



2025 TREE MAINTENANCE & REMOVAL GRANTS *GRANT GUIDE*

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 maintain a healthy urban tree canopy and address dead and high-risk trees in disadvantaged communities.

Tree Maintenance & Removal Grants will support projects focused on maintenance of trees and removal of standing dead or high-risk 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 will 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 for *Tree Maintenance & Removal Grants*. Grants will be awarded through a competitive selection process. VT UCF has developed a [2025 grant eligibility map](#) to support applications and project development.

WHO MAY APPLY

Municipalities, public educational institutions, and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations may apply for a *Tree Maintenance & Removal* 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**. For the purpose of this grant program a disadvantaged community is defined as a census tract included in one or more of the following datasets:

- 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 [2025 grant eligibility map](#) for guidance and to confirm a project's eligibility based on geographic location.

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AVAILABLE FUNDS

Grant awards will be **between \$5,000 and \$20,000**, for a total of \$119,000 available in 2025. There is no cost-share requirement for *Tree Maintenance & Removal 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.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND COSTS

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

Projects must include tree maintenance and/or standing dead or high-risk tree removals and **must take place in or must directly serve a disadvantaged community (or multiple)**, as defined on Page 1 above. Within these areas, *Tree Maintenance & Removal Grants* will support projects at the following locations:

- Within public ways and places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#):
 - “Public place” means municipal property, including a municipal park, a recreation area, or a municipal building. “Public place” shall not include any municipal forestland or property that is subject to any ownership interest held by the Agency of Transportation.
 - “Public way” means a right-of-way held by a municipality, including a town highway.
- Within State of Vermont highway rights-of-way provided a section 1111 permit is in place or in process (see page 5).
- At public educational institutions.
- On properties owned by registered non-profit entities, with proof of non-profit status.

Eligible project costs may include the following:

- Contracted services and staff salaries associated directly with tree maintenance or removal activities.
 - Administrative costs (contract management, invoicing, reporting, etc.) must be no more than 10% of the total budget.
- Supplies and materials to ensure successful and proper maintenance of trees.
- Cost of associated services, supplies, or facilities used for the project.
- Costs of public outreach and engagement, up to 5% of project budget. Examples include costs associated with public meetings, focus groups, facilitated neighborhood walks, or school outreach.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES GUIDELINES

Below are general guidelines for the eligible project components. **For technical assistance with project development, contact VT UCF's Urban Forester Adam McCullough or Technical Assistance Coordinator Joanne Garton (see Help section at the end of this guide).**

TREE MAINTENANCE

- The number, estimated diameter class (0-6", 6-12", 12-18", 18-24", or 24" +), and location of trees proposed to be maintained through the project must be documented in the application.
- Funds can be used for the maintenance of trees at eligible locations. Strong applications will include documentation of proposed maintenance practices, preferably based upon recommendations from a professional arborist. For support identifying a professional arborist, refer to the [International Society of Arboriculture's Find an Arborist online database](#).
- While not required, an existing tree inventory that has identified and informed tree maintenance needs should be referenced in the project application.
- 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 activities such as structural pruning/training of young trees, crown cleaning and corrective pruning of mature trees, application of mulch, deep root fertilization, cabling/bracing, lightning protection, 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.
- Project funds may **not** be used to support insecticide treatment of trees, a long-term commitment not adequately supported by a grant. However, the costs associated with protection of trees through insecticide treatment may be used as applicant match.
- Project funds may **not** be used to support tree maintenance on private land.

REMOVAL OF STANDING DEAD OR HIGH-RISK TREES

Grant funds may support removal of standing dead or high-risk trees at eligible locations if it has been determined that the tree(s) in question pose a considerable risk to public safety, following these guidelines:

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- The number, estimated diameter class (0-6", 6-12", 12-18", 18-24", or 24" +) and location of standing dead or high-risk trees proposed to be removed through the project must be documented in the application.
- Removal of standing dead or high-risk trees must improve conditions for disadvantaged communities. Trees should only be removed if they are in a condition that causes more harm than good to the disadvantaged community.
- Trees with no live canopy (no leaves during the previous growing season) may be considered to be standing dead trees and are eligible for removal. While a recommendation from a professional arborist is not required for standing dead trees, strong applications will include evidence such as tree inventory results, information about the cause of death of the tree(s), and/or photographs of the standing dead tree(s) during the growing season as an attachment.
- For all trees with any degree of live canopy (leaves on branches during the previous growing season) to be considered as eligible for high-risk tree removal, a recommendation regarding the tree(s) in question, in written form, **is required** as an attachment with the application. The recommendation must:
 - be from a professional arborist, preferably one that is a [Tree Risk Assessment Qualified](#) professional,
 - be based on at least one site visit to the tree(s),
 - include the method and threshold by which the trees(s) are defined as high-risk, and
 - include the contact information of the arborist.

