

Texas A&M Forest Service

2024 Community Forestry Grants

Guidance Document

Version 1.3

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Proposals Due February 16, 2024

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1.0 Welcome

The Guidance Document is a manual developed and created to support applicants interested in Texas A&M Forest Service Community Forestry Grants. The Guidance Document is available to all applicants and is considered a “living” document, where topical periodic updates will occur to facilitate the application process and help make it more transparent to potential applicants. These updates will be reflected in the version number on the first page of the Guidance Document and e-notified via our [Community Forestry Grants Newsletter](#).

In preparation of this Guidance Document, we have reviewed common concerns for guidance documents delivered by government agencies, provided and disseminated by the [Administrative Conference of the United States](#). Consequently, this Guidance Document contains relevant topics and resources to submit a grant proposal, is up-to-date, accessible and comprehensible to a wide audience.

The Texas A&M Forest Service expresses sincere thanks and appreciation to Dr. Mary Gardiner from Ohio State University for allowing us to utilize her 2023 Texas Tree Conference presentation: “Writing and Revising Successful Grant Proposals.”

1.1 Introduction to Community Forestry Grants

Texas A&M Forest Service’s Community Forestry Program helps communities develop sustainable programs that provide Texans with healthy trees and forests. With generous support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, the 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 sustain and enhance urban and community forest ecosystems throughout the state of Texas. By applying for a Community Forestry Grant (CFG), applicants can not only make a positive environmental impact but also contribute to the well-being, resilience, and sustainability of communities where they live, work and play.

1.1.1 Texas A&M Forest Service

Texas A&M Forest Service conserves and protects the resources and lands of the Lone Star State. Conserving Texas’ trees and forests, the state agency helps property owners maintain land and natural resources to ensure forestlands remain productive and healthy not only for the environment, but for generations of Texans to come.

Texas A&M Forest Service is also one of the lead agencies for incident management in the state. From the initial response to ongoing recovery, the agency strives to protect Texas from wildfire and other types of disasters. Texas A&M Forest Service does this by not only fighting wildfire and responding to incidents, but also by building capacity and increasing public awareness about community protection and wildfire prevention.

In partnership with other agencies, local governments and fire departments, Texas A&M Forest Service provides programs to aid communities across the state, giving them tools and resources to actively protect themselves and their properties.

How Texas A&M Forest Service was established:

Texas A&M Forest Service was created in 1915 out of a need for a conservation plan and state forester for Texas. In November 1914, W. Goodrich Jones and conservation-minded leaders in Temple, Texas created the Texas Forestry Association, a non-partisan, non-profit organization and lobbied to form a state forestry agency and develop a statewide plan for forest conservation.

Texas lawmakers created a new state agency and entrusted in it the responsibilities of monitoring and protecting the state's forests. March 31, 1915, House Bill No. 9, An Act to Promote Forest Interests in the State created the Department of Forestry, subsequently renamed Texas Forest Service and now called Texas A&M Forest Service.

The legislative authority of Texas A&M Forest Service

The 34th Texas Legislature mandated Texas A&M Forest Service to “assume direction of all forest interests and all matters pertaining to forestry within the jurisdiction of the state.” And in 1993, the 73rd Texas Legislature expanded Texas A&M Forest Service responsibility to include “Coordination of the response to each major or potentially major wildland fire in the state.” During all-hazard state emergencies, the State Emergency Management Plan calls for Texas A&M Forest Service to work with the Texas Division of Emergency Management to develop regional Incident Management Teams.

How Texas A&M Forest Service fits into Texas A&M System and state government:

Each state in the United States has a forestry agency; Texas was the first in the nation to establish its state forestry agency as part of a land-grant college. Four other states have since done the same. Texas A&M Forest Service is one of seven Texas state agencies headquartered not in Austin—but in College Station, Texas.

Signed into law in 1862, the Morrill Act fostered the land-grant mission, and has provided a broad segment of the population with a practical education that has direct relevance to their daily lives through research, teaching, extension and service. Texas A&M Forest Service embodies the service component of this land-grant institution and of Texas A&M AgriLife.

1.1.1.1 Community Forestry Program

Texas is a rapidly urbanizing state. Partnerships between cities, non-profits, the state, and other stakeholders are key to care for urban and community forests - the collective trees and associated plants where we live, work, and play.

Texas A&M Forest Service has a network of regional urban foresters and ecologists across the state. We monitor, measure and assess changes to the state's urban forests over time, and with the help of our partners, we provide urban forestry and arboricultural educational opportunities and technical assistance.

Trees are a vital component of the solution to issues that cities face, including energy use, air pollution, flooding, water quality, human health, student engagement and performance, and even crime.

1.1.1.2 Points of Contact

For questions regarding general Urban & Community Forestry Assistance and to find your Regional Urban Forester/Woodland Ecologist, please refer to our [Community Forestry Program Map](#).

If you have questions regarding grants, your application or other topics related to our Community Forestry Grants, please review the following contact information and resources:

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

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

1.1.1.3 2020 Texas Forest Action Plan

Texas, like other states, regularly assesses the forest conditions and trends within the state, delineating priority forest landscapes, and identifying the issues, threats, and opportunities facing these landscapes. Five primary issues have been identified as current concerns in Texas:

- Wildfire and Public Safety
- Central Texas Woodlands Conservation
- Sustainability of Forest Resources in East Texas
- Urban Forest Sustainability
- Water Resources

From this assessment, a forest resource strategy was developed to address these issues. Together, the assessment and strategy make up the Texas Forest Action Plan. The plan incorporates three national themes: conserve working forests, protect forests from harm, and enhance public benefits from trees and forests.

