



# COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING GRANTS

First round of applications closed. Next round due January 10, 2025.

[2025 Community Tree Planting Grants | Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program \(vtcommunityforestry.org\)](https://vtcommunityforestry.org)



# Program Goals

- **Environmental Stewardship – plant trees in Vermont’s urban areas to:**
  - Mitigate climate change impacts
  - Conserve energy
  - Manage stormwater
  - Enhance public spaces
  - Improve public health
  - Provide food
- **Community Engagement**
  - Foster partnerships & empower local stakeholders
  - Start or scale up local urban forestry programs
- **Equity and Inclusion**
  - Ensure equitable access to benefits of trees
  - Create lasting pathways for prosperity in underserved communities

# Awards Overview

\$5,000 minimum  
to \$75,000  
maximum

No cost-share  
required

VT UCF offers  
technical support

Two rounds of  
competitive  
funding (May  
2024 & Jan. 2025)

All projects must  
be completed by  
July 31, 2026

# How Much Money is Available



**Funding Allocation:** \$315,000 available in 2024, and \$315,000 available in 2025.



**Award Range:** \$5,000 minimum – \$75,000 maximum to scale around local needs and priorities.



**Municipal Projects under \$25,000** are encouraged to work through their Regional Planning Commission



# Round 1 Timeline

**April 2, 2024:** Applications Open

**April 19, 2024:** Deadline to submit questions for Q&A

**May 1, 2024:** Suggested deadline to coordinate with RPCs if serving as agent

**May 17, 2024:** Applications Due

**June 2024:** Grant Awards Announced

**July 2024:** Award Contracts Finalized

**December 2025:** Grant Closeout (may be extended upon request)

# Round 2 Timeline

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**September 1, 2024:** Applications Open

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**November 22, 2024:** Deadline to submit questions for Q&A

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**December 31, 2024:** Suggested deadline to coordinate with RPCs if serving as agent

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**January 10, 2025:** Applications Due

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**February 2025:** Grant Awards Announced

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**March 2025:** Award Contracts Finalized

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**July 2026:** Grant Closeout (no extensions available for this grant round)

# Who Can Apply



Municipalities and  
Counties



Public educational  
institutions



Non-Profits  
(including schools)



RPCs (on behalf of  
municipalities)

# What You Can Do with Grant Funds

## Plant trees! Where Exactly?

- **On public streets**
  - State roads: Vtrans 1111 permit required – we can help!
- **In public places**
  - Parks
  - Municipal offices
  - Community centers
  - NOT municipal forests
- **At schools (public and non-profit)**
- **On Non-Profit Properties**
  - Public housing
  - Churches
  - Community centers
- **On private property**
  - Easement / maintenance agreement required



# What You Can Do with Grant Funds

## Pay for Tree Planting Work!

- **Personnel Costs**
  - Direct tree planting / site prep: unlimited
  - Administrative: up to 10%
  - Can be in-house or contracted
- **Trees and planting materials**
  - Nursery stock
  - Watering bags / tanks
  - Mulch
  - Stakes
  - Tree protection
- **Costs of services, supplies, or facilities**
  - Delivery costs
  - Equipment rental
  - Site preparation (especially impervious removal)
- **Outreach & Engagement (up to 5%)**
  - Staff time & volunteer stipends
  - Printing / mailing / marketing
  - Public meetings & program accessibility



## Questions to Consider during Project Design

- **Purpose.** What purpose will the tree(s) serve on this site?
- **Site Conditions.** Consider both above and below ground.
- **Space.** Is there enough soil volume for the tree(s)?
- **Maintenance.** What will be needed? How can it be minimized by avoiding conflicts with human activities?
- **Right Tree, Right Place.** What species are suitable for this site? Consider multiple alternatives.
- **Co-Benefits.** What else can this tree provide to the community? How can this be maximized?



Community Tree Planting Grants Scoring Guide (rev. 9/1/2024)

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions**

There are 5 categories that will be used to evaluate applications. Within each category, there are several sub-criteria; these repeat on a spectrum of 0-5 points within the category. Check the boxes most applicable to the application, using no more than 4 checks per category, then multiply the checks by the "points" column to get a total score. For example, "Project area has <20% canopy cover" earns 5 points, but "20-25 trees planted" earns only 3 points.

