Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management

Urban & Community Forestry INFLATION REDUCTION ACT 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 26th, 2023

Project Timeframe: Project work must be completed by March 31, 2027
*exceptions may apply

Projects Closed: <mark>April 31, 2027</mark>
(Final Reports and Reimbursement Requests Due)

Est. Total Program Funding: $5,300,000.00

Award Maximum: $1,000,000.00

Award Minimum: $100,000.00

Typical Granting Range: $200,000.00 – $700,000.00

Cost Share/Match Required: None

Grant Theme: Improving urban forest conditions in disadvantaged communities for climate resilience and heat mitigation

Application Submittal Link: https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/1gl7p6hcmi6d4

Application Deadline: **11:59 PM Arizona Time**
<mark>**Sunday, November 26th, 2023**</mark>

Award Notification: <mark>**After December 4th, 2023**</mark>

Questions: LoriAnne Barnett Warren
Urban & Community Forestry 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 Program, in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service State, Private and Tribal Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program, is pleased to offer funding through the 2023 Inflation Reduction Act.

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

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) authorities in the Inflation Reduction Act are covered under the USDA Forest Service's Justice40 Initiative established through Executive Order 13985. To advance the mission of Justice40, only proposals that support disadvantaged communities, as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CJEST; https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/), will be considered.

The Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management seeks to improve community forest conditions and access to disadvantaged communities, address the backlog of local community forestry work, and position Arizona's community forests as a valuable piece of mitigating climate change impacts and urban heat.

Activities aimed at prioritizing those most vulnerable by increasing tree canopy, long-term tree survival and stewardship, and career opportunities in the face of decreasing water availability, rising temperatures, and fast-paced urban development for residents will be prioritized.

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 on forests, trees, and other natural resources (p. 141).

Disadvantaged Communities: Proposals must directly align with the Inflation Reduction Act and Justice40 priorities by substantially investing in the long-term growth and development of state and local community forestry programs. Applications must clearly describe the scope of work to be performed in applicable disadvantaged communities and identify online vulnerability and environmental justice equity data tools referenced to support a disadvantaged community designation (e.g., White House [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/) (CEJST; https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/), EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen), EPA EnviroAtlas Interactive Map, Opportunity Zones), or other **government-sponsored** vulnerability tools which inform metrics applicable to the scope of work. Multiple tools may be used, but proposals that use CEJST as at least a course filter may receive priority.

Project objectives should include:
1. increased and equitable access to the urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental, and economic benefits in disadvantaged communities,
2. broadened community engagement in local urban forest planning, and
3. improved resilience to urban stressors such as drought, increasing temperatures, decreasing water resources, pests, and expanding urban hardscape.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Projects must conform to laws and authorities in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (Section 9. [16 U.S.C.2105] Urban and Community Forestry Assistance. Costs must conform to 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

1. Who Can Apply:
   Entities eligible to apply for funding under this NOFO include:
   a. State government entity
   b. Units of local government (counties, municipalities, cities, towns, and townships)
   c. Federally and State Recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations as defined in 25 USC 5304 (l) and operating within the United States, or its territories
   d. Non-profit organizations
   e. Public educational institutions
2. Eligible Lands:
   Eligible applicants may apply for funding for a project on non-Federal lands. Lands owned or administered by the federal government are not eligible for this funding opportunity except for lands held in trust for Native American Tribes and individuals (hereinafter Trust lands).

Organizations that have previously received <u>any grant</u> 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

The Grantee Showcase is an event designed to highlight the work on these projects for an audience of stakeholders, including DFFM staff, US Forest Service Staff, other grant awardees, and community members. Each grant recipient is required to participate in an annual Grantee Showcase at least once during the active grant period.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Funding is made available to nature-deprived populations and disadvantaged communities for activities including, but not limited to, urban wood utilization, urban food forests, and workforce development. Below is a list of examples of other eligible activities, **given that they are implemented in disadvantaged communities as designated in the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/)** (CJEST; https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/)**:**

1. Foster individuals, groups, and organizations in the communities served to become engaged participants in urban forest planning, planting, and management, especially those in disadvantaged communities that do not have adequate resources to install or maintain green infrastructure or are underrepresented.
2. Protect, enhance, and expand equitable urban tree canopy cover to maximize community access to human health and social, ecological, and economic benefits, particularly in disadvantaged and nature-deprived communities experiencing low tree canopy cover, extreme heat, and frequent flooding. Improve and increase access to parks and nature in communities.
3. Encourage long-term urban forest planning, assessment, and management.
4. Encourage proactive and systematic maintenance and monitoring of urban trees and forested natural areas to improve forest health; assess risk to forests from pests, disease, and adverse climate impacts; and formulate adaptive management strategies to improve forest resilience.
5. Advance tree and forest inventories, monitoring, and assessment tools in priority areas, including monitoring and measuring extreme heat.
6. Improve preparation for severe storms and the recovery of damaged or deteriorated landscapes to more healthy and resilient conditions.
7. Protect, enhance, and increase access to watersheds in urban and developing areas with a focus on conserving and managing forest patches and green stormwater infrastructure.
8. Provide paid training experiences for urban forestry crews to establish and maintain urban forests into the future. Support youth employment opportunities, including workforce development and training for the creation and maintenance of green jobs and economic opportunities for planning, planting, and sustainably maintaining trees and forests, including training and retaining urban arborists and producing and using urban forest products.
9. Develop paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry.
10. Address exotic invasive pest species that adversely impact urban forests.
11. Work across jurisdictional boundaries, leveraging ideas and resources to increase capacity to provide equitable access to benefits across the larger landscape and at a more significant geographic scale.
12. Aid in planning, goal setting, and skill sharing with other professionals such as urban planners, engineers, educators, and recreational and public health officials.