The CFG Program is designed to support the issues and objectives of the Texas Forest Action Plan. Please access the 2020 Texas Forest Action Plan documents at the following link:

[2020 Texas Forest Action Plan](#)

1.1.2 Request for Proposal (RFP)

Texas A&M Forest Service Community Forestry Grant Program Request for Proposal can be found at <https://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/CFG/CommunityForestryGrants2024RFP.pdf>.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) is a broad legal document that includes specific requirements which has been determined by a grant-dispersing entity (in this case, Texas A&M Forest Service). The RFP details the objectives of the program, eligible entities, general grant requirements, funding sources, matching and non-matching grants, the timeframe, grant categories, funding, payments and final reports.

The RFP allows the Texas A&M Forest Service to officially notify potential applicants for the funding period and grant opportunities. When this document is released, it means that the background processes for applying have begun! Potential applicants should download the RFP, carefully examine the available grant categories (Section 1.2), Read the Requirements (Section 1.3) and Build a Team & Brainstorm (Section 1.4) to prepare for the upcoming grant application cycle.

1.1.3 Letters & Memorandums

Letters of Intent (LOI) and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) are similar in their use, but fundamentally differ due to their legal status. For the purposes of Texas A&M Forest Service Community Forestry Grants, LOIs or MOUs are only required for the Schoolyard Forests Grant. The educational institutions that applicants will be working with will likely have the resources and experience to determine what is more accurate and appropriate for their purposes.

Both documents broadly describe the goals and duties of partners on the application and how they will be working together to accomplish a project. When submitting a LOI or MOU, it should be clear to the grant-dispersing entity that partnered applicants have discussed the project, are aware of each organization's participation, each organization's goals have been made apparent and are aligned, general duties have been distributed among the organizations.

Potential applicants may be familiar with Letters of Recommendation (LOR), which is similar but also differs from a Letter of Intent (LOI). A LOR is written by an individual or organization enumerating specific skills or qualifications of an individual or entity that they are working with. However, a LOI is sourced from an entity (individual, organization or otherwise) stating that they are expressing interest or intent that they are working with another entity for the purpose of working within a project. These letters differ from an MOU due to their legal standing in a court of law; LORs and LOIs are not legally binding.

MOUs are legally binding in a court of law and provide documentation which demonstrates that partners are aware of the grant activities and have come to an agreement of roles and that a legal contract is imminent.

1.1.4 Website Navigation

The [Community Forestry Grants Webpage](#) has a plethora of resources to assist in your proposal process for the Community Forestry Grants. There are locations to download the Guidance Document (in Green below), the Request For Proposals and Appendix A (in Blue below), and a link to the Funding Connector Tool (in Yellow below).

The image illustrates the navigation flow from the main website to various resources. The main website screenshot on the left shows the 'Community Forestry Grants' page with a navigation menu and a list of links. Three callout boxes on the right highlight specific resources:

- Urban Forestry Grant Application Information & Forms +** (Red box): Contains links for Climate Resiliency, Human Health Equity & Accessibility, Municipal Forester, Tree City USA, Tree Planting, Geospatial Analysis 65, and Schoolyard Forests.
- Guidance Document +** (Green box): Contains a description of the Guidance Document and a link to [GuidanceDocument.pdf](#).
- Request For Proposals +** (Blue box): Contains a description of the Request For Proposals (RFP) and links to [CommunityForestryGrants2024RFP.pdf](#) and [2024CommunityForestryGrantsAppendixA.pdf](#).

At the bottom, the **Funding Connector** tool (Yellow box) is shown as a map of Texas with a county-level grid overlay, used for financial assistance for land stewardship.



Under the first drop down tab, you will find a list of the grant categories within Community Forestry Grants. Each of these will link to a specific page that holds that category's Application Worksheet and any relevant resources for that proposal.

Each category has a different Application Worksheet and specialized resources, so make sure to select the category you are interested in applying for.

1.2 Grant Categories

1.2.1 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.

1.2.2 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 human health by strategically enhancing people's access to treed greenspaces that promote 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 increase accessibility to treespaces in disadvantaged areas, 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.

1.2.3 Municipal Forester

1 Award for \$100,000

with phased funding over three years

Year 1: \$50,000

Year 2: \$25,000

Year 3: \$25,000

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 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.

1.2.4 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.**



1.2.5 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, community 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](#). 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

1.2.6 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.

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.

1.2.7 Schoolyard Forests

Up to 5 Awards for \$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 are required to bring the campus to 30% canopy cover, and they 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 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. Each award is designed to provide \$3,120,000 for 8 schoolyard forest transformations within a single ISD at ~\$390,000 per school. For eligible ISDs with fewer than eight schools within their district, a maximum of approximately \$390,000 per school transformation project is available.

Each school included in the project proposal must be fully within the [CEJST \(Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool\)](#) Environmentally Disadvantaged regions.

All funds must be encumbered by December 31, 2027.

1.3 Read Applications

The initial process of reading and synthesizing the [Request for Proposals](#) (RFP) and the Grant Categories can feel like a difficult process. The following is a step-by-step process to make it more approachable and digestible.

An applicant can begin by skimming the RFP and the grant categories, which includes looking for keywords that are relevant to the application or project concept that a potential applicant is interested in submitting.

It is important to remember that in many cases the brainstorming process and the reading process often go hand-in-hand. It may be useful for potential applicants to print out the RFP and the grant categories and mark them up with a writing utensil to decide how they want to apply and what is relevant for their communities.

1.3.1 Funding Priorities

The Texas A&M Forest Service Community Forestry Grant RFP lists eight objectives that form the backbone of the CFG Program:

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 leadership and opportunity within 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.*

The first seven objectives are directly sourced from the [2020 Texas Forest Action Plan, Issues Facing Forest Resources in Texas, Issue 4: Urban Forest Sustainability Strategy starting on page 87](#). These seven objectives are listed as Goals, which are then stratified into Objectives. Strategies are then identified to address each goal in smaller, more achievable pieces. This should be an applicant's initial framework for their application.