Points	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Project Metrics (20 points possible)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Over 75 trees planted	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-75 trees planted	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-50 trees planted	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-25 trees planted	<input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than 10 trees planted
	<input type="checkbox"/> Project area has <20% canopy cover	<input type="checkbox"/> Project area has 20-40% canopy cover	<input type="checkbox"/> Project area has 40-60% canopy cover	<input type="checkbox"/> Project area has 60-80% canopy cover	<input type="checkbox"/> Project area has >80% canopy cover, or canopy coverage is not mapped
	<input type="checkbox"/> Census tract has 5 or more flags on <a href="#">VT Social Vulnerability Index</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Census tract has 4 flags on <a href="#">VT Social Vulnerability Index</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Census tract has 2-3 flags on <a href="#">VT Social Vulnerability Index</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Census tract has 1 flag on <a href="#">VT Social Vulnerability Index</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Census tract has 0 flags on <a href="#">VT Social Vulnerability Index</a>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Project increases community tree diversity using exclusively native species	<input type="checkbox"/> Project increases community tree diversity using mostly native species and appropriately-selected non-native species	<input type="checkbox"/> Project increases community tree diversity but mostly uses non-native species	<input type="checkbox"/> Project has no net effect on community tree diversity and/or uses exclusively non-native species	<input type="checkbox"/> Project decreases tree diversity and/or uses non-native invasive species
<b>Planning Goals (15 points possible)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Project has clear and specific objectives and strategies to reach overall goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Project has clear but non-specific objectives / strategies to reach overall goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Project identifies clear goals but no objectives and strategies to reach them	<input type="checkbox"/> Project goals are vague with no objectives or strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> Project does not set goals.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Project has express support from multiple entities, including community members or a non-legislative municipal body; or project references specific goals / actions in the municipal plan and/or shade tree plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Project has express support from the municipal legislative body and at least one impacted group.	<input type="checkbox"/> Project has general written support from municipality, but no other community groups or documents.	<input type="checkbox"/> No clear support from municipal bodies beyond necessary signatures and forms.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is opposition to the project from community or affected entities
	<input type="checkbox"/> Project is located in a state-designated Downtown, Village, or New Town Center <b>AND</b> Growth Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Project is located in a Downtown, Village, or New Town Center but not a Growth Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Project is located in a Neighborhood Development Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Project is located in an urban area, but not in a state-designated center	<input type="checkbox"/> Project is located outside an urban area
<b>Likelihood of Success (15 points possible)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees will require minimal watering (fall planting) and pruning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Qualified professionals are committed to maintenance (watering / pruning) of trees.	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is committed to maintenance but does not have qualified professionals.	<input type="checkbox"/> No clear commitment to tree maintenance but trees are likely to survive.	<input type="checkbox"/> No clear commitment to tree maintenance; tree survival is questionable.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes full list of species to be planted that are correctly matched with each site	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes a full list of sites and criteria that will be used to select appropriate species	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifies planting sites but not a method by which to select appropriate species.	<input type="checkbox"/> Planting sites identified, but proposed species are inappropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> No planting sites identified
	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant demonstrates, through soil testing or knowledge of existing soils and landscaping design plans, that existing subsurface conditions are ideal and require no improvement for trees to thrive.	<input type="checkbox"/> Root growth is enabled through cost-effective subsurface improvements (structural soil, silva cells, suspended pavement Stockholm method, etc.); infrastructure is protected from roots	<input type="checkbox"/> Root growth is enabled through subsurface improvements, but at high cost.	<input type="checkbox"/> Below OR above ground space is restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> Below AND above ground space is restricted
<b>Co-Benefits (20 points possible)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Removes pavement, adds trees, and provides infiltration that controls both stormwater flow and quality (phosphorus)	<input type="checkbox"/> Removes pavement, adds trees, and controls stormwater flow but not quality (phosphorus)	<input type="checkbox"/> Removes pavement, adds trees, but has no net effect on stormwater management	<input type="checkbox"/> No removal of pavement; planting site is currently a lawn	<input type="checkbox"/> No removal of pavement; trees planted in forest, forest edge, or meadow
	<input type="checkbox"/> Establishes new recreational assets for all community members	<input type="checkbox"/> Enhances existing recreational assets for all community members	<input type="checkbox"/> Enhances existing recreational assets for some community members	<input type="checkbox"/> Has no impact on recreational assets	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduces recreational assets.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides deep shade, cooling, or shelter in a heavily trafficked area	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides deep shade, cooling, or shelter in a moderately trafficked area	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides some shade, cooling, and shelter benefits to some people	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not provide useful shade, cooling, or shelter	<input type="checkbox"/> Negatively impacts nearby buildings, sidewalks, or other infrastructure
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides food, cultural or aesthetic value equitably to all community members	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides food, cultural or aesthetic value to most community members	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides food, cultural or aesthetic value to some community members	<input type="checkbox"/> Project has no impact on cultural or aesthetic resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Project will negatively impact cultural or aesthetic resources
<b>Equity (15 points possible)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Underserved communities empowered to authentically lead project planning, implementation, or maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> Project planned, implemented, or maintained collaboratively with an underserved community	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant involved affected community and compensated them as part of project planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant consulted with affected communities (i.e., provided avenue for input).	<input type="checkbox"/> No effort to inform or consult with affected community / assumptions made about affected community.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Maximizes the co-benefit of each tree to disadvantaged communities by mitigating dust, noise, heat, traffic.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maximizes the co-benefit of some trees to disadvantaged communities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Project considers equitable access to trees but does not specifically benefits disadvantaged communities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Application doesn't reference tree equity; disadvantaged communities unintentionally excluded from tree benefits.	<input type="checkbox"/> Project reduces tree equity; disadvantaged communities intentionally excluded from tree benefits.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant hasn't interacted with VT UCF, does not have an arborist on staff, and would benefit from technical assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant has interacted with VT UCF, but hasn't received technical or financial assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant has received VT UCF technical OR financial assistance, but still demonstrates need	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant has received VT UCF technical AND financial assistance, but still demonstrates need	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant has no need of technical or financial assistance.

