



2024 URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY GRANTS

GRANT OVERVIEW

The [Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) (VT UCF), a partnership between the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation and University of Vermont Extension, seeks applicants needing financial assistance to increase and maintain a healthy urban tree canopy and access to nature in disadvantaged communities.

Urban & Community Forestry grants will support a broad range of activities including urban and community tree canopy expansion and protection, urban wood utilization, urban food forests, extreme heat mitigation through tree planting, workforce development, local tree nursery establishment, and increasing capacity to care for and manage community trees. This work aligns with and supports the Biden-Harris Administration's [Justice40 Initiative](#) by strategically identifying, reaching, and assisting disadvantaged communities in our state.

With special funds through the USDA Forest Service's National Urban & Community Forestry Program and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, these grants advance work within disadvantaged communities to support more resilient urban and community forests. [Learn more](#) about state allocations and the Inflation Reduction Act's impact on urban forestry nationwide.

This document contains information to support grant applications and project development. Please note that there are three grant categories in 2024: *Communities Caring for Canopy*, *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer*, and ***Urban & Community Forestry Grants***. This overview document pertains to the third category listed.

There is [a common application](#) form for all grant categories; applicants may apply for more than one grant category but must submit a separate application for each. VT UCF has developed a [2024 grant eligibility map](#) to support applicants and project development.

WHO MAY APPLY

Municipalities, public educational institutions, and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations may apply for an *Urban & Community Forestry* grant.

Eligibility for funding will be determined in accordance with criteria that have been approved by the USDA Forest Service's National Urban & Community Forestry Program. Projects **must take place in or must directly serve at least one disadvantaged community**, which for the purpose of this grant program are defined as census tracts included in one or more of the following datasets:

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

- The federal Council on Environmental Quality’s [Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)
- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s [Opportunity Zones dataset](#)
- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s dataset for [low to moderate income areas](#)

Refer to VT UCF’s [2024 grant eligibility map](#) for guidance.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Grant awards will be **between \$5,000 and \$50,000**, for a total of \$300,000 available in 2024. There is no cost-share requirement for *Urban & Community Forestry Grants*. Funds will be distributed through a competitive grant review and selection process.

Funding for this program is made possible by the USDA Forest Service and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Projects should create and foster more resilient urban forests by increasing and maintaining a healthy urban tree canopy and access to nature. Projects **must take place in or must directly serve at least one disadvantaged community**, as defined above. *Urban & Community Forestry Grants* will support a broad range of activities, including but not limited to:

- Urban and community tree canopy expansion and protection (e.g. tree planting, community tree nursery establishment)
- Tree maintenance
- Urban wood utilization
- Urban food forests
- Extreme heat mitigation and climate resilience
- Workforce development
- Increasing capacity to care for and manage community trees
- Other activities as detailed in VT UCF’s two other grant categories: *Communities Caring for Canopy* and *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer*

ELIGIBLE PROJECT GUIDELINES

Below are general guidelines for the eligible project components.

URBAN TREE CANOPY EXPANSION AND PROTECTION

- Projects should consider the health, maintenance of, and access to the overall tree canopy within a specific disadvantaged community or multiple disadvantaged communities.
- For all tree planting activities, guidelines are consistent with those in VT UCF’s traditional grant program (*Communities Caring for Canopy*).

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

- The estimated total number of trees that will be planted must be included in the project application. All applications must provide a draft species list and a maintenance plan for all planted trees, including provisions for replacing trees that have not survived.
- All tree planting activities associated with a project must adhere to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 Standards for Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Management.
- Funds can be used to purchase and/or plant trees. Planting stock should be at least 1 ½ inches in caliper and no larger than 3 ½ inches. Balled and burlapped or bare root stock is the preferred stocking material; VT UCF cautions that large (>1" DBH) container-grown trees may lead to root binding or girdling. Please refer to the VT UCF factsheet [Planning to Purchase a Tree](#) for guidance on selecting high quality trees.
- The [Vermont Tree Selection Guide](#) should be used as a reference for site assessment and tree selection.
- VT UCF encourages project coordinators to consider purchasing trees from Vermont-based nurseries. Visit the [Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association's](#) website for more information.
- Trees can be planted on public ways and places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#), such as public rights-of-way, parks and greenbelts, and areas around public buildings, or at public educational institutions.
- Tree planting on private property can occur when property owners are willing to support community-wide tree programs by providing permission for the municipality or organization to plant and, potentially, maintain trees on private property bordering public ways and places, provided the guidelines below are met:
 - A sample written agreement must be included with the application. [Examples of existing agreements](#) can be found on the VT UCF website. This agreement must address:
 - Responsibilities of both the property owner and the municipality,
 - Tree care and survival, and
 - Duration for which the agreement will exist.
 - The written agreement sample or template must be approved by both VT UCF staff and the program's Regional UCF Program Coordinator with the USDA Forest Service prior to the project's initiation.
 - Upon approval, a written agreement must be signed by both a municipal or organizational representative and the property owner for each property on which a tree or multiple trees will be planted; copies of these agreements must be submitted with the final project report.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

