



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## Community Forestry Grant Program

Texas A&M Forest Service  
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College Station, TX 77845  
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<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/communityforestrygrants/>

All applications must be submitted online by **5 PM CDT on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

### ***Introduction***

Texas A&M Forest Service's **Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program** helps communities develop sustainable programs that provide Texans with healthy trees and forests. In cooperation with the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (USFS)**, Texas A&M Forest Service is now accepting proposals for the 2024 Community Forestry Grant Program (CFG). These competitive grants are designed to establish sound urban and community forestry principles that promote the protection and enhancement of urban and community forest ecosystems throughout the state of Texas. By applying for a Community Forestry Grant, applicants can not only make a positive environmental impact but also contribute to the well-being, resilience, and sustainability of the communities they serve.

### ***Objectives and Eligibility***

#### **Grant Program Objectives**

- 1) Integrate Urban and Community Forestry into all scales of planning.
- 2) Promote the role of Urban and Community Forestry in human health and wellness.

- 3) Cultivate diversity, equity, and leadership within the Urban Forestry community.
- 4) Strengthen community forest health and biodiversity for long-term resilience.
- 5) Improve Urban and Community Forest management, maintenance, and stewardship.
- 6) Diversify, leverage, and increase funding for Urban and Community Forestry.
- 7) Increase public awareness and environmental education to promote stewardship.
- 8) Prioritize projects focusing work on extreme heat mitigation, urban wood utilization, urban food forests and workforce development.

### **Eligible Entities**

- Units of local governments (city, town, county)
- Non-profit organizations (501c3) in good standing
- Tribal entities
- State government agencies
- Educational institutions (ISDs, Colleges and Universities)
- Public utility districts (PUD, MUD, etc.)
- Other organizations, such as volunteer groups, neighborhood associations or civic groups which are not 501(c)3 are eligible but must apply in partnership with a non-profit organization or with their local government.

All applicants applying for a federally funded award must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on UEI provided here: <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update>.

### **General Grant Requirements**

Eligible Projects must meet one or more Program Objectives. This competitive Community Forestry Grant Program is intended to support new initiatives, programs, projects, or activities not currently being funded through other sources. This grant program is not intended for the purpose of beautification.

Projects will benefit from having clearly stated goals, well-thought-out budgets, and thoughtfully planned schedules that leverage volunteer support, foster local partnerships, promote development of local community forestry programs, incorporate an educational or technology transfer elements and a long-term focus on goals and benefits. Engagement efforts should ensure that community voices are heard and integrated into project decision-making. The program is designed to support new and innovative initiatives or expand existing programs that would not occur without grant funds. It is not intended to substitute for current funding levels. Applicants may apply for more than one category, however projects must be clearly distinct or only one will be considered. An organization can be a lead applicant for one project and serve as a collaborator for other proposals without penalty. Multiple applications from a single organization, while allowed, is not preferred.

Proposals are required to include a project overview, a project summary detailing goals and objectives, proposed activities, deliverables and outcomes, collaboration with other organizations, innovation, project timeline, and community need, as well as a proposed budget

and matching funds (if required), including cash, volunteers and in-kind.

### **Funding Sources**

There are multiple sources of funding for these grants, including Texas' Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) allocation, however, all are federal sources. Each category has specific requirements so please read the details below. Both matching and non-matching opportunities are available.

### **Matching grants:**

- Match requirements are on a 1:1 ratio, i.e., 50 percent federal, 50 percent non-federal (local) match from eligible groups.
- These non-federal funds cannot be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project. The match may include in-kind contributions, volunteer assistance, and private and public (non-federal) monetary contributions.
- In-kind contributions include: on-hand supplies, third-party donations of supplies or equipment, and the value of time (including fringe benefits) spent by the awardee's staff or volunteers on eligible project activities.
- These are reimbursement-type grants. Awardees will send invoices to Texas A&M Forest Service of eligible expenses as laid out in the grant agreement and be reimbursed by grant funds.
- Reimbursable expenses are direct, out-of-pocket expenditures for eligible project activities that are supported by paid invoices, signed receipts, or official payroll records. The use of in-kind (non-cash) match is valid and encouraged. In-kind match can take the form of volunteer hours, donated materials, donated services, donated office space, or donated equipment associated with the project. Volunteer hours may be applied to the project at rates appropriate to the skill level of the volunteer and/or the nature of the work being performed.
- The base value for adult volunteer time on a project is **\$31.80** per hour. This is the updated rate by the [Independent Sector](#), under the research tab. Staff time applied as either grant share or match must be valued at the employee's regular rate of pay.
- Fringe benefits are also allowable.
- Projects that require match must be completed in 12 months from when the award letter is signed, unless otherwise noted in category description.
- All matching funds must be specifically related to the proposed project. Documentation of all matching funds must be provided before reimbursement of the grant award will be issued.