13. Examples of project activities that are NOT eligible for funding under Urban and Community Forestry Authorities include:
    a. Research: Basic research, as defined in 2CFR 422.1, is "Systematic study directed toward fuller knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and observable facts without specific applications towards processes or products in mind." Note: Technical transfer, education, and outreach activities associated with applying research can be included in the application.).
    b. Construction and capital improvements. Examples of construction include facilities, infrastructure, roads, new buildings, culverts, and boardwalks.
    c. Land acquisition (conservation easement and fee simple) projects.
    d. Small business start-up funding.
    e. Capital equipment purchases. Equipment rental should be considered as an alternative. Capital equipment is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit.
    f. Funds may be used for specific projects only and may not be used to meet ordinary operational expenses or to purchase food or beverages.

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, 2027,** 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. Ten percent (10%) of the funds may be withheld from the final payment until the project is completed and the Final Report submitted and approved by the Urban and Community Forestry representative.
6. The funding source for these grants is the USDA Forest Service, and payments are contingent upon the availability of funds.

Note: Organizations that receive funds for tree planting projects 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. Match is not required, but welcome.

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 as a vendor 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 be used to 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. This NOFO **does not require match**, so applicants may leave those columns blank. 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 $5,000) 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 <u>one electronic file</u>.

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. Funds are awarded through a competitive application process. Grant applications are received, reviewed, scored, and ranked by representatives of the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management and partner agencies / organizations with expertise in Urban Forestry. If conflicts of interest exist, the following Recusal Procedures will be followed:

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

> <u>*Conflict of Interest*</u>*: 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 an <u>Inflation Reduction Act Grant Application Evaluation Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form</u>, which will be 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 ($250,000 - $1,000,000).
3. The proposal must be consistent with all stated grant limitations.

Evaluation will be based on how well proposals meet the defined criteria, objectives, and priorities in this request. The Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management will make final recommendations and approval of awards. Each applicant will be notified by email of the final status of their application. Additional information and instructions will be given to the selected applicants.

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 the theme: Improving the conditions of, and access to, urban forests for disadvantaged communities. The description should include which tool(s)* was/were used to identify the project area as disadvantaged. (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 four 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 (5-7+ years)?

9. Project Budget and Financials (10 points)
   - ▪ Is your budget reasonable?
   - ▪ Is each line item clearly calculated using mathematical descriptions (rather than verbal/narrative descriptions)?
   - ▪ Differentiate between grant share and match, if match is included (match is not required for this RFP)

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?

DFFM will only fund projects that address social justice, shade inequity, and disadvantaged communities. Applicants proposing projects conducted in disadvantaged communities should describe the location using the White House Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST; https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/) in their narrative. Other government-sponsored tools may also be used in addition to CEJST.

** Organizations and entities that have not already received IRA Urban Forestry Funding may be given priority in this process.

AWARD NOTIFICATION

Announcements are anticipated after December 4th, 2023. Applicants will be notified of the status of their proposal after funding decisions are finalized. Upon grant award, a formal agreement will be executed between the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management and each sub-recipient organization.

QUESTIONS

Questions about the application process or program may be directed to:

LoriAnne Warren, U&CF Program Manager

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management
1110 West Washington, Suite 500
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
lwarren@dffm.az.gov
(602) 399-9447

Application materials and other related information are available on the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management website at: https://dffm.az.gov/grants/community

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/1gl7p6hcmi6d4

What is the CEJST Tool, and how do I use it for this application?
Applications must use the White House Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST; https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/) to identify that the work to be performed is in an applicable disadvantaged community. Other online vulnerability and environmental justice equity data tools may be used to support a disadvantaged community designation (e.g., EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen), EPA EnviroAtlas Interactive Map, Opportunity Zones), or other government-sponsored vulnerability tools that inform metrics applicable to the scope of work. Multiple tools may be used.

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. Calculation of the administration rate should be done using the Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) formula.

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. However, if the proposed project is a second phase or component of a previously funded project, you may apply for funds. Matching funds for another grant project cannot be used.

Will the grant funds be given out at the beginning of the grant cycle?
Not generally. Most funds will be 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. However, on a case-by-case basis, DFFM may allow a portion of granted funds to be awarded

directly before work is done. The grantee will be responsible for making a request in writing that includes a justification for the allowance.

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.