# Application Suggested Steps

- 1. Review Grant Guidelines and this presentation!**
- 2. Assess Community Needs.** Assess your urban forest. Identify areas for improvement. Consult any street tree inventories or management plans.
- 3. Engage Stakeholders.** Seek input to ensure that you effectively address community needs.
- 4. Develop Project Plan.\***
  1. Site selection / planting plan
  2. Site preparation / details
  3. Who will do the work
- 5. Budget Development.** Include personnel, contractors, materials / supplies, & outreach costs.
- 6. Complete Grant Application.** Follow all instructions carefully and include required attachments.
- 7. Review, revise and Submit Application.**

\*Contact Adam McCullough for help with a planting plan, site assessment, or species.



# Resources and Links

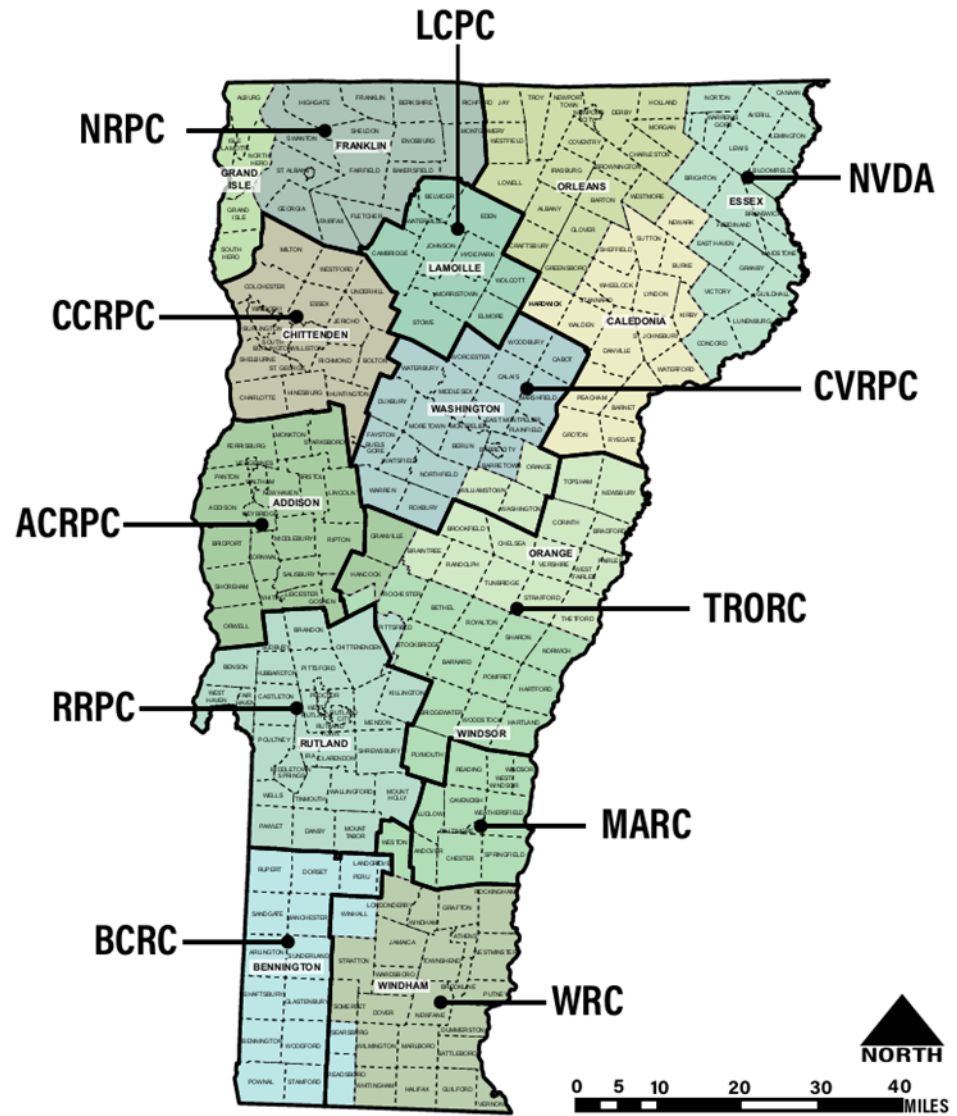
## **Application Materials on Website**

- [PROGRAM GUIDE](#)
- [APPLICATION WORKSHEET](#)
- [Application Scoring Rubric](#)
- [Municipal Letter of Support Template](#)

## **Additional Documents & Guidance**

- Act 154 [Certificate of Good Standing](#)
- [Grantee Insurance](#) guidance
- [Expanded Tree Table](#)
- [Planting Trees in the State ROW](#)
- [How to Create Your Own Planting Map](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

# Regional Planning Commissions



**STATE OF VERMONT  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS**



# How to Get Help

## **Grant Application & Submission Questions:**

Darren Schibler, Senior Planner, Chittenden  
County Regional Planning Commission

(802) 846-4490 ext. 135

[dschibler@ccrpcvt.org](mailto:dschibler@ccrpcvt.org)

## **Project Development Questions and Technical Assistance Requests:**

Adam McCullough, Urban Forester, VT Urban  
& Community Forestry Program

(802) 522-5104

[adam.mccullough@vermont.gov](mailto:adam.mccullough@vermont.gov)