*Assistance provided by federal employees, or the Texas A&M Forest Service may not be claimed as part of the match.*

### **Match waiver grants:**

- Two grant categories (6 & 7) are eligible for match waiver. These categories are funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and **MUST be used in Federally listed DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES** identified by the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST). CEJST is a geospatial mapping tool to identify census tracts that are overburdened by climate, pollution or other environmental and socioeconomic factors.
- 100% of the work on the ground must take place within CEJST defined disadvantaged communities in order to receive these funds and the match waiver.
- Texas A&M Forest Service, through extensive geospatial analysis that incorporates the CEJST screening, has defined 29 Texas communities as eligible for Category 7, Schoolyard Forests, projects. See the community list and explanation [here](#).
- Up to 20% of the total project budget can be used as administrative costs. These are included in any indirect expenses required by an applying organization. Indirect costs are allowable but supporting documentation is required.
- Acknowledgement of Texas A&M Forest Service and the US Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act Urban and Community Forestry Program contribution is required for printed materials and signage.

### Grant Timeframe

All applications must be submitted online by **5PM CDT on February 16, 2024**.

Applicants will be notified of proposal status in May 2024. Approved projects can begin only after a grant agreement and Federal Assurances are signed by the awardee. All projects must be completed within the specified date of the finalized grant agreement. Some projects that qualify for match waiver may have deliverables over multiple years. Applications for multi-year funding must justify the need for an extended project term and define activities, timeline, and deliverables for each year of the project term. All funds must be encumbered by December 31, 2027. All funding of grants is contingent on federal appropriations.

### **2024 Matching Grant Categories**

#### **CATEGORY 1 – Climate Resiliency**

1 Award for \$50,000

**Description:** The Climate Resiliency grant category is designed to support projects that focus on enhancing the adaptability of urban ecosystems to create more climate-resilient and sustainable Texas communities. With changing environmental conditions, native trees and forests are becoming more vulnerable to pests and diseases and frequent extreme weather events. Grants in this category will address issues of species vulnerability and diversity, especially in historically disadvantaged communities, and develop tools and strategies that not

only increase urban tree cover and the related benefits those communities will receive, but also lead to a more resilient community forest.

### **CATEGORY 2 – Human Health Equity and Accessibility**

1 Award for \$50,000

**Description:** The Human Health Equity and Accessibility grant category is dedicated to supporting projects that aim to improve the well-being of communities by strategically and equitably enhancing their access to greenspaces and promoting public health. Projects funded under this category should have a demonstrable impact on public health and well-being. This could include but is not limited to initiatives that reduce air pollution, mitigate heat island effects, promote physical activity, or improve mental health through nature-based experiences. Successful projects in this category address social determinants of health and work towards creating inclusive, healthy, and vibrant environments for all residents.

### **CATEGORY 3 – Municipal Forester**

1 Award for \$100,000  
with phased funding over three years

**Description:** The Municipal Forester grant category is designed to fund a qualified city forester/arborist position, in a city that has not yet had one, to help support local capacity and advance urban and community forestry initiatives at the local level. The applicant should outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the Municipal Forester position within their organization. This may include duties like community forest management, tree planting, care and maintenance, policy development, community engagement, and coordination with relevant departments.

#### **Education, Experience and Certification Requirements**

Texas A&M Forest Service must approve the position description before any hiring with grant funds can take place. Minimum requirements for Municipal Forester position should include:

- A bachelor's degree in forestry, urban forestry, arboriculture, horticulture, or a natural resource related field approved by the Texas A&M Forest Service.
- Demonstrated at least two years of proficiency in community in forest management including tree planting, care, pruning and maintenance techniques to ensure the long-term health of community trees.
- Experience managing tree inventories, conducting tree risk assessments, and implementing tree care programs is preferred.
- A Certified Arborist recognized by International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) or able to obtain certification over the three-year grant cycle.

