



2023 GROWING URBAN FORESTS IN THE FACE OF EMERALD ASH BORER *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 for tree planting and reforestation efforts in consideration of the impact of the invasive forest pest emerald ash borer (EAB). This grant program will support:

- Tree planting in the public right-of-way or in public places such as parks, village greens, and educational campuses and
- Tree planting on private land, provided approved permissions and agreements are in place.

With special funds through the US Forest Service's *Sustainable Urban Forest Resilience Program*, VT UCF was selected to work with communities to support more resilient urban and community forests, with a focus on Vermont's most populated areas. This funding is intended for **municipalities and applicants that are prepared to plant trees to offset the loss of ash trees due to EAB.**

This document contains information to support grant applications and project development. Please note that there are two grant categories in 2023: *Communities Caring for Canopy* and *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer*. This overview document pertains to the latter. There is a common application for both grant categories; applicants may apply for both grant categories but must submit separate applications.

WHO MAY APPLY

Municipalities, public educational institutions, and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations may apply for a *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer* grant. Organizations will need to include with their application a written letter of support from the municipality(ies) where the work will occur.

Eligibility for funding will be determined in accordance with the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#); **projects must be in, connect to, or be in direct service to a:**

- [Designated Downtown](#),
- [Designated Village Center](#),
- [Designated New Town Center](#),
- [Designated Growth Center](#), or
- [Designated Neighborhood Development Area](#).

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The Department of Housing and Community Development's [Planning Atlas](#) may be a helpful resource. Priority will be given to applicants that can demonstrate need for funding assistance and documented prevalence of ash within the community.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Grant awards will be **between \$3,000 and \$20,000**, for a total of \$80,000 in 2:1 cost-share grants available in 2023. These funds will be distributed through a competitive grant review and selection process.

Funding for this program is available from the US Forest Service under Code of Federal Domestic Assistance 10.664, Cooperative Forestry Assistance, Federal Fiscal Year 2023.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Projects should create and foster more resilient urban forests by diversifying tree species planted and specifically addressing the loss of ash trees due to the [invasive emerald ash borer](#). Projects **must** take place in, be connected to, or be in direct service to an area that is designated through one of the Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#) and must include components of **one or more** of the three following focus areas:

1. Tree planting in public ways or public places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#) or at public educational institutions in proximity to prior ash tree removals;
2. Interplanting species other than ash in public ways or public places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#) or at public educational institutions in preparation for the eventual removal of ash trees; and/or
3. Tree planting on private property, provided the municipality or applicant coordinates the planting of the trees and that approved permissions and agreements are in place.

Although not required, projects **may** also include one or more other components directly related to EAB and resilient urban forests, including:

- increasing municipal staff capacity to plan for and manage public trees
- public outreach and engagement
- ensuring the establishment and success of any trees planted through the proposed project.

Project funds **may not** be used to support:

- tree removal
- stump grinding
- insecticide treatment of ash trees.

However, the costs associated with these activities could be used as project match. Applicants are encouraged to review the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program's [emerald ash borer management webpage](#) prior to applying. The page contains educational, planning, budgeting, and implementation resources that may be helpful in preparing a project proposal.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT GUIDELINES

Below are general guidelines for each of the required and eligible project components.

REPLACEMENT TREE PLANTINGS OR INTERPLANTING BETWEEN EXISTING ASH TREES

Project funds may be used for the purchase, delivery, and planting of trees in public ways and public places or at public educational institutions. Tree planting components of proposed projects should be explicitly related to a strategy to address the loss of ash trees due to EAB. Eligible projects should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Tree plantings **must** take place in, be connected to, or be in direct service to an area that is designated through one of the Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#). The Department's [Planning Atlas](#) may be a helpful resource.
- Replacement tree plantings may occur at the site where ash tree(s) have been removed, or at another location, with a goal to increase tree canopy cover over an area.
- Interplanting (planting between two existing trees) should occur in areas with high existing populations of ash trees, where there is adequate space to plant new trees to eventually replace the ash trees when they are eventually removed.
- The estimated total number of trees that will be planted must be included in the project proposal. All proposals must provide a species list and a maintenance plan for all planted trees, including provisions for replacing trees that have not survived.
- Trees planted using project funding should be a minimum of 1 ½ inches in caliper and no larger than 3 ½ inches in caliper. Balled and burlapped or bare root stock are the preferred stocking materials; 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.
- **No ash trees (*Fraxinus spp.*)** should be included in the replacement planting or interplanting efforts.

TREE PLANTINGS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

Tree planting on private property can occur when property owners are willing to support community-wide tree programs by providing permission for the municipality to plant and, potentially, maintain trees on private property bordering public ways and places. Recognizing that this is a strategy that may be of interest to municipalities as they consider how to recover from the loss of ash trees due to emerald borer, it is eligible for this grant program, provided the guidelines below are met:

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- A sample written agreement must be included with the application. 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.