1.3.2 Tips for a Successful Application

Climate Resiliency

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.

This category doesn't have the keyword we're looking for, but does emphasize two aspects. Firstly, that the *"category is designed to support projects that focus on enhancing the adaptability of urban ecosystems to create more climate-resilient and sustainable Texas communities.... native trees and forests are becoming more vulnerable to pests and diseases and frequent extreme weather events."* What does enhancing the adaptability of urban ecosystems mean in this context?

Secondarily, that the application will address environmental issues that can be found in historically disadvantaged communities: *"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."*

When applying for this grant category, applicants should include these issues and prospective solutions in their application. It is also important to consider how the grant category and RFP define a disadvantaged community. For Texas A&M Forest Service Community Forestry Grant applications, the [CEJST Tool](#) mentioned in the Schoolyard Forests grant is a good place to start as it is foundational for the disadvantaged determination. Applicants should ask stakeholders what issues in this grant category affect them, potential solutions for the issue, and how implementation of grant funds could affect outcomes.

Human Health Equity and Accessibility

This grant category states it will be *"supporting projects that aim to improve the well-being of communities by strategically enhancing their access to treed greenspaces that promote public health."* Then continues to give examples of projects that could be funded based on *"demonstrable impact on public health and wellbeing"*. In this case, demonstrable includes (but not limited to) existing projects that have impacted the community in your area, evidence-based projects that your community wants to pursue, or culturally significant practices that improve and strengthen community fabric which are influenced by trees or forestry practices.

There are numerous resources showcasing the impact of trees on human health, and this grant category works to bring these impacts to communities in creative ways. Applicants should be prepared to source and describe issues that affect their communities, develop a plan which *“addresses social determinants of health...for all residents”*.

Some brainstorming questions to consider:

- Does your community already have programs that exist within this category, but could use additional funding to reach a broader audience or create additional depth or capacity?
- Have you talked to, interacted with or asked the communities that you want to include? Are there considerations that you aren't aware of that haven't been specifically mentioned?
- What long-term public health impacts from trees will this project be bringing to the people of the community?

Municipal Forester

This category describes a job that is valuable to all communities across Texas. A municipal forester/city arborist is a position that brings innumerable benefits to the community they serve by providing technical help regarding the health and success of public trees, bringing education and forest literacy to the public, and advocating for the benefits that trees bring to the community. Minimum characteristics existing in urban forester positions across the state have been used as a baseline template for your community's application.

Brainstorming Questions:

- How well the position will be supported institutionally in your community?
- Who will this position be reporting to?
- What qualities will your ideal applicant have?
 - Do they align with industry and professional standards?
- What will their day-to-day operations and duties look like?
- Do you have a schedule for duties and projects for the next three years?
- What canopy projects need to be completed in the community, but what barriers exist to finish—or to even start?
- How will your community find the money to fund this position permanently?
- How will this position help your community?
- What will happen if you have an applicant for this position that lacks a bachelors degree but is highly qualified in all other aspects?
- What interview questions will you be asking? Are these interview questions written by subject matter experts?
- Will your community be providing opportunities to support ISA continuing education credits for this position?

Tree City USA & Growth Awards

[Tree City USA](#) and Growth Awards show citizens their community forest is managed with their well-being in mind. The Tree City USA designation recognizes communities that demonstrate commitment to the health and maintenance of their urban tree canopy. Tree City USA Growth Awards are presented to Tree City USA communities that demonstrate increased levels of tree care and community engagement.

To receive the Tree City USA designation, a community must meet these four overarching standards:

- Maintain a tree board or department
- Have a community tree ordinance
- Spend at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry
- Celebrate Arbor Day

To receive a Tree City USA Growth Award, your community must have a Tree City USA designation for one year and meet a [point requirement](#) based on urban forestry practices.

Considering successful application tips, in the description of the category, we find “*promote sustainable urban forestry practices, community engagement, and the growth of U&CF initiatives*”. This is an opportunity to reflect on the Urban & Community Forestry Program’s seven goals that are found in the 2020 Texas Forest Action Plan and implement practices and community engagement in support of those practices.

Tree Planting

This category is broad and innovation will be a key evaluation component. Remember to refer to the [2020 Texas Forest Action Plan](#), [CEJST](#) and the practices listed in [Appendix A](#). Priority will be given to projects that are within the [65 Planting Priority Cities](#), or are completely within CEJST disadvantaged areas of communities with a population over 900,000.

Tree species selection relative to site qualities is vital to the successful development of a community forest. For example, baldcypress, a hydric (water-loving) species is not recommended for an area that is an extremely arid (or dry). Without substantial additional irrigation, that species will not thrive and may encourage bug or pest issues which puts the rest of the canopy at risk.

We also want to note that while your community may have a plethora of beautiful and established crepe myrtles and live oaks, we want to see biodiversity present in the species list that your community develops. We are interested in planting strategies to reduce the likelihood that your community will lose canopy based on a single pest or event. This can be mitigated by having trees of various ages, species and uses.

Keep in mind the locations and target areas you are interested in, how they will utilize the Texas Forest Action Plan (page 87 will be helpful), and how the project relates to either CEJST and/or the cities listed in 65 Planting Priority Cities. We highly recommend including maps, photos and additional information to show that your community is prepared to plant trees as soon as they receive the funding.

Watering and other maintenance can be problematic thanks to extreme Texas weather. Additionally, it can be difficult to develop and implement a watering and maintenance plan due to fluctuating budgets, staffing capacity, and sourcing reliable vendors. We want to see that you have a plan ready and all you need is funding to make it happen.