In addition to these qualifications and expertise areas, a successful Municipal Forester should also have a passion for trees and a commitment to enhancing the forest for the well-being of the community and the environment. They should be adaptable, able to work in a team, and capable of making informed decisions to manage and protect urban and community forests effectively.

**Funding schedule:**

Funding for this grant will be phased over three years. Grant funds will pay:

- \$50,000 in year one
- \$25,000 in year two
- \$25,000 in year three

This phased approach helps ensure the long-term sustainability of the position.

**CATEGORY 4 – Tree City USA and Growth Awards**

Up to 10 Awards, for up to \$10,000 each

**Description:** The Tree City USA and Growth Awards grant category is specifically designed to recognize, support, and further enhance the efforts of municipalities that have achieved or are striving to achieve Tree City USA or Growth Award designation. This grant category seeks to promote sustainable urban forestry practices, community engagement, and the growth of U&CF initiatives. This grant category will support small projects up to \$10,000 with a minimum of \$5,000 to help a city meet the standards for designation as a TCUSA and to reach the next level by implementing activities leading to Growth Awards.

**What are Tree City USA and the Growth Awards?**

[Tree City USA](#), is a national recognition program founded by the Arbor Day Foundation and carried out in partnership with State Forestry Agencies. The Tree City USA program provides communities with a four-step framework that establishes a minimum baseline for U&CF management.

[Growth Awards](#) are presented by the Arbor Day Foundation to participating Tree City USA communities that demonstrate higher levels of tree care and community engagement during the calendar year. The Growth Awards recognize major milestones and annual activities in five categories that combine to build sustainable community forestry programs over the long term. Each activity has a value between 1 and 10 points, and communities must document activities that total at least 10 points—from any of the subcategories—to receive the Growth Award for the calendar year. **First-time Tree City USA applicants are not eligible for a Growth Award.**

**CATEGORY 5 – Tree Planting**

Up to 10 Awards, for up to \$20,000 each

**Description:** The Tree Planting grant category is dedicated to supporting initiatives that increase urban and community tree canopy coverage, engage the community, and promote the

many benefits of trees in built environments. This category plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life in cities and towns by improving environmental conditions, resilience, and public health. Funding will be given to communities that implement tree planting programs that address one or more urban sustainability issues identified in the [Texas Forest Action Plan](#), specifically climate, energy consumption, and water quality. All tree planting with grant funds shall adhere to Appendix A (Appendix to be drafted to instruct awardees on specific planting specifications and how to select, plant, and care for young trees.) Failure to follow the Standards in Appendix A will lead Texas A&M Forest Service to require replacement of the trees at the awardee's cost.

All grant funded tree planting programs must demonstrate the following in their proposals:

- **Tree Species Selection:** This grant will support the selection and planting of a diverse range of tree species that are well-suited to the local climate, soil conditions, and environment. Emphasis is placed on species that provide ecological benefits, such as improving air quality, supporting wildlife, and mitigating climate impacts. Texas A&M Forest Service must approve the final planting list.
- **Location and Target Areas:** Applicants must define the specific target areas or neighborhoods where tree planting efforts will take place. Priority will be given to proposals that best justify how trees planted in that area addresses one or more of the urban sustainability issues defined in the Texas Forest Action Plan
- **Tree Planting Methodology:** Applicant will describe the planting techniques and best practices for their planting plan, including proper tree planting depth, spacing, mulching, and post-planting care to ensure tree survival and growth.
- **Watering and Long-Term Maintenance:** Applicant must outline a forest management plan they will implement for the planting program's ongoing maintenance and care of newly planted trees. This should include a schedule for watering, maintenance, and protection from human interaction, pests and diseases. Grant funds are eligible to pay for watering and maintenance costs.

**Priority will be given to projects that fall within:**

- Any of the [65 Planting Priority Cities](#), as identified by Texas A&M Forest Service
- 100% CJEST defined areas of communities that are over 900,000 in population

### **2024 Match Waiver Grant Categories**

#### **CATEGORY 6 – Geospatial Analysis 65**

1 Award for \$550,000

**Description:** This grant category is aimed at harnessing advanced geospatial technology and data analysis to strategically identify and recommend tree planting locations within all of the 65 Planting Priority Cities identified by Texas A&M Forest Service as areas of the utmost need, where strategic tree planting can generate the most substantial positive outcomes for maximum impact on the local environment and community. From these analyses, reports and maps of urgent and high priority planting and placemaking areas will be developed at city and

council district levels to identify and facilitate prioritization of high-impact tree planting locations.

