



Urban Forest Equity Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions

Contents by Topic

- A. Eligibility
- B. Application submission
- C. Reimbursements
- D. Timeline
- E. Budget
- F. Scoring Criteria

A. Eligibility

1. Are trail revitalization/creation efforts in alignment with the mission of the Urban Forest Equity Grant Program?

Trail revitalization and creation is not an eligible activity through the Urban Forest Equity Grant program. However, you may wish to review Connecticut's Recreational Trails Program [here](#) which does provide funding for trails and related work.

2. Is work in [environmental justice communities](#) as defined by Connecticut's state statute eligible for this program?

Unfortunately, no. This grant program is supported by federal funding through the Inflation Reduction Act, as such, we are required by the US Forest Service to direct funding toward projects that will benefit "disadvantaged communities" as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool ([CJEST](#)). This is a federal tool that is distinct from the communities identified as "environmental justice" by our state statute. While there is some overlap between CT's environmental justice communities and those identified in the CJEST there are some differences, please refer to this [eligibility tool](#) for more information.



3. Does a proposed project need to be solely focused on education/research or can it be tied with forest stewardship/restoration/maintenance efforts?

The proposal needs to have an urban forestry focus but can include a variety of activities within a single proposal so long as there is a clear urban forestry component to all of the proposed activities. For example, a proposal could include a planting, stewardship, invasive removal, and an educational component. Please refer to the scoring criteria and list of eligible projects in the [RFP](#). Also, note that purely scientific research projects are not eligible for funding.

4. Is a tree inventory required to request funding for tree planting?

No, a tree inventory is not required, but if your community has an inventory and is using these or other data to inform your proposed projects, please make sure to note this in your application under the section on “urban forestry goals”.

5. Due to significant impervious pavement coverage in some areas of the disadvantaged community - we are wondering whether hardscape items such as planters, raised beds, etc. are allowable expenses, or whether they might be considered ‘equipment’?

Planting trees in planters/raised beds is not recommended as it is not good for their long-term health and longevity. Where impervious surface limits planting space one option is to include the cost of creating or expanding tree pits to increase the potential plantable area or to try and plant on private property. Tree pit creation or expansion is an eligible cost under this grant program and tree planting on private property is allowed with a sample agreement between the municipality and the homeowner, see [RFP](#) for examples.

6. What if the proposed project site is outside of but bordering a disadvantaged community? Would work in this area be eligible?

Properties directly adjacent to disadvantaged communities are eligible for funding so long as clear benefit to those residents in the disadvantaged communities are demonstrated in the application and efforts are made to engage residents from the disadvantaged community throughout the project – for more guidance on this see the “equity and environmental justice goals” section of the scoring criteria in the [RFP](#).



7. Would it be eligible to conduct a tree planting program only within a disadvantaged area, to serve as a pilot to be replicated across town in the future?

Yes.

8. Which types of trees are acceptable for planting? Are Arborvitae acceptable? Are shrubs acceptable?

This grant program does not explicitly state what species can or cannot be planted (with the exception of invasive species which cannot be planted) nor does the program distinguish between trees versus shrubs. That is to say yes, both arborvitae and shrubs are “acceptable”. However, applicants are encouraged to review the “Urban Forestry Goals” section of the grant scoring criteria in the RFP. That section highlights the need for projects to address urban forestry goals, specifically those stated in [Governor’s Council on Climate Change and Forest Action Plan](#). Those plans stress the need for a diversity of tree species (for example, not planting ONLY planting arborvitae) and the importance of using trees to mitigate extreme heat, maximize carbon storage, etc. (so when possible planting large-statured and long-lived shade trees rather than smaller, short-lived species). There may be situations in which arborvitae or shrub species are the most appropriate species to plant but we encourage all applicants to prioritize planting a diversity of large-statured trees whenever possible given the proportionally higher ecosystem services that they provide.

9. Are grant applications allowed to include more than one eligible area in a municipality?

Yes, as long as all areas included in the grant application meet the program’s eligibility criteria. Our screening tool can help determine which areas are eligible for the Equity Grant Program:

<https://ctdeep.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=14490a5e176e4f5893de798dde852b48>.

10. Are city-wide management plans/inventories eligible for funding in cities that have some CJEST communities but that would be inclusive of non-CJEST designated areas as well?

