



2027 URBAN TREE PLANTING MINI GRANTS

Applicant Guidance

The [Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) (VT UCF) seeks applicants needing financial assistance to support the development of local tree planting in populated centers with low existing tree canopy cover.

Urban Tree Planting Mini Grants will fund tree planting projects in urban census tracts and block groups with less than 30% tree canopy cover. 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 areas with high population density to support more resilient urban and community forests.

This document contains information to support grant applications and project development. Applications are due Friday, January 29th, 2027.

WHO MAY APPLY

Municipalities (cities, towns, villages, etc.) and public educational institutions in Vermont may apply for an *Urban Tree Planting Mini Grant*.

Eligibility 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 a census block that has been identified as having a current tree canopy cover of 30% or less according to the website [TreeCanopy.us](#).

Eligible Vermont communities that have a census block with 30% or less current tree canopy cover:

- Barre
- Bennington
- Brattleboro
- Burlington
- Chester
- Essex
- Essex Junction
- Middlebury
- Montpelier
- Morrisville
- Rockingham
- Rutland City
- South Burlington
- St. Albans City
- St. Albans Town
- St. Johnsbury
- Swanton
- Vergennes
- Waterbury
- Williston
- Windsor
- Winooski

To identify eligible census blocks, potential applicants should:

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1. Visit the mapping website <https://treecanopy.us>.
2. Using the Search bar at the top, navigate to your municipality and zoom in until all census blocks are visible.
3. In the left side bar use the “Filter by Tree Canopy” dropdown menu and select “Current Canopy”.
4. Use the slider tool beneath the “Filter by Tree Canopy” dropdown menu to reduce the percent tree canopy from 100% to 30%.
5. Once the above is done, only census blocks with 30% current tree canopy or less will remain shaded. These are the only eligible census blocks for *Urban Tree Planting* mini grants.

The website treecanopy.us is administered through a partnership between the Arbor Day Foundation, PlanITGeo, and the USDA Forest Service and strives to help communities track changes in their local community forests and to understand how well plans and projects are working.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

A total of \$8,000 is available, with individual awards ranging from **\$1,000 to \$3,000**.

Funds will be distributed through a competitive grant review and selection process.

Urban Tree Planting Mini Grants is a reimbursement program. This means that the applicant must be capable of financing the project (after a grant agreement is fully executed) and pay expenditures, then submit a request to the State for reimbursement using the required documentation. The program will reimburse up to 100% of eligible project costs; there is no cost share requirement.

Funding for this program is available from the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

2027 TIMELINE

- Applications open: Thursday, October 29th, 2026
- Application deadline: 5pm on Friday, January 29th, 2027
- Selection announcement: February 2027
- Finalize grant agreements: March – April 2027
- *Urban Tree Planting* projects must be completed no later than: November 30th, 2027

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects must take place in Vermont and plant trees in public ways and places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#). This includes municipal rights-of-way and municipal property, and at public educational institutions.

Projects may only take place in a census tract or block that has been identified as having a current tree canopy cover of 30% or less according to the website [TreeCanopy.us](#). See instructions under the *Who May Apply* section above to determine project eligibility by location.

Urban Tree Planting Mini Grant projects should be “shovel-ready”. Make sure that you have a clear plan in place prior to applying, and that your timeline and activities are realistic.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT COMPONENTS GUIDELINES

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

TREE PLANTING

- “Right tree, Right place, Right way” Is the maxim to follow during project development. Thoughtfully select tree planting sites, pair them with suitable tree species, and ensure planting is done correctly. Many applicants will develop projects without tree professionals on staff. This is why VT UCF provides free technical assistance before the application deadline. Contact Adam McCullough at adam.mccullough@vermont.gov or Joanne Garton at joanne.garton@vermont.gov.
- Trees can be planted within public ways and places as defined in [24 V.S.A. § 2501a](#); these spaces include municipal rights-of-way, parks and greenbelts, and municipal property. Trees can also be planted at public educational institutions.
- Trees can be planted within State of Vermont highway rights-of-way, provided a section 1111 permit is in place or in process. [Learn more about planting trees in the State ROW](#). The 1111 permit is free, and it is not required at the time of application but must be in place before planting in the State ROW.
- The estimated total number of trees that will be planted **must** be included in the project proposal. All proposals should provide a draft species list and a maintenance plan for all planted trees, including provisions for replacing trees that have not survived after the first year.
- Funds can be used to purchase and/or plant trees. Planting stock should be at least 1 inch in caliper and no larger than 3 ½ inches. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- VT UCF will require a post-planting site inspection; trees planted improperly will require corrective measures before grant funds are reimbursed. This includes planting depth alterations. To ensure trees are planted correctly please consider the following:
 - Trees must be planted according to [VT UCF’s Tree Planting Specifications](#).
 - If paying individuals to do the tree planting, ensure that they are qualified. Arborists certified through the International Society of Arboriculture are recommended. Refer to the New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture’s resource [choosing a qualified arborist](#) and the [Find an Arborist database](#).
 - If volunteers will be planting the trees, applicants should ensure these volunteers have been trained; VT UCF has resources to help, including [a video series on planting trees](#) of different nursery stock types.