**A successful applicant will:**

- Clearly outline a budget and timeline for conducting the geospatial analysis, acquiring necessary data, and completion of all deliverables.
- Integrate cutting-edge geospatial technology, such as GIS, remote sensing, and spatial data analysis, to identify, analyze and rank potential tree planting sites at a hyperlocal level.
- Gather and analyze relevant environmental and socioeconomic data, including information on land use, soil quality, climate, existing tree canopy coverage and species composition, demographic factors, and environmental conditions to inform tree planting decisions. Analysis must incorporate Forest Inventory Analysis data, Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives methodology (provided by Texas A&M Forest Service), and other relevant data layer.
- Ground verification is required. This can include boots on the ground, drive through site evaluations or high-resolution imagery from at least the past six months. Ground truth methodology must be described in the application and approved by the Texas A&M Forest Service before award.
- Demonstrate added value to the project deliverables beyond tangible benefits and positive impact of trees being planted in these prioritized areas. This can be achieved by incorporating relevant software, visualizations, technologies and/or other design elements that will help showcase the environmental, social, and economic advantages of tree planting within the geospatial analyses.

**Deliverables include:**

- Digital and physical maps and reports prioritizing planting locations for all 65 communities at the census block level.
- Maps and reports are for priority locations within a single community, not prioritizing sites across the other 65 communities.
- Specific reporting for planting areas at the census block level for each urban sustainability goal of the Forest Action Plan for all 65 communities. Each community will have priority planting locations for:
  - Heat island reductions
  - Carbon capture
  - Air Quality improvements
  - Public Health (includes HTHL methodology)
  - Watershed improvement (flooding and stormwater reduction, water quality improvements)
  - Others as proposed by applicant
  - Composite of all of the above
- An online dashboard through ArcGIS Online or another mapping software cataloging all 65 communities and the analyses prioritizing that location. Users should be able to turn



off different layers to interact with specific sustainability goals (carbon, heat, water, public health, etc).

- All maps and reports must be accessible online in perpetuity for the public to access at no cost.

### **CATEGORY 7 – Schoolyard Forests**

Up to 5 Awards for up to \$3,120,000 each

#### **Description:**

The purpose of this category is to create forested schoolyards that provide treed nature exposure and accessibility within our most vulnerable communities across Texas and improve the health, well-being, and educational opportunity of children in these communities. These schoolyard forests will serve as neighborhood greenspaces, providing after school-hours accessibility. Projects will invest in nature-based climate solutions that deliver multiple benefits such as helping to alleviate extreme heat, improving the immediate environment for students as well as supporting outdoor learning and environmental literacy, improving functionality of urban forests, arresting the decline of urban forest resources, increasing climate change resilience, improving the quality of the environment in urban areas, and optimizing co-benefits to surrounding urban residents. Only communities listed in the 29 Crucial Greening Communities are eligible for this category. A breakdown of these communities can be found [here](#). Each award is up to \$3,120,000 for 8 schoolyard forest transformations within a single city at \$390,000 per school.

5 Schools = \$1,950,000

6 Schools = \$2,340,000

7 Schools = \$2,730,000

8 Schools = \$3,120,000

#### **Project Eligibility and Requirements**

These criteria must be met for a project to be eligible:

- Projects shall include the planting of trees to bring campus tree canopy to 30% and may include converting pavement to green spaces on school campuses with a focus on child-accessible areas of campus.
- Projects may also include strategies such as the installment of natural features for learning and recess such as pocket forests, rain gardens, natural playgrounds, outdoor classrooms and activity stations and shall include maintenance of planted vegetation for the duration of their expected life span.
- Public access after school hours to increase accessibility and nature gathering in these prioritized communities.
- A management plan shall be required for the watering and maintenance of the respective area to ensure student safety, including activities such as clean up or inspection after public use and prior to student use.