An important note for this category: [Appendix A](#) is the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for tree care and planting guidelines in Texas. If [Appendix A](#) isn't followed closely then the awardee will bear the cost of replacing the trees. Poor management practices can include anything from straps not being removed from trees in the first year, pruning in the summer during a drought, improperly applied mulch, trees being girdled by lawnmowers and weed whackers, and lack of watering.

Geospatial Analysis 65

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 layers. Ground verification is required.

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.

Schoolyard Forests

This category focuses on the concept of bringing the forest to the community. In Texas it can be too hot to play outside due to normally high summer temperatures and the [urban heat island effect](#), especially in communities that are defined in CEJST as vulnerable. We are providing 5 awards of up to \$3.12 million dollars each to support those communities that are in the most need. This category is designed as a catalyst for community greening. It will provide neighborhood greenspaces and reduce the urban heat island through shaded community greenspaces on schoolyard grounds that incorporate environmental education – making a big impact in communities of greatest need.

Grants in this category will be awarded in the [29 Crucial Greening Communities](#), listed in alphabetical order: Alamo, Alice, Alton, Amarillo, Beeville, Brownsville, Corsicana, Del Rio, Donna, Eagle Pass, Edinburg, El Paso, Harlingen, Hildago, Laredo, Longview, McAllen, Mercedes, Mission, Pharr, Port Arthur, San Benito, San Elizario, San Juan, Socorro, Terrell, Uvalde, Weslaco, and Wichita Falls.

Funding is limited to 5 awards. Each award will occur only in one Independent School District (ISD). Within these ISDs, up to 8 schools can receive a schoolyard forest transformation. Each schoolyard forest transformation must increase the canopy cover of the campus to 30% or greater and will be within the set amount of \$390,000/campus.



1.3.3 Eligible Organizations and Uses

The next keyword applicants should be looking for in the RFP is *eligibility*. This is included in the RFP because *eligibility* list the types of applicants the grant-dispersing entity is seeking. The eligible entities for Texas A&M Forest Service Community Grants Program RFP is listed on the same page (page 2) as the Grant Program Objectives:

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.

This is an expansive list that only excludes three types of applicants: individuals, businesses and federal agencies. If there is a community group that doesn't fall into any of the direct application categories, such as an informal volunteer group, a Texas A&M System member or affiliate (like Master Gardeners or Master Naturalists) and others, these interested groups can participate via a partnership with a non-profit or their local government. This allows their skills and expertise to support direct grant stakeholders and strengthen and concentrate local efforts.

Essentially, if your community organization doesn't have a [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#) through SAM.gov or a [Federal Employer Identification Number \(EIN\)](#) through IRS.gov and *doesn't qualify for one*, partnering with a local government or an organization who does have one would be your best avenue to participate in these grants.

If you are a qualifying organization and do not yet have a Unique Entity Identifier Number you may need to set up a SAM.gov account and receive a Unique Entity ID (UEI). You may also need to set up a FEIN with the IRS as well. These can take some time, so it should be one of the first items on your to-do list (please review pre-award timelines for more details).

Texas A&M Forest Service Community Forestry Grants focus on community partnerships that encourage urban forest sustainability in prioritized projects and areas. These projects are more likely to succeed long-term if there is additional capacity, resources and skillsets.

1.3.4 Deadline

The final date for submission is February 16, 2024 5:00pm Central Time. There are no other deadlines that are required for interested applicants. However, Texas A&M Forest Service Community Grants Team highly recommends attending the online seminar (webinar) and online meeting (Office Hours) for additional help, clarifications or questions that may occur during the application process.

1.3.5 Format

The application is composed of two parts. First is the Application Worksheet. This fillable PDF worksheet was developed so that applicants will have a tangible resource to write their application. It is available on our website and is easily downloaded. This allows applicants to plan and accommodate for differences in formatting. We also want you to be able to save your work on your own computer as you build your proposal.

There is little to no formatting that happens on the applicant's end. The application has been internally formatted on the Application Worksheet and on Application Submission link. There are no margins to be measured, no standard typefaces, etc. However, the Application Worksheet and Application Submission do have character limits for each section. Please be mindful that the Application Worksheet is not a universal document for all grant categories. Each Application Worksheet is unique to each category. If you are applying for the Tree Planting category, but are using the Climate Resiliency Application Worksheet, you may be unprepared for responses on the Application Submission.

The Application Worksheet will help you fill out the second component of the application: the Application Submission on Survey123. The survey has the same questions and the same format. Consequently, the Application Worksheet be used to organize your application, then simply copy and paste your answers to the final survey. The Application Submission will be linked on our website and open from December 11, 2023 to February 16, 2024. However, the Application Submission will not allow saving during the application process. It is only used to submit finalized proposals.

1.4 Brainstorm & Build Team

Applicants may already have an idea or project that they are interested in pursuing. The Community Forestry Grants are not designed to be applied for without community involvement in each step of the process. A successful, complete and competitive application requires teamwork.

If you or your community is interested in a grant, but an idea or project doesn't immediately come to mind, take a look at the brainstorming questions provided in this document at the end of most of the categories. We encourage you to reach out to folks in and outside of your job or community organization, and include other people that you regularly interact with to see if there may be something that you're missing or unaware of in your community that could be addressed with the funding that we offer. Another option is to have a brainstorming meeting with members of your community that are excited about this prospect.

1.4.1 Writing a short summary

For those that already have a project idea, we recommend writing a short summary that encompasses all the aspects your project covers. Essentially, write about the problem that led to your project by using the following format:

- a. What is the project?
 - a. What problem does your project solve?
 - b. How did this problem initially occur?
 - c. Why does it continue to be a problem in your community?
 - d. How do you plan on resolving this problem through your project?
- b. Where is the project?
- c. What do you need to complete this project and solve the problem?
- d. How does your project relate to the Texas Forest Action Plan (page 87)?

