenge Grant applications and recommend to the State Forester the grant applications that will move communities toward accomplishing national performance measures. The overriding question the Council will consider is, ***“Will this grant implement or provide a significant improvement in the community's ability to improve the condition and extent of its neighborhood trees and forests?”***