- Applicants shall obtain a memorandum of understanding (MOU), resolution, certified letter, or other agreement format as approved by Texas A&M Forest Service from the Independent School District (ISD) supporting the project before being awarded a grant. An ISD can write multiple MOUs for separate applicants.
- Each school campus included in the project will be expected to form a group of staff, including the respective school principal, grounds management, and teachers, to support the implementation of the project, help optimize the benefits to students and staff, and ensure long-term success of the project.
- Projects shall incorporate shade tree plantings and may incorporate the conversion of pavement to green spaces on school campuses with a priority on the child-accessible areas of campus in the campus design.
- Texas A&M Forest Service staff shall be invited to participate in project planning meetings with school community members. Meeting sign-in sheets shall be submitted as part of progress reporting.
- Projects shall include a Forest Literacy curriculum component for students, teachers and other members of the campus community. Forest Literacy messaging must be approved by the Texas A&M Forest Service.

In addition, the following shall be required once project is awarded:

- The Awardee must work with the school district and campus to develop policies, best practices, and necessary staffing for tree/landscape maintenance, budget, and goals expressed and adopted in long-term plans.
- Awardees must comply in all respects with all applicable local and county ordinances, and all applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
- Awardees shall maintain and operate the project developed pursuant to the grant long term; evidence of adequate long-term care for the trees and other nature-based solution features must be shown.
- Tree planting within the project shall adhere to Appendix A (Appendix to be drafted to instruct awardees on specific planting specifications and how to select, plant, and care for young trees.) Failure to follow the Standards in Appendix A will lead Texas A&M Forest Service to require replacement of the trees at the awardee's cost.
- All campus designs must be created or approved by a landscape architect or other qualified professional.
- Awardees must show proof of having an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborist or other qualified, Agency approved, professional on staff or as consultant during project design, species selection, and project implementation including ensuring quality stock is being planted.
- Trees and plant materials selected shall be climate appropriate and well suited to the site and must be approved by Texas A&M Forest Service.

### **Eligible Project Costs**

Grant funds may be used to support project costs including, but not limited to, planning, permitting, environmental assessment, design, pavement removal, soil testing, remediation of hazardous materials from pavement removal, water-efficient irrigation, and project maintenance.

- Trees, plants, and planting materials
  - Trees in the 15-gallon container size are eligible. Balled and burlapped and bare-root tree stock are also eligible if the size and quality are equivalent.
  - Smaller containerized stock, seedlings, and direct seeding may also be considered by Texas A&M Forest Service in situations where appropriate.
  - Larger sized trees may be considered by Texas A&M Forest Service if adequate justification is provided.
  - Other larger container sizes may be considered by Texas A&M Forest Service in situations where appropriate.
  - Focus shall be on shade trees. The largest stature species suitable for a site should be chosen.
  - Justification of any alternative tree size and species should be based on co-benefits and must be approved by Texas A&M Forest Service. Such co-benefits may include hands-on learning opportunities related to food production as part of a school garden or other designated learning space.
  - Site appropriate accompanying plants in sizes justified for the project.
  - Planting materials may be: Stakes, ties, and root collar protectors proportional to number of trees being planted; grow tubes for small container, seedling and direct seeding; wood chip surface mulch, soil amendments in areas of hard clay soil or sandy soil; soil where needed to complete backfill; watering tools, cost effective water-efficient irrigation system supplies; and hand tools.
- Activity stations and hardscapes:
  - Removal of pavement/asphalt
  - Installation of activity stations, hardscape, fencing, and sitting areas to support outdoor learning spaces as relevant to the project. All hardscaping with project funds must be approved in advance by Texas A&M Forest Service.
  - USFS policy provides support for asphalt/concrete removal as needed to provide a reasonable rooting area for tree establishment and sustained health of the tree (mature canopy spread as an area guide), particularly if soil replacement was deemed necessary and part of the scope of work. Removal of an asphalt playground to plant a few trees and turf grass would not be considered eligible costs.
  - Creating of ADA-compliant path of travel.
- Labor directly related to the project:
  - Includes young tree establishment costs such as: structural pruning, stake adjustment and removal, and water-wise irrigation. May also include staff hiring or training.
- Contracts or services for inventory, monitoring, or planning
  - Costs for collection of current tree inventory data, monitoring/work order databases, or development of plans, procedures, best practices, or standards.