For support identifying a professional arborist, refer to the [International Society of Arboriculture's Find an Arborist online database](#).

- Tree removal is not eligible if the tree(s) are providing substantial benefits and minimal risk to public safety and urban forest health.
- If the tree(s) proposed for removal are ash (genus *Fraxinus*), no written recommendation from a professional arborist is required. All ash tree removals and disposal of wood waste should adhere to the State of [Vermont's Slow the Spread](#) recommendations. Applicants are encouraged to submit supporting documentation regarding emerald ash borer planning including ash inventory or survey results and adopted strategies for mitigating the impact of emerald ash borer.
- If the project includes standing dead or high-risk tree removal, VT UCF encourages applicants to include in the application any plans to replant directly on site or to replace the loss of tree canopy cover elsewhere in the community.
- Project funds may **not** be used to support removal of any trees on private lands.

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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 grant category focus areas.

Applications should respond to the following elements, which will be used by the grant review and 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 for maintenance and/or removal of standing dead or high-risk trees, 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, history of tree maintenance and removal, 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. *Tree Maintenance & Removal* projects must be completed by **June 30th, 2027**. Limit 4,000 characters.

WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE PLAN?

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 maintaining and/or removing trees, provide details about their qualifications and experience. Limit 4,000 characters.

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES IMPACT 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 of 2022. Tree Maintenance & Removal Grant projects must take place in or directly serve disadvantaged communities, which for the purposes of this grant category are defined as census tracts included in one or more of the following datasets:

- The federal Council on Environmental Quality's [Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)
- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's [Opportunity Zones dataset](#)

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- The US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s dataset for [low to moderate income areas](#)

Describe how your project will benefit or improve conditions for 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.

COST-SHARE REQUIREMENTS

There is no cost-share requirement for the 2025 *Tree Maintenance & Removal* grant category. In-kind or cash match may be documented on the grant budget worksheet but is not required.

TIMELINE

Applications must be submitted on or before midnight on Friday, **January 10th, 2025**. Grantees will be notified of funding approval by the second week of February 2025. Awarded funds in the form of signed grant agreements are anticipated to be available by the beginning of April 2025. **Projects must be completed, and a final project report and invoice submitted by June 30th, 2027.**

PAYMENT PROCESS

All funds awarded through the *Tree Maintenance & Removal 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 project 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. Grantees may opt to be set up to receive Automated Clearing House (ACH) electronic payments; if no ACH electronic payment is set up, please allow 4–6 weeks from the time of the payment request to receipt of the check from the State Treasurer's Office.

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HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

Applications will be accepted via an online [Tree Maintenance & Removal Grant Application form](#). The online form application will accept applications until 11:59pm on Friday, January 10th, 2025. **Note that the online form application cannot be saved or restarted; we suggest that applicants download and use the Grant Application Worksheet available as a fillable PDF or Word doc. 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 required attachments that are outlined on the [Grant Application Worksheet](#) and within the [Tree Maintenance & Removal Grant Application form](#) are submitted as separate PDF documents in a single email to elise.schadler@vermont.gov.

HELP

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

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

Project Development Questions:

- Joanne Garton, VT UCF Technical Assistance Coordinator, (802) 249-4217, joanne.garton@vermont.gov or
- Adam McCullough, VT UCF Urban Forester, (802) 522-5104, adam.mccullough@vermont.gov

VT UCF staff will host two 2025 Grants Office Hours as a chance for applicants to ask specific questions about the application development, submission, and grant administration. These Office Hours will be held in tandem with staff from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, who are administering the 2025 Community Tree Planting Grants. The Office Hours will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams and pre-registration is not required. Meeting dates, times, and links are as follows:

- **Wednesday, October 9th**, 2024, 12-1pm, [Meeting Link](#)
- **Tuesday, December 10th**, 2024, 12-1pm, [Meeting Link](#)

Grant funding that supports Vermont municipalities, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions 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.