

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management



Community Challenge Grants 2023

REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS (Notice of Funding Opportunity)

Applications must be submitted electronically
through DFFM's application portal.

Visit our website for more information:
<https://dffm.az.gov/grants/community>

Application Deadline:

No Later than Sunday, November 12th, 2023

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management Urban and Community Forestry Community Challenge Grant Program Grant Guidelines

Project Timeframe:	January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024* <small>*exceptions may apply</small>
Projects Closed:	April 30, 2025 (Final Reports and Reimbursement Requests Due)
Est. Total Program Funding:	\$145,000.00
Award Maximum:	\$50,000.00
Award Minimum:	\$15,000.00
Typical Granting Range:	\$20,000.00 – \$50,000.00
Cost Share/Match Required:	50% (1:1) cost-share from non-federal source
Grant Theme:	<u>Cultural and historical use and value of trees; historic tree preservation; or maintaining connections to historically important trees that are no longer standing</u>
Application Submittal:	https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/1w12wsrekjob5
Application Deadline:	11:59 PM Arizona Time Sunday, November 12th, 2023
Award Notification:	After Wednesday, November 20th, 2023
Questions:	LoriAnne Barnett Warren UCF Program Manager lwarren@dffm.az.gov 602.399.9447

DFFM reserves the right not to accept the following:

- Hand-written applications (except for signature)
- Applications that do not meet the grant criteria
- Incomplete applications

INTRODUCTION

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM) – Urban and Community Forestry in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry, is pleased to offer the Community Challenge Grant program.

Urban and Community Forestry is a cooperative program that focuses on the stewardship of urban natural resources, and this program is designed to encourage projects that promote tree planting, the care of trees, the protection and enhancement of urban and community forest ecosystems, and education on tree issues in cities, towns, and communities across the nation. Community Challenge Grants are awarded through this program to encourage and promote citizen involvement in creating and supporting long-term and sustainable urban and community forestry programs at the local level.

Program Objectives

The Community Challenge Grants are to be used to promote and enhance the quality of Arizona’s urban and community forests. Research project funding is provided as seed dollars. Projects should be aimed at improving the long-term health and care of the urban forest or at initiating new urban forestry projects in Arizona communities that would not otherwise be funded through existing budgets.

State Strategic Goals and Program Priorities

Arizona Forest Action Plan 2020

To be eligible, all proposals must meet at least one of the State’s strategic goals for urban and community forestry outlined in the **Arizona Forest Action Plan 2020**. This document can be found on the Forestry and Community Forestry website (<https://dffm.az.gov/forestry-community-forestry>). Projects should touch on one or more of the following goals relevant to Urban Forestry:

1. **People and Landscapes, Goal 1:** People and communities receive maximum benefits from forests and trees (p. 43)
2. **Ecosystem Health, Goal 1:** Resilient and diverse forest ecosystem structures, processes, and functions (p. 60).
3. **Climate Change, Goal 1:** Increase the resilience of ecosystems to climate change (p. 124).
4. **Climate Change, Goal 3:** Broad public and community understanding of climate change science, Arizona’s variable climate, and current and future impacts (p.125).
5. **Cultural Resources, Goal 1:** Improved communication between all land management agencies, indigenous tribes, and other cultural groups about varying perspectives and beliefs related to forests, trees, and other natural resources (p. 141).

Eligible Applicants

- Units of local government (counties, municipalities, cities, towns, and townships)
- Tribal governments
- Non-profit organizations with 501(c)3 status
- Public educational institutions

Organizations that have previously received any grant from DFFM must be current on their quarterly reporting requirements per their signed grant agreement(s) before receiving a new award. *DFFM does not discriminate against any person or organization because of race, color, religion, disability, sex, age or national origin.*

Grantee Showcase

Each grant recipient will be required to participate in the annual Grantee Showcase during the year their grant is active. The Grantee Showcase typically takes place online every year in September or October. If the event is in person, travel costs associated with attendance and participation in the Grantee Showcase are an eligible budget item (either reimbursable or used as a match toward the grant).

Projects Categories

Well-rounded projects include a scope of work that touches on one or more of the categories listed below.

