



USFS Urban & Community Forestry Program - Funding Application Guide

In April 2023, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) announced a new funding opportunity to enhance equitable urban tree canopy through its [Urban and Community Forestry Program](#). This program, which is funded by a historic \$1.5 billion investment in the Inflation Reduction Act, allows for public and nonprofit entities to plan for and fund tree plantings and maintenance in their communities, support workforce development, and address climate impacts, such as extreme heat, flooding, and storm damage. The deadline for this [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) is **June 1, 2023, 11:59 PM ET**.

American Forests is providing this document to help its community partners with a guide on how to build a successful application, to ensure Tree Equity for all.

Who can apply?

- State and local government entities from the US states, DC, territories, and insular areas
- Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Public and state-controlled higher education institutions

Joint applicants must describe their respective roles within the application.

How much funding is available and how much can we apply for?

There is currently \$1.25 billion available, since \$250 million was allocated to states, for regranting to communities. This round's awards range from \$100,000 to \$50 million per proposal. Each award will have a 5-year term.

What kinds of activities can we use these dollars for and where?

- Community engagement in urban forest planning;
- Tree planting, protection, and maintenance efforts that maximize access to human health, social, ecological, and environmental benefits;
- Long-term planning and assessment of urban canopy;
- Developing paid training, workforce development, and youth employment opportunities;
- Designing systems that encourage climate resilience and adaptation; and
- Advancing the use of tree inventories, monitoring, and assessment tools in priority areas

These projects may be conducted on lands owned by state and local governments, homeowners' associations, private entities, and Tribal/Alaska Native corporations (includes Trust lands).

These dollars **cannot** be used on other federal lands or projects related to land acquisition, construction, capital improvements, basic research, buying equipment, and/or business startup funding.

What kinds of activities are more likely to be funded?

Proposals that align with the priorities set by the USFS and state foresters will have the greatest preference, as shown in [Justice40, your state's Forest Action Plan](#), and/or the [Ten-Year National Urban and Community Forestry Plan](#). The most competitive proposals are those that prioritize



increased equitable access to urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental and economic benefits in disadvantaged communities; broadened community engagement in local urban forest planning; and improved resilience to climate change, pests, extreme weather events.

Application guidance:

1. **Apply early for SAM.gov registration** (if not registered or updated) or partner with an entity with an existing SAM.gov number, as processing can take 10 to 60 days to complete.
2. **Begin the application via the [UCF online grant portal](#)**. Materials can be found in the [forms, templates, and resources section](#). All applications require the 7-page program narrative, budget, budget narrative, SF-424 and SF-424A forms.
3. **Develop a strong project narrative:** Proposals are evaluated using a score out of 100 points, with the greatest weight being placed on the above-mentioned **priority alignment** (30 pts), then by **technical merit, capability and capacity**, and **measurability and expected impact** (20 pts each). **Budget and cost-effectiveness** hold the least weight in the score at 10 pts.
4. **If eligible, use the match waiver:** The Forest Service offers a match waiver if **100% of the activities benefit disadvantaged communities** as determined tools like [CEJST](#), [EJScreen](#), or [EnviroAtlas Interactive Map](#). Otherwise, this award needs to be matched dollar for dollar with non-federal fundings, which means this award can only cover up to 50% of the project cost. Any pass-through entities eligible for a match waiver, must transfer this match waiver to subgrantees.
5. **Submit the application:** Once you have uploaded all of your materials into the portal, submit the application. Award decisions will be released by **September 30, 2023**.

Note on regranting opportunities for communities: Several major national organizations, including American Forests, are applying to be pass-through entities for these federal dollars. These organizations, as well as states that were part of the early \$250 million allocation, will be taking applications after June 2023. If your request is **under \$100,000 or you otherwise believe that your entity could benefit from a later submission**, consider applying through a pass-through entity or your state.

Key resources that can help strengthen your application:

- **[UCF Program Application Guide](#):** Step-by-step guidance for all stages through the application process, especially through the budget section.
- **US Forest Service Webinars on the NOFO:** Recordings of the introductory and follow-up guidance on the application can be found on the USFS [forms, templates, and resources page](#).
- **[Tree Equity Score](#):** This tool created by American Forests allows users to determine which communities face needs to improve Tree Equity using existing tree canopy, employment, income, population density, surface temperature, racial makeup, age, and public health data.
- **State and Federal Program Staff:** For communities in need of additional guidance, reach out to your dedicated State Urban Forestry Coordinator or your Federal Program Manager. Your representative can be found in the “Contact Us” section on the [UCF program website](#).

For more information, please contact **Joel Pannell**, Vice President of Urban Forests Policy at jpannell@americanforests.org.