This will help develop your project narrative and also provides an outline for contacting and influencing possible team members to join your team.

1.4.2 Contact possible team members

As we have stated previously, applying for these grant categories is a team effort that requires the skillsets of many people to accomplish. One of the first items we outline in the timeline for grant applicants is to contact potential team members that would support your application.

We have some tips to get started. First, download the [Request for Proposals](#) and write a brief summary that fits within one or more of the categories with the tips we outlined in the previous section. Then, examine what you need help with (writing, community connections, ideas, matching funding, etc.) and reach out to potential team members accordingly, sending them the RFP and the summary that you have written.

1.4.2.1 Expectations

When reaching out to potential team members, it is important to make sure that they have the time and resources to dedicate for a grant application. Ask them directly if they are willing to invest time in this project and if they are willing to work together. You can send them the pre-award applicant timelines that we have included in this document for a rough estimate of the dedication that is required to complete it.

Clearly ask what, if anything, they can provide that you need help with and be honest with yourself and other what you can accomplish in that timeframe, including your immediate budgeting needs (financial, time, etc.).

1.4.2.2 Availability

A potential team member may be willing to help with the proposal, sometimes their schedule simply doesn't allow for the time needed for the task you initially had in mind for them. However, you can ask them to take on smaller, bite sized tasks that will free up additional time for you to pursue larger lifts. Take for example, you may need help expanding the short summary to a larger project outline and then develop that into a well-rounded project narrative, but your ideal team member for this project may not have the time or resources to help. Instead, you can ask them if they are interested in taking on occasional editing duties to help with brevity, clarity or other items that are smaller in size. Be clear with the rough number of hours that would be expected and if it fits into their schedule.

Be open to developing new working relationships that could bring different perspectives to your proposal, especially if they have the time, availability and interest to help.

1.4.2.3 Experience

As you are working with various stakeholders in the community, you will come across individuals and groups that vary in experience. Some community groups will have experienced members that are familiar with the grants process and others have no experience in grants, but may have experience in areas that you and your immediate team lack.

If you haven't worked with an individual or group before that lacks direct experience, but has the drive to make the project happen, we highly encourage you to take the initiative to mentor that community member and incorporate them and their input into your application. They will bring new, innovative perspectives that you may not have considered before and could provide an edge to your application that you may not have expected.

1.4.3 How to engage communities

Some grant writers may have the opposite problem: you may have few, if no, community members that are interested in writing a grant application.

We recommend asking yourself and/or your team a few questions:

- Who am I, or should I be, working with?
- What is my plan?
- Do both of these answers align with community values?

As we've reiterated many times so far, it takes a team to write a competitive application.

When the grant writing team isn't aligned with the community's values it could be due to the following:

First, the grant team doesn't have direct representatives involved from the communities the grants are for. The grant team should be incorporating feedback from these stakeholders, not just because it's what the 'spirit' of grant is for, but because it is the right thing to do. Grant writing teams must offer opportunity and resources so that community partners can participate.

Second, if the grant writing team does have direct community stakeholders involved on the team, they may be providing feedback but the larger body of partners or leadership isn't receiving or listening the feedback. When working in a community (and a team), it is vital to listen to all team members and go back to the drawing board if team members are expressing concerns about the project.

Third, you may have community partners that are involved in the grant writing process but are not comfortable giving feedback. Has your team developed a trusting relationship with this

community partner and shown them that your team is there to support them? It is recommended that you solicit feedback from each stakeholder to find common ground.

Finally, as you are reaching out to community, developing relationships and planning projects, be prepared to feel uncomfortable and be held accountable. Community tree canopy intersects every demographic, socioeconomic status, creed and more. Being uncomfortable provides an opportunity to listen to new perspectives and to grow and to learn.

The ultimate outcome will be sustaining Texas' community forests through strengthened relationships.



1.5 Recommended Timelines

1.5.1 General Timeline (Texas A&M Forest Service)

November 2023

[Newsletter](#) weekly on Tuesdays
[Application Worksheets](#) Released
[Guidance Document](#) Released
[Request for Proposals](#) Released

December 11, 2023

Application Submission opens

December 14, 2023

Webinar about application process

January 10, 2024

Office Hours with Community Forestry Grants Coordinator (by appointment)

January 17, 2024

Office Hours with Community Forestry Grants Coordinator (by appointment)

January 24, 2024

Office Hours with Community Forestry Grants Coordinator (by appointment)

February 16, 2024

Application Deadline

May 2024

Recipients announced

1.5.1.1 Application Process

General Timeline (Applicants, Pre-Award)

November 2023

Inform community about opportunity
Determine needs of community
Choose grant categories
Brainstorm ideas for grant proposal
Register for UEI number
Research how to write a grant proposal (Review Texas A&M Forest Service Guidance Document)

December 2023

Register for UEI Number (SAM.gov)
Register for FEIN (IRS.gov)
Develop outline for grant proposal
Develop budget
Contact Community Partners
Gather basic organizational information
Establish grant roles
Source matching funds
Attend Grant Webinar

December 11, 2023

Application Submission opens

December 14, 2023

Webinar about application process

January 2024

Refine Budget
Write Grant proposal
Request letters of support
Ask community partners to review project and ask for feedback
Tailor application to grant category
Attend grant webinar

January 10, 2024

Office Hours with Community Forestry Grants Coordinator (by appointment)

January 17, 2024

Office Hours with Community Forestry Grants Coordinator (by appointment)

January 24, 2024

Office Hours with Community Forestry Grants Coordinator (by appointment)

February 2024

Budget is completed and accurate
Grant proposal is completed
Receive letters of support
Thank community partners for help and assistance
Review application for errors
Ensure application conforms to character limits on PDF
Attach documents to application

February 16, 2024

Submit application

May 2024

Recipients announced

1.5.2 Webinar & Office Hours

One online seminar (Webinar) and three online meetings (Office Hours) regarding FY 2024 Community Forestry Grants will be held in the pre-award period.