Proposals should fall under one or more of the seven (7) project categories listed below. Proposals that meet multiple categories are desired and more competitive; those that do not fall into at least one of the categories are ineligible.

The bulleted example projects under each category are listed for your reference. This is a **non-exhaustive list** of possible example projects by category; other projects that fit the category are encouraged. These examples should not be construed as a guarantee of project funding for any year or under any category.

Category 1 – Information and Education

- Arbor Day programs
- Workshops/seminars with an urban forestry emphasis
- Urban forestry reference library development or enhancement
- Arborist and tree worker training classes
- Urban forestry youth programs or education

Category 2 – Planning

- Planning or management document development (e.g., Street-tree Master Plan, Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan)
- Tree ordinance development or revision
- Efforts toward becoming an approved Tree City USA community
- Community forest management or shade master plans
- Urban Forestry Board or commission development

Category 3 – Community and Natural Resources Management

- Asset Management (that includes urban trees)
- Tree inventories (including protocol development)
- Canopy inventories (including protocol development)

Category 4 – Maintenance

- Hazard tree evaluation, removal, and replacement
- Contract pruning using the International Society of Arboriculture standards
- Tree and sidewalk conflict resolution with an emphasis on tree-preservation

- Risk Management programs

Category 5 – Demonstration Projects

- Technology transfer
- Tree habitat implementation and restoration projects
- Market-driven Forest Fire Hazard Reduction in urban-rural interface areas

Category 6 – Climate Change Resiliency

- Strategies that build urban forest resiliency
- Urban forest vulnerability mapping (related to drought, flooding, and other climate change impacts)

Category 7 – Assessment

- Expansion of existing assessments intended to improve understanding of tree growth and maintenance, tree physiology and morphology, and species adaptations in Arizona.
- Projects that further explain the role of urban trees in human health, conserving energy, and mitigating the urban heat island.

Grant Limitations

1. No more than 20% of the *total project dollars* may be used for non-tree plant materials.
2. Funds used to purchase trees as part of the project may not be used to substitute for existing tree planting and care expenditures. Any tree planting project* must include a five-year (5-year) maintenance plan. This maintenance must be funded separately by the applicant. All trees purchased must meet the American Standard for Nursery Stock and Arizona Nursery Association Standards.
3. Indirect costs associated with the proposed activities may not exceed 10% of the reimbursable project costs.
4. All project work must be **completed by March 31, 2025**, unless otherwise authorized by the grant administrator or specified in the grant agreement. Priority may be given to projects able to be completed before this date.
5. This is a reimbursable grant program. At least 50% of the total cost of the project must be contributed by the applicant from sources other than the federal government. This amount may be in cash, services, volunteer time, equipment usage, and/or in-kind contributions. Grant funds will be distributed on a 50% reimbursement basis, and at no time can they be used to cover more than 50% of the project cost. No grant funds will be distributed until project expenditures and local match are incurred. Ten percent (10%) of the funds may be withheld from the final payment until the project is completed and approved by the Urban and Community Forestry representative.
6. Funds may be used for specific projects only and may not be used to meet ordinary operational expenses or to purchase food or beverages.
7. Grant funds cannot be used to purchase capital equipment (i.e., costing >\$5,000). However, they may be used to rent equipment.

***Note: Organizations that receive a grant related to planting must have a Certified Arborist or Certified Landscape Professional (CLP) on hand when the plants are delivered and when planting occurs. If the**

applicant already has either on staff, they may perform this function and credit their time as a match toward their awarded grant.

Federal and State Regulations

Grantees must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, policies, and procedures, including obtaining all permits and approvals necessary to proceed with proposed grant activities. Successful applicants must also comply with all regulations pertaining to Federal Grants. It will be the applicant's responsibility to develop, document, administer, and manage the grant in accordance with all applicable Federal and State laws, including the Federal Government Single Audit Act and all relevant Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars. Awardees will be subject to the OMB requirements and guidance in subparts A through F of 2 CFR 200 as adopted and supplemented by USDA in 2 CFR part 400.

CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) – <http://www.ecfr.gov>. If grantees need assistance obtaining any of these documents in electronic or printed form, please contact DFFM for assistance.