- Administrative costs:
  - Administrative costs directly related to the implementation of the project are eligible but must be justified and shall not exceed 20% of total award.
- Education and signage:
  - Purchase, development and distribution of education materials and curricula, or events may be funded pending relevance to the scope of the proposed project.
  - Funding source and program sign construction and materials.
  - Texas A&M Forest Service staff will approve signage plans on a case-by-case basis.
- Concrete removal and other special concerns:
  - In projects where impervious surfaces are being converted to green spaces or expansions of existing planting sites, the costs for removal of asphalt, concrete paving, and/or other hardscape is eligible. If hardscape cuts are to be made, they must create at least 36 square feet of open space for a single tree planting. Larger is preferred.
  - Soils testing to determine the needs for the site are eligible.
  - Remediation of hazardous materials exposed during pavement removal are eligible.
  - Water-efficient irrigation supplies or system components are eligible.

### **Ineligible Project Costs**

The following practices will not be funded by this grant program:

- Planting trees that require excessive maintenance such as: excessive long-term watering, fertilizing, exterminating, or controlling plant pests and diseases to survive.
- Projects that plant trees that will eventually conflict with overhead or underground utilities or ground-located infrastructure.
- Planting invasive species as determined by Texas A&M Forest Service
- Projects that use synthetic fertilizer. Organic fertilizers (e.g., compost, manure) may be used.
- Projects that will supplant a locally funded budget item rather than supplement it.
- Property acquisitions.
- Project elements that are purely aesthetic.

### **Proposal Format and Funding Availability**

Applications may be found at <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/communityforestrygrants/>. There are 7 available categories (matching grants up to \$100,000 and non-matching grants up to over \$3 million per project). Applications are online forms with multiple sections. Applicants will provide short responses with limited character count for each of the following sections.

- Contact Info
- Partnering Organizations and Collaboration
- Overview of Project

- Goals and Objectives
- Proposed Activities
- Organizational Experience Completing Similar Projects
- Deliverables, Timeline, Outputs and Outcomes
- Innovation
- Project Budget
  - Personnel
  - Fringe
  - Travel
  - Supplies
  - Contractual
  - Other Expenses

**Attached Documentation Required:**

- Texas W9
- Maps
- Other documentation as required by category.

Texas A&M Forest Service reserves the right to reject and approve partial funding for any and all proposals. Records must be maintained for at least 5 years following final payment. Texas A&M Forest Service assumes no liability for any contractors, volunteers, or local government employees working on any projects.

**Ineligible Expenses For All Grants**

- Purchase of machinery, equipment, or real estate
- Construction
- Purchase of food, snacks, or beverages
- Gift cards
- Purchase of plant material classified as invasive species
- Costs that are not incurred during the grant award period
- Costs not approved by Texas A&M Forest Service during award or grant modification
- Overhead and/or indirect costs are not allowed, except for Categories 6 and 7.

**Funding Criteria and Proposal Review**

Community Forestry Grant Program funds will be awarded on a competitive basis by category. A multi-organizational committee will evaluate proposals. Proposals ranking will be based on the following criteria:

- ✓ Clearly defined purpose or objective of project
- ✓ Goals, purpose, or mission statement of the applicant is clear
- ✓ The degree to which the project meets a local need, provides community improvement, and supports the Texas Forest Action Plan

- ✓ Level of community engagement and volunteer involvement
- ✓ Local visibility or awareness of the project
- ✓ Sustainability of the project after the grant period
- ✓ Long-term benefit of the project
- ✓ Clarity of budget presentation
- ✓ Cost effectiveness
- ✓ Appropriate proposed time frame for completion of the project
- ✓ Demonstrated ability of the applicant to follow through on project completion

### **Payment Process**

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a reimbursement basis after verification of match and in accordance with a payment schedule agreed to in advance. Awardees must file a *Request for Reimbursement* (included in award paperwork package) and send records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs to the Texas A&M Forest Service

### **Project Inspection, Reporting, & Payment**

Periodic progress reports and a Final Report are required of the awardee. The schedule and content of final and periodic reports will be set in advance of initiating the project.

### **Review of Projects**

Texas A&M Forest Service reserves the right to inspect projects at any time. All educational materials (written or video) developed as part of a grant project must be reviewed by Texas A&M Forest Service prior to final printing to ensure that appropriate standards are met, that proper credit is given to Texas A&M Forest Service and the U.S. Forest Service, and that an appropriate non-discrimination statement is included. Project work not in compliance must be corrected before the work is approved and grant payments will be made.