The webinar will be held on December 14, 2023. The webinar will include a presentation about the 2024 Community Forestry Grants that discusses: where to apply, who should apply, where to find supporting documents, why Texas communities should apply, how to navigate our website, where to find the grants, what are the differences between available grants, final submission dates, and Texas A&M Forest Service points of contact for interested applicants.

The online meetings (office hours) will be held on January 10th, 2024, January 16th, 2024, and January 24th, 2024, by appointment. These are meetings available to all applicants who are interested in asking questions that have not been previously addressed. The grants coordinator will not be on the review board for the grants. The Grants Coordinator is **not** providing editing feedback, but will be there to answer questions or clarify information prior to final submission that will aid in any misunderstandings or differing interpretations of the RFP or Guidance Document.

1.5.3 Post-Award

February 2024

Applications are reviewed by grant team

May 2024

Grantees will be notified

Grantees will sign Grant Agreement, assurances and certifications

Grantees will begin projects

After May 2024

Grantees will provide progress reports as defined the Grant Agreement.

Project completion report will be due as defined in the Grant Agreement.

Reimbursements will be turned in as expenses are made as defined in the Grant Agreement.

Project Completion

Projects must be completed within one year of the Grant Agreement being signed. The Municipal Forester Grant has a three year completion timeline.

Project Completion (Schoolyard Forests)

All funds must be encumbered by December 31, 2027.

2.0 Preparing your Application

2.1 Application

2.1.1 Application Worksheets

Each grant category has an Application Worksheet to assist in creating your proposal. This worksheet is a fillable PDF listed on our website.

The Application Worksheet is NOT a submittable document. The Application Submission will open on December 11. The form will have the exact same questions as the worksheet, but is not able to be saved partway through, so we suggest using it only to submit finalized proposals.

2.1.2 Application Submission

The Application Submission will be linked on our website and open from December 11, 2023 to February 16, 2023. The form will run through Survey123 which can be completed through your browser. The Contact Person will receive a submission confirmation email once you have submitted the survey.

The Application Submission will not save your answers partway through, so ensure that you are able to fill it out in one sitting. The simplest way to complete the Application Submission is to copy and paste your answers from your Application Worksheet.

2.1.3 Helpful Guidance

Each category has specific questions and guidance on the Application Worksheets. Below are helpful guidelines for the overall process.

2.1.3.1 Applicant Information

This information should be the information of the Entity or Organization applying, not for a contact person.

Each applicant must provide a Federal Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN). The UEI application can be filled out through [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) and the FEIN can be applied for through [IRS.gov](https://irs.gov).

The name and contact email for all partnering organizations must be listed. The Community Forestry Grants program encourages collaboration for project proposals. Partnering organizations, especially from different sectors, can add innovation, further expertise, increased community reach, more problem-solving techniques, and extra helping hands.

2.1.3.2 Point of Contact

This information should be the best Point of Contact for the application. This contact information will not be shared with any external parties and will only be used in regard to Community Forestry Grants.

2.1.3.3 Project Information

This is where you showcase your project. Make sure to answer all of the guidelines on the Application Worksheet for each question. Each answer should tie into the grant category and give the pertinent information for your application to shine. The application will be reviewed based on the details and intentions of the project, not the writing style or skill. Make sure to be clear, thorough, and intentional while answering the questions regarding your proposal. All projects must occur within Texas. Helpful resources are listed below.

[Texas Forest Action Plan](#) (Urban Forest Sustainability begins on pg. 87)

[Tree City USA](#)

[Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

[Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives](#)

2.2 Budget

The Budget is a crucial portion of the grant proposal process. Each Application Worksheet includes a page to lay out your Budget, and there is a downloadable Excel Budget Layout on the webpage.

The Community Forestry Grants are reimbursement style grants. **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.

Federal \$ refers to the grant funds being applied for. Local \$ is anything not coming from the grant. Most of the Community Forestry Grants require 1:1 Match, meaning that every grant dollar must be matched by a dollar's worth of local resources. The Total Local \$ must be greater than or equal to Total Federal \$.

Local Cash \$ is any non-grant money being used for the project. Local In-Kind \$ refers to services or goods being used or lent free of charge. This can include using borrowed supplies, volunteer hours, or donations.

Valuing In-Kind \$ can be difficult, but typically the applicant will value their donated supplies, funds, or services. Volunteer hours are currently valued at \$31.80 per hour per volunteer as estimated by the [National Independent Sector Report](#).

Equipment is in most cases not permitted to be purchased with grant funds. Equipment is defined as any product over \$5,000. Anything under that is considered Supplies and Materials. Rentals or contracted services should be listed under Contractual/Professional Services.

For each budget category, you will be required to clearly describe how the funding is being used. You also should clearly describe where any local funds or in-kind funds are coming from.

For Schoolyard Forests and Geospatial Analysis 65, there is not a match requirement. However, it is beneficial to include any in-kind services, extra local funding, and donations so the Selection Committee can fully understand the scope and details of the project.

2.2.1 Inputting the Budget in the Application Submission

The Application Worksheet has a table to showcase your budget, and there is also an Excel Workbook with automatic totals to help you with the budgeting process.

Below is an example of the Budget on the Application Worksheet:

	Federal \$	Local Cash \$	Local In-Kind \$	Total \$
Personnel				
Fringe				
Travel				
Supplies and Materials				
Equipment				
Contractual/Professional Services				
Other				
Totals				
	Total Local \$:			

Each budget category will have a set of questions within the Application Submission that correlated to the table on the Application Worksheet. The Totals will be automatically calculated.