All records for awarded grants must be maintained for five (5) years following final payment or longer if required by law. An audit requirement for all Federal grantees is provided in the Code of Federal Regulations: 2 CFR 200.

SAM Registration

Sub-recipients are required to register with the federal government System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov> before receiving an award. Please allow at least two (2) weeks to apply or renew this registration. Please note DUNS numbers are no longer used. All information is now in the SAM System.

You will need a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from the SAM process, a Taxpayer ID Number (TIN), and financial information to set up an Electronic Funds Transfer. Grantees must also register with the Arizona Department of Administration's Vendor Portal (<https://app.az.gov/>).

Application Submission

Applicants will complete an online application via eCivis with multiple parts. After creating an individual user login, the applicant will complete three required online forms:

1. **Organization Profile Form** – This includes information about the applicant's organization and points of contact.
2. **Application Form** – This includes questions about your proposed project. Several questions are common to most state grant applications. Some questions are specific to this grant program. All questions and required responses are outlined below.
3. **Budget Form** – The budget form details how the requested grant funds and contributed match will support the project.
4. **Attachments** – Letters of support (no more than 5 pages in one file).

Required Attachments

1. **Budget Form** (Required) - 1 form per project (maximum of 2 pages). Applicants **must** use the budget form provided by DFFM. This form asks for financial details about how requested grant funds will be used by the recipient. A 50% match is required. Budget categories include:
 - a. **Administrative Labor** – What personnel will contribute administrative labor? What is their approximate cost per hour?
 - b. **Project Labor (including Fringe Benefits)** – What personnel will contribute project labor? What is their approximate cost per hour? The Project Labor category should be reserved for **staff working for the grantee organization or agency and not contractors**. Fringe Benefits (approximate costs) can be included in the Project Labor category and should be broken out in the description as separate line items. Note: Reimbursement requests must be accompanied by payroll documentation and timesheets.
 - c. **Travel** – Include travel costs necessary for project completion.
 - d. **Equipment** – What equipment is planned for purchase, rental, etc.? (Purchase of capital equipment greater than \$5000 is not allowed in this program). Equipment budgets may include operational costs or equipment rental to implement the project, but they may not include purchasing any capital equipment (valued over \$5,000 per unit).
 - e. **Supplies** – What supplies are needed for the project?
 - f. **Contractual** – What work will be completed by a contractor?
 - g. **Other** – Describe other expected project costs as needed.

Use the Budget Narrative boxes to provide a **mathematical** explanation (not a verbal narrative) of how the dollar figures were calculated. Provide as much mathematical detail as possible (amount per item times the number of items, rate per hour, etc.). Reviewers will evaluate whether the costs are reasonable and necessary to complete the proposed work.

If specific partners have been identified, then *Letters of Partnership or Collaboration* are required—a maximum of 5 pages (8 ½ x 11) in one electronic file.

Grant Review and Ranking

The grant review policy promotes a process whereby each grant application submitted is independently evaluated on its own strengths and merits. Applications will be reviewed by members of the Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council, and Council members may represent organizations that submit applications for funding. If conflicts of interest exist, the following Recusal Procedures will be followed:

Recusal Procedures: Council members with a conflict of interest for specific applicants will be asked to recuse themselves of discussions and ranking of those grant applications. Recusal includes leaving the room during discussions and refraining from influencing council votes through dialogue.

Conflict of Interest: A conflict of interest exists if a review council member, or member of their family, is a director, principal officer, key employee, or member of a committee with delegated

powers who has a direct or indirect financial interest. A person has a financial interest if the individual has, directly or indirectly, any actual or potential ownership, investment, or compensation arrangement with the grant applicant.

Grant reviewers must complete a Community Challenge Grant Application Evaluation Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form, which will be kept on file at the State Forester's Office. Grants awarded are discretionary funds. Recommendations from the review council will be presented to the State Forester for consideration and final funding decision.

Application Evaluation

To be eligible, applications must meet the following *minimum requirements*:

1. The applications must be submitted online by the deadline.
2. Funding requested should fall within the granting range (\$15,000 - \$50,000).
3. The proposal must be consistent with all stated grant limitations.