- Funds can also be used to support the growing environment of a tree or group of trees, including those grown in a municipal or community tree nursery, for long-term success. This includes activities to increase available soil volume, irrigate trees, and for tree protection.
- Applications that allow for trees to act as green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff are encouraged.
- Strategically planting trees to maximize their long-term benefits is encouraged. For example, planting trees to conserve energy for cooling, improve or expand recreational space, enhance community resilience, or increase business patronage will receive special consideration. Refer to the US Forest Service's [Vibrant Cities Lab](#) for resources and ideas.
- Strategically planting trees to increase equitable distribution of tree canopy cover across a community is encouraged. Learn more about [Tree Equity here](#).

TREE MAINTENANCE

- Funds can be used for the maintenance of trees in public ways and places or at public educational institutions. If hiring a professional arborist, refer to the International Society of Arboriculture's [Certified Arborist database](#).
- All tree maintenance activities associated with a project must adhere to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 Standards for Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Management.
- Tree maintenance should focus on a prescriptive approach to long-term tree health and structural improvements. This could include structural pruning/training of young trees, crown cleaning and corrective pruning of mature trees, deep root feeding, cabling/bracing, and soil compaction mitigation.
- Funds can be used for equipment to maintain and care for trees, including hand and pole pruners, pruning saws, mulch, watering bags or tanks, and staking materials.

URBAN WOOD UTILIZATION

Project funds may be used to establish a local wood utilization program for trees removed from public ways and places or from other municipally managed lands. Projects to distribute wood as firewood are eligible and applicants are also encouraged to consider ways to utilize the wood for furniture, flooring, outdoor art installations, recreation equipment, or any other use. For more information visit the [Urban Wood Network](#) website.

URBAN FOOD FORESTS

Project funds may be used to support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of food forests, community orchards, or community garden sites with the planting and care of fruit and nut trees.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

EXTREME HEAT MITIGATION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Project funds may be used to support local and regional environmental, municipal, or transportation planning efforts that integrate trees and urban and community forests. Funds may be used towards implementation of a broad range of strategies to enhance resilience to climate change and extreme heat incidences.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Project funds may be used to develop, enhance, or support new and existing workforce development programs that serve disadvantaged communities and incorporate urban and community forestry. Activities may include youth engagement, educational activities or initiatives, and apprenticeships.

INCREASING CAPACITY TO CARE FOR AND MANAGE COMMUNITY TREES

Project funds may be used for staff training or personnel costs related to maintaining and enhancing urban forest canopy. Applicants are encouraged to consider training needs or support for their appointed tree warden, road crews, public works staff, and/or parks department staff. Applicants may also request funds to support work with regional groups and neighboring municipalities.

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by a grant review and selection committee for completeness, eligibility, and applicability to the grant category focus areas.

Applications should respond to the following elements, which will be used by the selection committee to prioritize awards. Sample applications are available on our [Grant FAQ page](#) as guidance.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Provide a succinct statement of the need for funding, identifying the opportunities and desired outcomes of the proposed project. How will the project help to further your community or organizational goals? Include any information that supports a comprehensive understanding of the applicant's situation, e.g., tree inventory or survey results, planning efforts, and who has been or will be involved in making decisions about urban and community forestry management. Limit 4,000 characters.

WHAT DO YOU PLAN ON DOING AND HOW WILL YOU DO IT?

What do you plan on doing and how will you do it? In list format, describe what action steps you are planning to implement. Include with each bulleted or hyphenated item a description of what will be done, the measurable results, and a timeline. Please be as specific as possible; this list should outline every distinct deliverable of your project. *Urban & Community Forestry* projects must be completed by **June 30th, 2026**. Limit 4,000 characters.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE PLAN?

In concert with the action items entered above, identify who will be involved in the project and their role including services provided, financial contributions, and product donations. Consider the various municipal staff, boards and commissions, tree warden, community members, professionals, and organizations that can be called upon as partners to support your efforts. If municipal or organizational staff are planting, maintaining, or removing trees provide details about their qualifications and experience. Limit 4,000 characters.