Records must be maintained according to federal regulations. The financial management system of the awardees shall meet the following standards:

1. Records shall comply with generally accepted accounting principles.
2. Records will document allowable costs.
3. Records will include source documentation such as canceled checks (front and back) or "paid" receipts, itemized invoices, purchase orders, payrolls, time and attendance records, contracts, etc. Invoices must be marked paid and reflect how payment was made.
4. Records will be maintained for 5 years following final payment.

### **Payments to Grant Recipients**

No payments will be made until the proper paperwork has been submitted. This includes a signed grant application and technical proposal, appropriate authorization for the project, executed contracts and agreements, and a project completion report.

Payments will be made as reimbursement for approved project expenditures. Texas A&M Forest Service will review all reports for concurrence with the values placed on in-kind contributions by the Awardee or by third parties.

**Reimbursement** is defined as an after-the-fact grant payment representing the federal/state share (50%) of the project's actual costs, not to exceed the amount originally approved or the out-of-pocket expenditures.

### **Project Completion Report**

Within 60 days after the close of the grant or completion of the project, the Awardee must submit to Texas A&M Forest Service an accounting of the project that will include:

- A final report detailing the accomplishments of the project and any publicity it generated. Three copies of any materials produced through the grant must be included as part of the report.
- A cost summary listing all eligible costs of the project, both federal and local contributions, including cash purchases, in-kind labor charges, and donated items.
- Supporting documentation. For cash purchases, this includes copies of all invoices and cancelled checks, or some other proof-of-purchase. For in-kind labor and equipment charges, this includes individual work records. For donated items or services, this includes signed donation letters stating the fair market value of the donated item.
- All progress and final reports shall be sent to [CommunityForestryGrants@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:CommunityForestryGrants@tfs.tamu.edu) and must be signed and dated by the authorized representative of the organization to which the grant was awarded.

### **Execution of Agreements and Documents**

Awardees will enter into a contract, called the Grant Agreement, with Texas A&M Forest Service. This document will stipulate what is to be accomplished with the grant, the payment terms for the grant, the methods used to determine compliance, any penalties or actions that Texas A&M Forest Service will take in the event of noncompliance and releases the agency from any liability associated with contractors, volunteers, or city employees working on this project. The state forester will execute all necessary agreements on behalf of the agency.

As part of the Grant Agreement, each Awardee must sign several documents grouped together as Assurances and Certifications, which describe the federal laws with which it must comply. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all documents are fully executed within a period of 30 days after receiving the contract packet. Failure to comply with this schedule may result in the grant offer being withdrawn.

### **Federal and State Regulations**

Awardee agrees to comply with the federal cost and administrative regulations found in the OMB Uniform Guidance published December 26, 2014. Administrative regulations can be located at: [http://whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_default/](http://whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_default/) Cost principles can be located at: <http://gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>. Forms can be found at [http://www.ocio.usda.gov/forms/ocio\\_forms.html](http://www.ocio.usda.gov/forms/ocio_forms.html) or <http://search.usda.gov>.

All applicants applying for a federally funded award must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on UEI provided

here: <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update>

### **Inflation Reduction Act**

Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (a). State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) appropriated \$1,500,000,000 to provide multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants. Of this total allocation \$21,750,000 was allocated to Texas to be distributed over a 5-year period. Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) is also covered under the Agency's Justice40 Initiative established through Executive Order 13985. To advance the mission of Justice40, proposals that deliver the benefits of IRA investments through established partnerships with local organizations working to support disadvantaged communities will receive priority consideration. USDA is a partner on the Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Promoting Equitable Access to Nature in Nature-Deprived Communities, which seeks to reduce the number of people without access to parks and nature in their communities. The America the Beautiful Initiative supports the prioritization of locally led conservation and park projects in communities that disproportionately lack access to nature and its benefits.

### **Grant Preparation Assistance**

Assistance in developing proposals is available to all potential applicants. We will also provide guidance as to a project's suitability under this program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss potential projects before proposal submittal. Contact information below:

**Mac Martin, Urban and Community Forestry Program Leader**

Phone: 979-402-1339, Email: [CommunityForestryGrants@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:CommunityForestryGrants@tfs.tamu.edu)

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Questions about applications or access issues with the Survey123 application platform please reach out to our Grants Specialist. Contact information below.

**Kate Faris, Urban and Community Forestry Grants Specialist**

Phone 979-458-6660, Email: [CommunityForestryGrants@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:CommunityForestryGrants@tfs.tamu.edu)

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