Scoring Criteria

Applications meeting the minimum requirements listed above will then be evaluated and scored based on how the proposed project meets the following criteria:

1. Fitting this year's grant theme: Cultural and historic use and value of trees; historic tree preservation; or maintaining connections to historically important trees no longer standing. (10 points)
2. Project Need and Justification (10 points)
 - Clearly state the need for work
 - Describe how they will project positively and directly impact urban forest canopy
 - Clearly convey the benefits of this project
 - Describe how the project aligns with AZ Forest Action Plan Goals.
3. Project Outcomes (15 points)
 - Clearly describe your anticipated outcomes
 - Outcomes are the measurable (how many, how much) results of your actions
4. Scope of Work (10 points)
 - How will your project be implemented?
 - Include sufficient detail about your project activities
 - Include a description of who is responsible for completing the work
5. Project Timeline (10 points)
 - Ensure the timeline is reasonable and specific
 - Provide a specific timeline with beginning and end dates that show the project is achievable in 1-1.5 years
 - Describe anticipated quarterly accomplishments or other milestones
6. Collaborative Elements (10 points)
 - Identify the collaborative partners and what each will contribute

- Describe how each partner will contribute to the planning and implementation phases of the project
7. Results and Evaluation Plan (10 points)
 - Provide a clear plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the project
 - How will you assess your success throughout the project timeline, and when will you know if you need to change course, if at all?
 - How will you share your results and impacts?
 8. Sustainability Plan (10 points)
 - Document your plans for making this project's implementation sustainable.
 - How will it be maintained without additional federal and state financial support?
 - What is your long-term commitment to success? What are your long-term goals (3+ years)?
 9. Project Budget and Financials (10 points)
 - Is your budget reasonable and specific?
 - Describe in your narrative mathematically (e.g., how you arrived at those figures in each category)
 - Differentiate between grant share and match
 - Ensure you can provide 50% match
 10. Complete and understandable application (5 points)
 - Is your application complete?
 - Can someone other than you understand what you are trying to achieve?
 - Are your details consistent between all criteria?

***NOTE Priority may be given to projects addressing social justice, shade inequity, and underserved populations.**

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I submit my application?

Applications must be submitted online through the eCivis portal.

https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/1w12wsrekjob5

Do I need letters of support from my Board of Directors or contributors who provide a cash and/or in-kind match with my application?

Letters of intent and signatures from volunteers providing cash or in-kind match are not required. However, letters of support from sponsors, partnering organizations, and community leaders may help your application.

What is the allowable Overhead/ Administration rate?

It is intended that most grant funding is required for specific project implementation and not general organizational support or administrative costs. The expectation is that less than 10% of grant funding will be utilized for general overhead expenses such as administrative labor, accounting, office expenses, etc. These expenses must be allocated to the project and documented as any other direct project expenses. If “Indirect Costs” are proposed, an indirect cost rate plan must already be established by the organization or be permitted under 2 CFR 200 and approved by DFFM before allowance of these expenses. Reimbursement of Indirect Costs greater than 10% will not be allowed.

Can I get funding for a project that has already been funded or started? Can money spent on another previous component be used as a match?

No, previously funded projects and ongoing projects are not eligible. If the proposed project is a second phase or component of a previously funded project, you may apply for Community Challenge Grant funds. Matching funds for another grant project cannot be used.

Will the grant funds be given out at the beginning of the grant cycle?

No, funds are only given out as the project is worked on and monies are spent (reimbursement-based grant). No money will be given out without a fully documented report and supporting paperwork. Match greater than or equal to the costs incurred must be shown before a reimbursement is made.

What is the value of volunteer labor?

Volunteer time may be valued at the local market rate for equivalent work (children aged ≤14 years at minimum wage). Hourly rates exceeding \$20/hour will require specific support documentation for justification and approval. If you use consultants, forestry professionals, planners, etc., who donate their professional services, appropriate hourly rates may be documented in a letter from the individual or their organization.

When will I know if my grant was accepted? What is the next step?

Applicants will receive a confirmation email that their application was submitted. After grant proposals are reviewed, applicants will be notified if their grant requests have been funded. The contract will be emailed to the grant recipients for approval/execution. Billable, funded work on your project cannot begin until you receive a copy of the final executed grant agreement.