- The [Vermont Tree Selection Guide](#) is available to be used as a reference for site assessment and tree selection.
- VT UCF encourages project coordinators to consider purchasing trees from Vermont-based nurseries. Refer to the Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association's [member directory](#).
- Tree planting on private property is eligible when doing so supports the public good, property owners give written permission, and 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. Following the provided examples is recommended. The sample agreement must address:
 - Responsibilities of both the property owner and the applicant,
 - Tree care and survival, and
 - Duration of the agreement.
 - The written agreement sample must be approved by VT and USDA Forest Service staff prior to the project's initiation.
 - The approved written agreement must be signed by both the grantee and the owner for each property on which any trees will be planted; copies of these signed agreements must be submitted with the final project report.
- Strategically planting trees to maximize their long-term benefits is encouraged. For example, planting trees to conserve energy, improve or expand recreational space, enhance community resilience, or increase business patronage will receive special consideration. Refer to the USDA 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](#).

ALLOWABLE PROJECT COSTS

Allowable project 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](#).

Urban Tree Planting Mini Grants is a reimbursement program. Grantees will need to secure funds in advance to pay for all project expenses when they occur. Grantees will be able to seek reimbursement on a quarterly basis, and reimbursement can take 4-8 weeks to complete.

Allowable project costs include:

- Cost of services and supplies necessary to complete the project.

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- Costs of trees to be planted, site preparation, tree protection, and associated supplies or services necessary for successful tree planting and establishment.
- Salaries and fringe benefits of people working directly on the project.
 - Administrative costs (contract management, invoices, reporting, etc.) may not exceed 10% of the grant request.

Note that if your project involves hiring a contractor, you **MUST** wait until notification of awards and execution of a grant agreement before beginning the procurement process and signing a contract. Review the FPR [Procurement Guidance for Grantees](#) document to find more information related to contracting as it relates to grants. *Note that this document is specific to the FPR Outdoor Recreation Grants Program but is applicable to Urban & Community Forestry grants.*

When contracting with any vendor, be sure to solicit written price quotes for all supplies, materials, and workforce/labor. Maintain records from the solicitation of at least three quotes.

Indirect costs:

Indirect costs are eligible for *Urban Tree Planting* mini grants per [2 CFR 200.414](#), but must be included in your project budget and then explicitly named a final grant agreement to claim them. Indirect costs included in your budget can be claimed either **as reimbursement or match (cost-share)**. Applicants may choose **not** to include indirect costs in their budget.

Indirect costs can only be calculated based on “Modified Total Direct Cost” or MTDC. Per [2 CFR 200.1](#): MTDC “means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$50,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$50,000.”

Applicants have two options for budgeting for indirect costs:

- The federal “de minimus” rate. If your organization or municipality does not have a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NIRCA), you can include a flat rate of **15%** of your MTDC in your budget. Since the maximum Communities Caring for Canopy grant award amount is \$20,000 (and thus below the \$50,000 threshold), the “de minimus” rate can be applied to all project costs.
- Your established federal NIRCA. If you have a previously established NICRA with any federal agency, you **MUST** use that rate. In this case, any applicable restrictions, including those about what types of costs the NIRCA applies to, will apply to your Communities Caring for Canopy project. To use a federally established NICRA, you will be required to provide a copy of your NIRCA letter with your full application. The NICRA must be active at the time of grant signatures, and if not, the indirect rate may not be included in the grant agreement. Note that if your organization has a current NIRCA, you are not permitted to use the “de minimus” rate.

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Indirect costs will not need to be itemized any further for reimbursement. This means that applicants do not need to itemize indirect costs or provide itemized receipts for each cost covered by the indirect rate.

Reimbursement for indirect costs should track proportionately to direct project costs. For example, if you're using the 15% "de minimus" rate, with each reimbursement request, you can request 15% of the MTDC included in that reimbursement request. In other words, you can't ask for all your indirect costs up front then submit all your itemized direct costs later.