# Some Frequently Asked Questions

Questions	Answers
Can we apply for both Rounds?	<b>Yes.</b> Entities that have received funding under the first round may apply for additional funding in the second round. Applications from eligible entities that have not yet received VT UCF funding will be prioritized in both rounds. The maximum individual award amount for each round of funding is \$75,000.
How much of the grant funding can go to administrative costs?	Administrative costs (including both direct and indirect costs) can be <b>no more than 10%</b> of the total budget. Administrative costs include activities such as managing contracts and procurement, invoicing and reporting, and general coordination. These are distinct from staff salaries for direct planting activities, which can be up to 100% of the project budget.
If an RPC is acting as agent for multiple municipalities, should they submit a single application or several?	<b>It depends.</b> A consortium application should be used for a project with a single, cohesive scope and budget that takes place in two or more municipalities. For example, planting trees in mobile home parks in several towns, or hosting a regional Arbor Day Celebration and tree planting. However, if planting projects in each municipality have distinct scopes and goals, a separate application should be submitted for each project.
Can this grant be combined with other funding from federal sources?	<b>No.</b> This program is funded by federal dollars and cannot be combined with other federal funds. If you are using this program as match or leverage for another grant (or vice versa), you should check the specific requirements of other programs. For example, the Vermont Greening Schools Initiative does not allow other ARPA State Recovery Funds for Clean Water to be used as local match or leverage.