The diagram illustrates the data flow for the Personnel budget category. On the left, a form titled 'Personnel' contains four input fields: 'Personnel - Federal \$*', 'Personnel - Local Cash \$*', 'Personnel - Local In-Kind \$*', and 'Personnel - Total \$'. Each field has a colored circle next to it (red, blue, yellow, and purple respectively). Colored arrows point from these circles to the corresponding columns in a summary table on the right. The summary table has columns for 'Federal \$', 'Local Cash \$', 'Local In-Kind \$', and 'Total \$'. Below the table, there are text input boxes for 'Personnel' and 'Fringe' descriptions, with a large grey arrow pointing from the 'Personnel - Total \$' field to the 'Personnel' description box.

	Federal \$	Local Cash \$	Local In-Kind \$	Total \$
Personnel				
Fringe				
Travel				
Supplies and Materials				
Equipment				
Contractual/Professional Services				
Other				
Totals	50,000			
	Total Local \$:			

Clearly describe how the amount in the category will be used. Maximum 1000 characters.

Personnel

Fringe

2.3 Uploads

Most of the Community Forestry Grants categories require uploads. The Municipal Forester category does not require any uploads.

Maps

Maps should showcase your project in a clear and detailed manner. Include a legend, any helpful text or details, and specific plans for the project. Upload in PDF format.

Photos

Photos are not required for any category. Up to 15 photos can be uploaded. These are supplemental resources to showcase your project area and plans.

Schoolyard Forests: Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)/Letters of Recommendation (LOR)

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and/or Letters of Intent (LOI) are only required for the Schoolyard Forests category. Include one MOU or LOI from each district that is included in the project. School districts can write MOUs for multiple applicants. For more information regarding the similarities and differences between MOUs and LOIs, please refer to “Frequently Asked Questions”.

Geospatial Analysis 65: Previous Work Examples

These are only required for the Geospatial Analysis 65 category. Include any previous work that showcases your organization’s capacity for this type and scope of project. Up to 10 PDFs can be uploaded.

2.4 Resources

The following are some helpful resources to use during the application process.

[Community Forestry Grants Newsletter Sign Up](#)

[Community Forestry Grants Webpage](#)

[Funding Connector Tool](#)

[Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

[Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives](#)

[Tree City USA](#)

[Arbor Day Foundation](#)

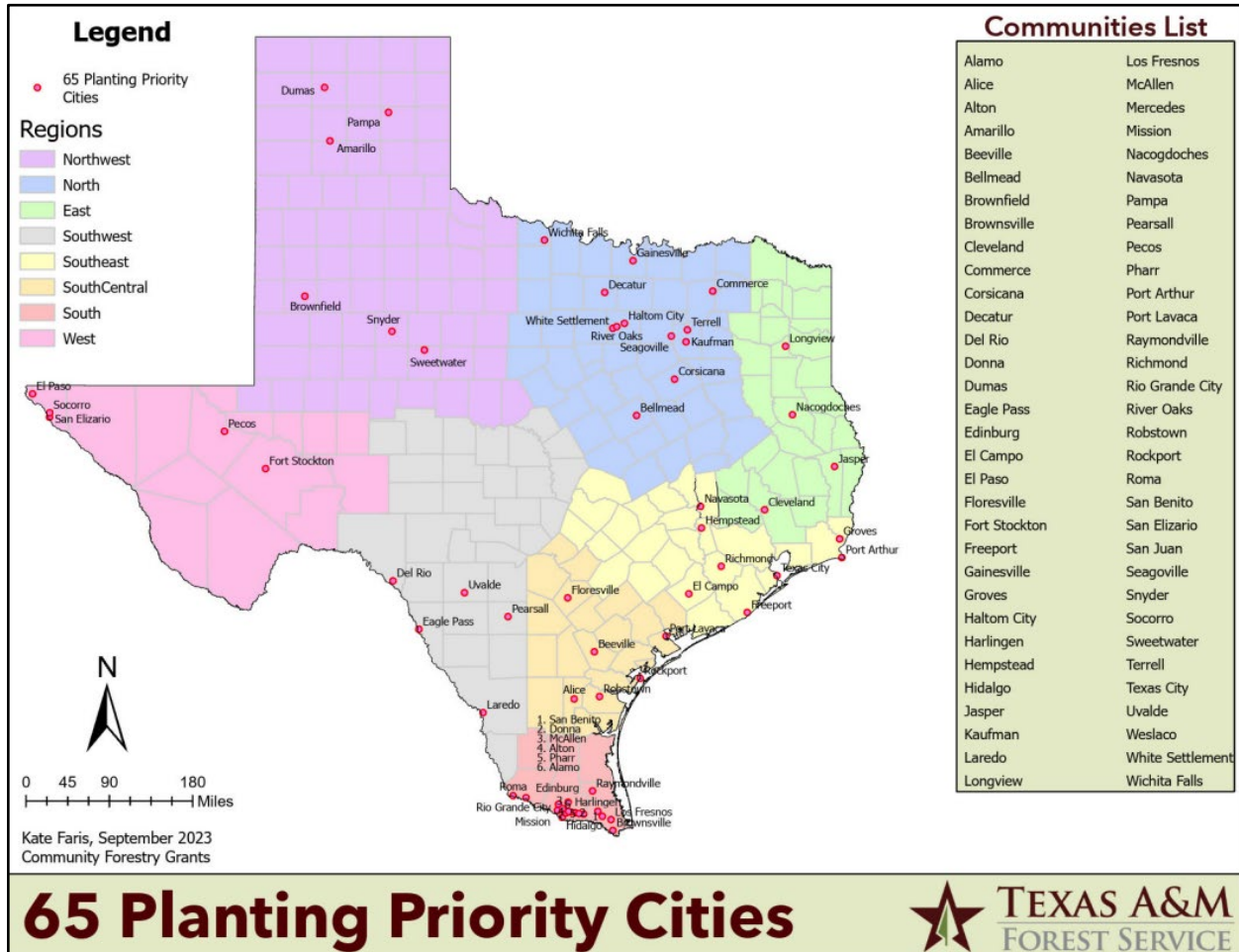
[Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture](#)

