



RESILIENT URBAN FORESTS FOR ALL

A Technical and Financial Assistance Package to Help Grow Downtown Trees

Application Overview

The [Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) (VT UCF) recognizes that in many Vermont municipalities, tree planting, and maintenance is guided by local volunteers, community groups, and municipal staff with multiple other duties. Despite attempts to invigorate a sustainable municipal tree program, a good number of our municipalities lack training, funding, and volunteer and staff commitment that ensures a thoughtful and well-supported urban forestry program. **VT UCF is seeking two urban municipal partners willing to utilize technical and financial assistance to invest in their urban forest and the community that cares for it throughout the 2022 calendar year.** This document contains information to support the development of an application for this community assistance program.

Funding for this initiative was provided by the USDA Forest Service through the 2021 State Urban Forest Resilience grant program.

ASSISTANCE PACKAGE OVERVIEW

Partner municipalities will receive a package valued at over \$20,000 that includes:

- A **\$10,000 grant** for strategic tree planting and/or maintenance of existing trees.
- A minimum of **50 hours of direct assistance** from VT UCF's Technical Assistance Coordinator for assessment of needs, plan and program development, and site and tree selection and sourcing, including a minimum of 3 site visits.
- A minimum of **20 hours of VT UCF staff or intern time** spent updating an existing tree inventory or conducting an initial inventory of publicly managed trees.
- **Tree care supplies and resources**, such as irrigation or watering bags, pruners, pole pruners, or printed guides, totaling \$500 in value.
- **1 basic tree** care training for municipal staff.
- **100 free trees** for private property owners through the 2022 Vermont Community Canopy program, run in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation.
- **A Vermont Tree Stewards training** for local youth groups, educators, or volunteers willing to engage with the municipality's urban forestry program in a capacity that best suits the broader community (e.g., after school hours, for a neighborhood association, with a religious or community group, etc.).

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Municipal partners will be required to commit to:

- Providing at least \$2,500 in-kind staff time or cash match.
- Assigning a municipal staff point of contact or the town appointed tree warden who will participate in a minimum of 3 in-person planning meetings.
- Assisting VT UCF staff in coordinating the local Community Canopy tree giveaway program, basic tree care training, and volunteer training and workday.
- Taking intentional steps towards meeting the required standards of the [Tree City USA](#) designation program, as a benchmark for a sustainable urban forestry program. The four standards of Tree City USA designation are:
 - development of a tree board or department
 - drafting and accepting a tree care ordinance or policy
 - an urban forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita
 - an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

WHO MAY APPLY

The intent of the **Resilient Urban Forests for All** assistance package is to support and grow downtown trees and forests in Vermont’s most populated areas in partnership with communities that lack capacity and need assistance in moving their programs forward. Accordingly, eligible municipalities must:

- 1) **Be within a U.S. Census-defined urban area or urban cluster**
- 2) **Must not already be a designated Tree City USA community**

Based on the 2010 U.S. Census and current Tree City USA designations, eligible municipalities* are:

Barre City	Lyndon	Springfield	Westminster
Barre Town	Milton	St. Albans City	West Rutland
Bennington	Newport City	St. Johnsbury	Williamstown
Brattleboro	Northfield	Swanton	Windsor
Castleton	Norwich	Vergennes	
Fair Haven	Rockingham	Waterbury	
Jericho	Shaftsbury	Weathersfield	

This list is consistent with the [Vermont 2010 Population and Housing Unit Counts Report](#), issued July 2012 by the U.S. Census Bureau. Click for more information on [Census definitions](#) and reference maps for [urban areas and urban clusters](#).

**As 2020 [U.S. Census](#) information and data are released, the eligible municipalities list may change. If you would like to discuss your municipality’s eligibility, please contact joanne.garton@vermont.gov.*

Note that 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations may apply in partnership with a municipality but must include a letter of support from the governing entity of the municipality in the application packet.

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

APPLICATION

Municipalities are asked to submit a simple application that provides an overview of needs or gaps in urban forest care and management, describes municipal support and readiness to engage in this community effort and influx of technical and financial assistance, and identifies desired outcomes of the partnership and assistance package.