## More Frequently Asked Questions

### **This grant is focused on urban areas. How are those defined? What about rural villages?**

**There is no fixed definition for this grant.**

- There is no fixed definition of “urban area” for this grant. It generally includes areas with a high density of people, buildings and impervious area.
- In particular, the core areas of communities often included within state-designated planning centers are given priority in the application scoring rubric.

## More Frequently Asked Questions

# What size of trees can be planted with this grant?

### **As big as possible!**

- In general, planting stock should be at least 1 1/2 inches in caliper and no larger than 3 1/2 inches.
- Balled and burlapped or bare root stock is the preferred stocking material; VT UCF cautions that large (>1" caliper) 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. However, smaller planting stock may be used for certain types of planting sites, such as riparian buffer restoration or replanting in flood buyout properties.
- Please contact program staff for technical assistance if you plan to submit a proposal with unique site conditions or planting circumstances.



## More Frequently Asked Questions

# Are shrubs eligible for funding under this grant?

### **Generally not.**

- This program is intended to increase the value that trees provide to communities, specifically to increase canopy cover and manage stormwater (among other values).
- Shrubs generally don't accomplish those goals, at least not to the degree that trees would, so grant funds could not be used to purchase or plant shrubs.
- However, use of shrubs is strongly encouraged as a complement to tree planting projects.

# More Frequently Asked Questions

## What if we don't know the exact locations of tree planting until our project is in progress?

Applications can be submitted for projects without specific planting locations as long as:

- The general planting area is defined (e.g., along specific streets or in a defined geographic area like a designated downtown)
- A list of potential tree species is provided that would be suitable for the general planting area's environmental conditions, including a range of sizes for mature trees to accommodate different available planting areas.
- There is a defined process for deciding exact planting sites and tree species – checklists are recommended and should be as specific as possible.
- Someone on the project team has arboricultural experience, such as the Tree Warden.

Projects of this nature must submit a final list of planting locations and species to program staff before planting occurs. It is recommended that you reach out to program staff prior to submitting an application without specific planting locations to ensure success.



## More Frequently Asked Questions

# Can this grant be used to remove or replace trees?

### **No.**

- This grant cannot fund tree removal; it can only be used for tree planting.
- While, this could include the planting portion of projects that involve tree replacement, such as interplanting around ash trees to mitigate the effects of emerald ash borer, projects that result in a net increase of canopy cover will be most competitive.

# More Frequently Asked Questions

## Will there be any weighting in favor of planting native tree species?

### **Yes (with some caveats).**

- Use of native tree species is strongly encouraged.
- However, it is more important to select the appropriate species for a particular site so that the tree will survive and thrive, even if it may not be strictly native to the area.
- Applicants may also consider selecting trees that will be resilient to the impacts of climate change in Vermont (such as those that thrive in somewhat warmer climates and can withstand periods of drought as well as intense rain events).
- Projects should also avoid using species with known susceptibility to invasive pests, especially emerald ash borer.
- Projects including trees known to be invasive will not be funded; if you are uncertain about whether a species is invasive, consult [VTinvasives.org](http://VTinvasives.org) or ask program staff.



# More Frequently Asked Questions

## **The grant guidance calls for paying residents to give input on the project. How does this work?**

- Outreach to disadvantaged communities can happen either before you apply or as a part of your project.
- You can use the outreach part of the budget to pay staff to conduct outreach, and/or to provide stipends for volunteers to participate, along with other expenses listed in the [grant guidance](#).
- If you have already conducted outreach on your project before applying, you can document that in your application to support your environmental justice impact narrative.

## More Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can a nonprofit (including a non-municipal school) still apply if their project is under \$25,000?**

**Yes.**

- Any eligible entity can submit an application for a project under \$25,000 (though municipalities with small projects are strongly encouraged to work through their RPC).
- In addition, a municipality may submit a project on behalf of a nonprofit, which may allow for the RPC to serve as the project agent.



More  
Frequently  
Asked  
Questions

# Can we pay for pre-award costs once we get a grant?

**Unfortunately not.**

- Only costs incurred starting on the date the award contract is finalized will be eligible expenses.
- You may still make plans, obtain quotes, or start your contractor procurement process before the award contract date, but any administrative costs such as staff time before the contract date will not be reimbursed.