COST-SHARE REQUIREMENTS

There is no cost-share requirement for the 2027 *Urban Tree Planting mini grant* category. In-kind or cash match may be documented on the grant budget worksheet but is not required.

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by a grant review and selection committee for completeness, feasibility, and eligibility. Refer to the [2027 Urban Tree Planting Application Scoring Guide](#) for full application review criteria.

See our [Urban Tree Planting Mini Grants webpage](#) for the application worksheet and link to the online form application.

Sample applications are available on our [Grant FAQ page](#) as guidance.

Application components:

1. APPLICANT INFORMATION & PROJECT INFORMATION

Provide information such as project and municipal/organizational contacts, Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number, project title, summary, funding request, number of trees proposed to be planted through the project, census block number(s) where trees will be planted, and current canopy cover percentage of census block(s) where trees will be planted.

2. 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 your community or school goals? Include any information that supports a comprehensive understanding of the applicant's situation, e.g. historical context, planning efforts, and who has been or will be involved in making decisions about the project. Limit 4,000 characters.

3. 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 bullet or hyphenated action item a description of what will be done, the intended measurable results, and a timeline. Please be as specific as possible; this list should outline every distinct deliverable of your project and, if awarded, will be the basis for the

Scope of Work of the grant agreement. Note that projects must be completed by November 30th, 2027. Limit 4,000 characters.

4. 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, the 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. If you intend to hire a contractor as part of your project, note that you must follow the procurement policies of your municipality; please do not identify specific contractors in your application. Limit 4,000 characters.

5. OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

How will the public be engaged in the project? In what format will communications about the project be delivered (newsletters, articles, flyers, etc.)? Will the public or any specific stakeholders be asked to provide input about the project; if so, how and at what point in the project's timeline? Limit 4,000 characters.

6. REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

In addition to the application components above, applicants will be required to complete and submit the following application attachments **as separate documents** in a single email to elise.schadler@vermont.gov:

- Project Budget Form
- Completed Risk Assessment Questionnaire
- Current Year Certificate of Insurance
- NICRA – *Optional*
- Supplemental Materials – *Optional*

OPTIONAL AND REQUIRED SITE VISITS

Funded projects may require a pre-grant site visit with a VT UCF staff member to support project success.

Funded projects will require a site visit from VT UCF staff since tree planting is included as a project activity. The project lead will be responsible for scheduling a site visit with VT UCF staff once all the applicable grant activities have been completed, but prior to submitting the final report and invoice. The site visit will serve as a post-planting inspection to ensure that planting specifications were followed; if they were not, corrective actions may be required prior to approval of the final project invoice.

PAYMENT PROCESS

All reimbursement and cost-share project activities must take place:

- in accordance with the terms of the grant agreement,
- after federal and state funding approval, and
- after a grant agreement is fully executed by both the grantee and FPR.

All funds awarded through the *Urban Tree Planting Mini Grant* program will be available for reimbursement payment in accordance with the following schedule:

- Invoices shall be submitted no more than quarterly based on actual project expenses.
- 10% of the maximum award amount will be withheld from the grantee until the project is completed, a site visit is arranged and conducted (if required), and a final report is received and approved by the State.

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

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 receive the check from the State Treasurer's Office.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

Applications will be accepted via the online [2027 Urban Tree Planting Mini Grant Application Form](#). The online form application will accept applications until 5:00pm on Friday, January 29th, 2027.

Note that the online form application cannot be saved or restarted; we suggest that applicants download and use the Grant Application Worksheet linked on the [grant category 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 additional documents are submitted **as separate 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, (802) 522-6015, elise.schadler@vermont.gov

Project Development Questions:

- Joanne Garton, (802) 249-4217, joanne.garton@vermont.gov or
- Adam McCullough, (802) 522-5104, adam.mccullough@vermont.gov.

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

- Thursday, December 3rd, 2026, 12-1pm, [meeting link](#)
- Tuesday, January 5th, 2027, 9-10am, [meeting link](#)

The *Urban Tree Planting mini* grant program is one of the many tools the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program offers to support local tree care and stewardship. Visit our website to learn more: [VTCOMMUNITYFORESTRY.ORG](https://vtcommunityforestry.org)

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is an equal opportunity provider. To file a discrimination complaint, for questions, free language services, or requests for reasonable accommodations, please contact ANR's Nondiscrimination Coordinator at ANR.CivilRights@vermont.gov or visit ANR's online [Notice of Nondiscrimination](#).