[Examples of existing agreements](#) can be found on the VT UCF website.
- The written agreement sample must be approved by both VT UCF staff and the program's Regional UCF Program Coordinator with the US Forest Service prior to the project's initiation.
- Upon approval, a written agreement must be signed by both a municipal 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.
- Tree plantings **must** take place in, be connected to, or be in direct service to an area that is designated through one of the Department of Housing and Community Development's [state designation programs](#). The Department's [Planning Atlas](#) may be a helpful resource.
- Tree selection and tree planting specifications should adhere to the same guidelines as outlined under the *Replacement Tree Plantings or Interplanting between Existing Ash Trees* heading above.

INCREASING MUNICIPAL STAFF CAPACITY

Project funds may be used for staff training or personnel costs related to mitigating the impacts of EAB. 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.

PUBLIC OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Project funds may be used to support public engagement regarding the proposed project and/or the municipality or applicant's proposed EAB management strategy. This includes printing and mailing costs, signage, online and print newspaper ads, and development of outreach materials.

ENSURING TREE ESTABLISHMENT AND SUCCESS

Project funds may be used to purchase materials to ensure that any trees planted will thrive. This includes slow-release tree watering bags or other irrigation supplies, mulch, and tree protection and staking supplies.

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APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by a grant review and selection committee for completeness, eligibility, and applicability to the project focus areas. Additionally, priority will be given to:

- Municipalities or applicants within the current [Vermont EAB Infested Area](#) and
- Municipalities or applicants that can demonstrate through documented tree inventory the prevalence of ash within their public tree population.

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 need for funding, identifying the opportunities and desired outcomes of the proposed project. How will the project help to further the community-wide tree program? Include any information that supports a comprehensive understanding of the municipality or applicant's situation, e.g., tree inventory or survey results, planning efforts, who has been or will be involved in making decisions about urban and community forestry management.

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

In table format using action steps and a timeline, provide a list of what you plan on doing, describe how it will be done, and list the measurable results. Please be as specific as possible; this table should list the deliverables of your project. All projects must be completed by **March 29th, 2024**.

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 wardens, citizens, professionals, and organizations that can be called upon as partners to support your efforts. If municipal staff will be planting or maintaining trees provide details about their qualifications and experience.

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. Examples include

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- Costs of replacement trees or trees to be interplanted, 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. 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.

COST SHARE REQUIREMENTS

Funds will be awarded on a 2:1 match basis; in other words, match provided must equal at least 50% of the requested funds. The match may be in the form of cash, services, or in-kind contributions. Match may take the form of ash tree removals, additional tree plantings, or insecticide treatment of select ash trees as either a permanent or temporary measure. In-kind contributions can include the cash value for volunteer assistance in planning and all grantee personnel/staff labor as well as the donation of professional services or materials. *Example: The value of volunteer time organizing and implementing a volunteer tree planting project are an eligible source of match.*

Costs contributed as match must be eligible as described in the preceding section, Eligible Costs. Use of federal funds from other programs as match will be approved on a case-by-case basis and is contingent upon agreement from the organization or agency from where those funds originate. Volunteer time contributed as match must be documented on a sign-in sheet to include dates, hours of work performed and signatures. The State will provide a form on which to report matching funds upon request.

VALUE OF IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

- Volunteers: Please see our [Grant FAQ webpage](#) for recommended rates
- Donated professional services: use customary rates for services provided
- Donations of materials: use fair market value
- Personnel/staff: use hourly wage rates (may also include fringe benefits)
- Equipment: use established rates per hour, per mile, etc.

TIMELINE

Applications must be postmarked on or before midnight on Friday, December 30th, 2022. Grantees will be notified of funding approval by the end of January. Awarded funds in the form of signed grant agreements are anticipated to be available by the end of March 2023. Projects must be completed, and a final financial report and invoice submitted by March 29th, 2024.

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PAYMENT PROCESS

All funds awarded through the *Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer* grant program are available for payment upon completion of the project 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.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

TO EMAIL:

Due to changes in office occupation, electronic submission of applications is strongly encouraged. Email completed proposal and all other required documents as attachments by close of business on **Friday, December 30th, 2022**, to Jenny Lauer at Jenny.Lauer@vermont.gov.

TO MAIL:

If necessary, applicants may mail the completed proposal and all other required documents to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation's main office. The application **must be postmarked no later than Friday, December 30th, 2022**. If sending application by mail, please give at least one week's notice to Jenny.Lauer@vermont.gov.

MAILING ADDRESS:

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
Attn: Jenny Lauer
Urban & Community Forestry Program
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2
Montpelier, VT 05620

Applications will not be accepted past the deadline date. VT UCF is not responsible for e-mail delivery that fails or mail that is not postmarked on the day of mailing.

HELP

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

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

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

Grant Application Submission Questions: Jenny Lauer, Administrative Assistant, (802) 828-1531 or jenny.lauer@vermont.gov

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Grant funding that supports Vermont municipalities 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.