In addition to the written statements, applicants are encouraged to include supporting materials with the application, including letter of municipal support, maps, and related documents.

Applications are available online at: vtcommunityforestry.org/UrbanForestsForAll

REVIEW

All applications will be reviewed by a selection committee for completeness, eligibility, and demonstration of need. The application review and selection team will be composed of staff from the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program and members of the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Advisory Council.

Municipal partner selection will consider:

- Demonstrated need to build capacity to manage the urban forest at the municipal level.
- Willingness to work towards the [four standards necessary for Tree City USA designation](#).
- Existing or past tree care or management efforts.
- Demonstrated need for urban tree cover through existing metrics such as remote sensing tree cover data, amount of impervious surface area, and dense population centers.
- Historic engagement with the VT UCF program.
- Willingness and ability to find and retain new partners in urban tree care (e.g., local volunteers, youth groups, local storekeepers, municipal staff or officials, employment programs).

ELIGIBLE COSTS FOR \$10,000 GRANT

Funding for this initiative is available from the US Forest Service under Code of Federal Domestic Assistance 10.664, Cooperative Forestry Assistance, Federal Fiscal Year 2021.

Eligible costs for the financial award within the **Resilient Urban Forests for All** assistance package are those necessary for completing the project partnership. Costs must be documented, reasonable, and consistent within the scope of the overarching partnership, in accordance with Uniform Guidance 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E, Cost Principles. Examples include:

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- Costs of services, trees, site preparation, tree protection, and associated supplies necessary for successful tree planting in publicly managed places, including:
 - Costs associated with services, supplies, or materials necessary to establish a new or enhance an existing municipal tree nursery.
 - Costs associated with purchase of equipment to increase the municipality's capacity to plant trees internally and successfully manage a municipal tree nursery. 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 associated with services, supplies, or materials necessary for public tree maintenance.
- Salaries and fringe benefits of people working directly on the project.

COST SHARE REQUIREMENTS

A total of \$2,500 of cost share (match) is required. The match may be in the form of cash, services, or in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions can include the cash value for volunteer assistance in planning and all municipal partner personnel/staff labor as well as the donation of professional services or materials. *Example: The value of volunteer time organizing and implementing the Tree Stewards training 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.

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 emailed **no later than 5pm on Thursday, December 9th, 2021**. Selected municipal partners will be announced by late-December 2021. Signed MOUs and signed grant agreements are anticipated to be available by early 2022. The assistance package and required community match, including required final reports, must be completed by December 31st, 2022.

Restrictions put in place by the State of Vermont in response to COVID-19 may alter the proposed timeline of municipal partnerships. Project start dates and any subsequent deliverable dates in the

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partnership agreements are subject to change. It is the responsibility of the municipality to ensure that any work conducted under this initiative complies with State of Vermont COVID-19 guidance and any related Executive Orders.

PAYMENT PROCESS FOR \$10,000 GRANT

The \$10,000 in granted funds as part of the assistance package will be available for payment on the following schedule:

- Up to one-third of the total award amount may be requested once a grant agreement is in place through submission of an invoice and a written request. Amount requested to be advanced should align with immediate cash needs.
- The remaining balance will be reimbursed upon completion of the tree planting and/or maintenance project and submission of an invoice and final report, with verification of payment of all expenses.

To receive advance payment, the municipality (grantee) will need to attest to having a written procedure outlining how they minimize the time lapse between receipt and expenditure of grant funds. We have added an optional checkbox in the assistance package application to satisfy this requirement if applicants anticipate requesting for advanced payment.

Please note that municipal partners 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.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Due to changes in office occupation, electronic submission of applications is required. Email completed proposal and all other required documents as attachments by 5pm on **Thursday, December 9th, 2021**, to Joanne Garton at joanne.garton@vermont.gov.

Applications will not be accepted past the deadline date and time. VT UCF is not responsible for e-mail delivery that fails.

HELP

For more information or assistance, contact:

Eligibility requirements: Joanne Garton, (802) 249-4217, joanne.garton@vermont.gov

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

Grant funding that supports Vermont municipalities to plan for urban tree care is one of the many resources that the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program offers to support local tree stewardship. Learn more at VTCOMMUNITYFORESTRY.ORG.