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

The USDA Forest Service's Urban & Community Forestry Program awarded funds to state agencies to create sub-grants that support disadvantaged communities through equitable access to trees and the benefits they provide. The funding was made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act. Projects must take place in or directly serve "disadvantaged communities", which for the purposes of this grant category are census tracts included in one or more of the following datasets:

- The federal Council on Environmental Quality's Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool
- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Opportunity Zones dataset
- The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's dataset for low to moderate income (LMI) areas.

Describe how your project will benefit a disadvantaged community or communities. Limit 4,000 characters.

PRE-GRANT AND POST-GRANT REVIEW

Funded projects may require a pre-grant or post-grant site visit with a VT UCF staff member to support grant success. VT UCF will notify each award recipient if a pre-grant or post-grant review is required in the grant award announcement.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible costs are those necessary for completing the project. Costs must be documented, reasonable, and consistent within the scope of the project, in accordance with Uniform Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E, Cost Principles. Note that projects must adhere to any procurement policies in place at the applicant's organization, municipality, or educational institution.

Examples of eligible project costs include:

- Costs of services, supplies, or equipment.
- Costs of trees to be planted, site preparation, tree protection, and associated supplies necessary for successful tree planting in publicly managed places.
- Costs associated with purchase of equipment to increase the municipality's capacity to plant trees and successfully manage a community-wide tree program. Equipment is defined as tangible personal property with a per unit-cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of one year or more.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

Purchase, use, and management of equipment under this grant is subject to requirements in Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR Part 200.

- Costs of public outreach and engagement.
- Salaries and fringe benefits of people working directly on the project. Note that administrative costs may not exceed twenty percent of the total award.
- Value of labor, services, supplies, equipment, or facilities donated to the project by third parties.

COST SHARE REQUIREMENTS

There is no cost-share requirement for the 2024 *Urban & Community Forestry Grants* category.

TIMELINE

Applications must be submitted on or before midnight on Friday, **January 5th, 2024**. Grantees will be notified of funding approval by February 1st, 2024. Awarded funds in the form of signed grant agreements are anticipated to be available by the end of March 2024. Projects must be completed, and a final financial report and invoice submitted by June 30th, 2026.

PAYMENT PROCESS

All funds awarded through the *Urban & Community Forestry Grants* program will be available for payment in accordance with the following schedule:

- one-third payable after the signing of the grant agreement as accompanied by an invoice,
- one-third at a mid-project point as accompanied by a progress report and invoice, and
- the balance upon completion of the project with verification of payment of all expenses and with submission of a final report and invoice.

Refer to our [Grant FAQ webpage](#) for more information.

Please note that grantees will be required to pay for contracted services before final reimbursement from the State. The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation reserves the right to make partial payment upon non-compliance of conditions in the grant agreement. Allow 4–6 weeks from the time of the payment request to receipt of the check from the State Treasurer's Office.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

New this year, applications will be accepted via the online [2024 Common Application for Urban & Community Forestry Program Grants](#). The online form application will accept applications until 11:59pm on Friday, January 5th, 2024. Note that the online form application cannot be saved or restarted; we suggest that applicants download and use the Grant Application Worksheet on the grant webpage to develop, edit, and save your work until you are ready to fill the form out entirely and submit.

Applications will not be considered complete until the application form is submitted and the four required additional documents that are outlined on the Grant Application Worksheet and within the Common Application are submitted via email to elise.schadler@vermont.gov.

Release Date: 9/6/23

Application Due Date: 1/5/24

HELP

For more information or assistance, contact the VT UCF staff listed below.

Grant Application & Submission Questions: Elise Schadler, (802) 522-6015, elise.schadler@vermont.gov

Project Development Questions: Joanne Garton, (802) 249-4217, joanne.garton@vermont.gov

VT UCF staff will host monthly 2024 Grants Office Hours as a chance for applicants to ask specific questions about the grant categories, application development, and submission process. These Office Hours will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams and pre-registration is not required. Meeting dates, times, and links are as follows:

- Tuesday, September 19th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)
- Friday, October 20th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)
- Thursday, November 16th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)
- Monday, December 18th, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)

Grant funding that supports Vermont municipalities, organizations, and educational institutions through urban and community tree planting is one of the many resources that the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program offers to support local tree care and stewardship. Learn more at VTCOMMUNITYFORESTRY.ORG.