City-wide management plans/inventories are allowable if the focus is on disadvantaged communities and includes community engagement that collects input to influence decisions. It is also important that the output or the product of the plan is focused on benefiting CEJST communities. Best practices include:

- *Community-wide **Management Plan** needs to include significant and thoroughly-explained and documented community engagement (seeking input to influence*



decisions) and include strategies for improving service to disadvantaged communities. Ideally, upon plan completion, the IRA grant will include implementation of management strategies on the ground solely in disadvantaged communities/census tracts.

- *Community-wide **Tree Inventory** needs to include a management plan and follow the above requirements.*
- *Community-wide **Urban Tree Canopy Assessment** is allowable to identify low-canopied portions of the community. It should be coupled with on the ground tree planting, maintenance, and/or protection measures solely in low-canopied, disadvantaged communities/census tracts.*
- *Community-wide **Ordinance Development or Revision** needs to include significant and thoroughly-explained and documented community engagement (seeking input to influence decisions) and not result in overburdening disadvantaged communities. It should be coupled with on the ground tree planting and related activities solely in disadvantaged communities/census tracts.*

B. Application Submission

1. Is there a way to save work progress on a partially completed application through the online portal?

Unfortunately, no, the web application does not allow you to save and resume your work. The best way to work on the grant application is to complete the individual proposal components (scope of work, urban forestry goals, timeline, etc.) in separate documents and upload all the materials when you are ready to submit.

2. Are separate applications required for separate projects if they have different goals?

No, a single application can include a variety of different activities so long as they all have an urban forestry focus (see question 9). However, reimbursement will only be issued to the grant applicant so if you would like to reimbursement be issued to different entities for different project components (for example a municipality and a non-profit), each entity will need to submit a separate application.

3. If the proposed work will include funding for sub-contracted services, does an estimate or proposal from a sub-contractor need to be included in the application package?

No, you are not required to submit an estimate or proposal from a sub-contractor with your application but are welcome to include these materials in the supplementary



information section of the application if you have them. These documents can be used to help gauge the budget and feasibility of your proposed project.

4. Is a Resolution of the Governing Body required as part of the grant application either prior to or post grant award?

Resolution and proof of insurance will both be required upon grant award but are not needed to submit an application.

5. What is a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and do I need to be registered through SAM.gov in order to obtain one?

A Unique Entity ID, obtained through SAM.gov, allows program staff to determine if applicants have any active exclusions for federal grants. You do not need to be fully registered in SAM.gov in order to obtain a UEI however you will need a UEI to receive funding. You can quickly obtain a UEI without getting a full SAM.gov registration by following the instructions provided on this [link](#).

C. Reimbursements

1. Are there fixed intervals required for submission of reimbursements or are reimbursement requests made continuously as expenses occur?

Upon award we will work with grantees to determine the reimbursement schedule that works best for them. Typically, reimbursements are issued either at project completion or quarterly throughout the duration of the grant. Reimbursement cannot be issued more frequently than monthly during the grant period. Reimbursements must correspond with the expenditures made.

2. Are reimbursements sent directly to nonprofits, or are they sent to the municipality?

Reimbursements are issued directly to the applicant so that can be either a non-profit or municipality depending on who applied.

D. Timeline



1. How long does the grant period last (length of time that work can be done)?

The grant period will begin with contract execution (anticipated at the end of summer/early fall 2024) and will expire on June 29, 2026 so expect just under two years to complete you project.

2. What is the time frame for work to begin?

We anticipate that awarded applicants will have executed contracts late summer/early fall 2024. Work can begin upon contract execution.

3. Will there be other opportunities in the future when this grant will be available again?

At this time, we cannot guarantee that additional rounds of funding for this program will be available.

E. Budget

1. What qualifies as administrative costs? Is there a cap on salaries or personnel costs?

Indirect costs or administrative staff time (labor cost) are considered administrative costs. There is no cap on salaries or personnel costs, but keep in mind that administrative costs cannot exceed 20% of the total amount requested.

2. Is funding supporting labor costs for outreach staff positions such as tree ambassadors?

The cap on administrative cost is only applicable to staff time and/or direct time related to grant administration only. Therefore, any other paid positions not involving grant administrative work will not be capped.

F. Scoring Criteria



1. Will supplementing the funds requested through the Urban Forest Equity Grant Program with additional external grants increase the probabilities of it being awarded?

No, see the specific scoring criteria in the [RFP](#) for guidance on preparing a competitive application.

THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK!

Contact deep.ucf.grants@ct.gov with any additional questions or follow-up