[Texas Forest Action Plan \(Urban Forest Sustainability begins on pg. 87\)](#)

3.0 65 Planting Priority Cities

The 65 Planting Priority Cities are a set of communities that have been determined through extensive geospatial analysis as cities where trees can make a significant impact. Factors that went into the analysis include Canopy Cover, the Urban Heat Island Effect, the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, Social Vulnerability Index, and the Texas Forest Action Plan.

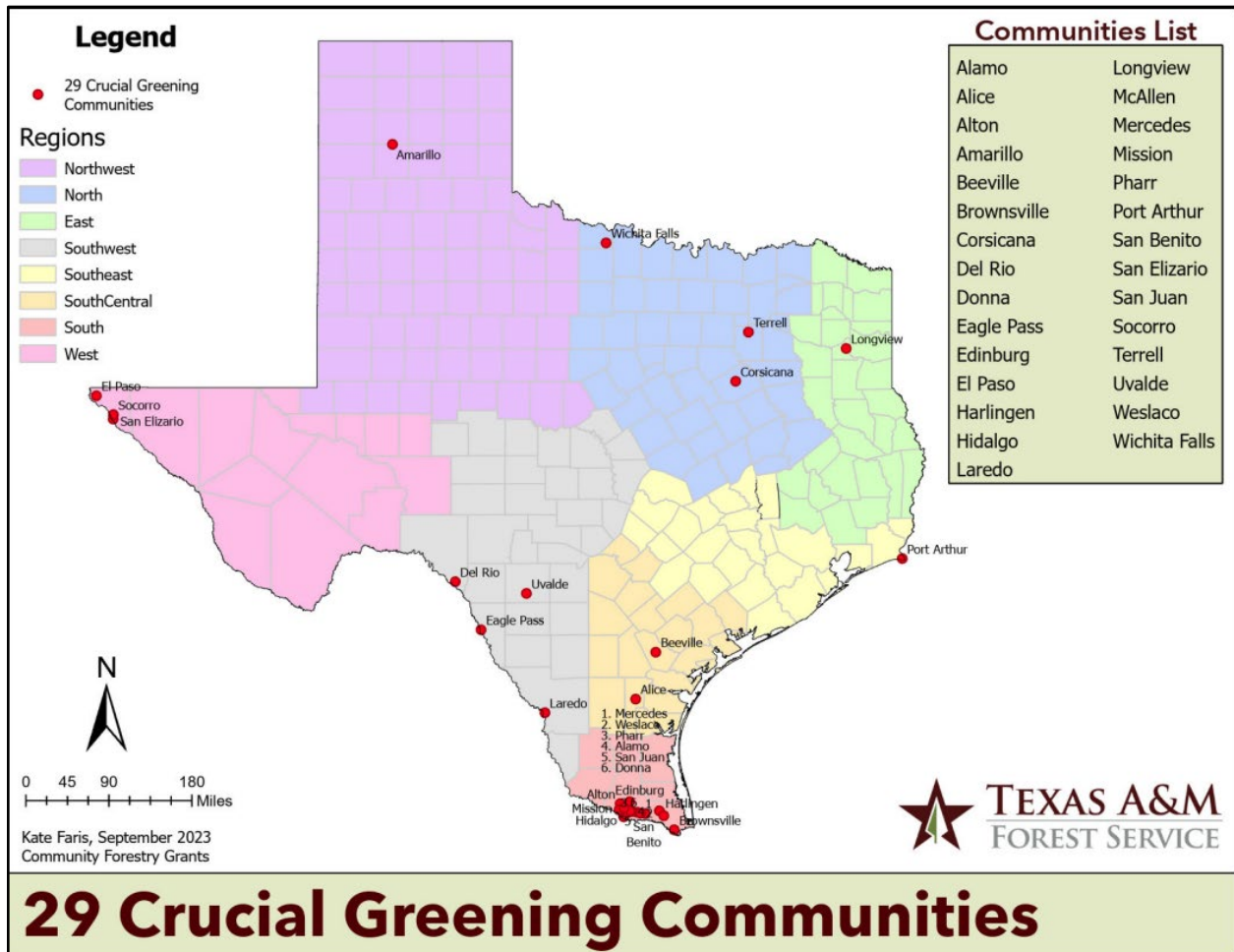
The 65 Planting Priority Cities will be prioritized for the Tree Planting grant category and will be the focus of the Geospatial Analysis 65 project.



4.0 29 Crucial Greening Communities

The 29 Crucial Greening Communities are a subset of the 65 Planting Priority Cities which are communities that have been determined through extensive geospatial analysis as cities where trees can make a significant impact. Factors that went into the analysis include Canopy Cover, the Urban Heat Island Effect, the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, Social Vulnerability Index, Public Schools, and the Texas Forest Action Plan.

The 29 Crucial Greening Communities are the only cities eligible for the Schoolyard Forests grant category.



5.0 Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Community Forestry Grant Program (CFGP)?

The Texas A&M Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Program helps communities develop sustainable programs that provide Texans with healthy trees and forests. One of the ways that we do this is by offering competitive grants that help to establish, promote and sustain urban and community forestry principles throughout the state of Texas.

The Texas Community Forestry Grant Program is now accepting proposals for the 2024 competitive grant program.

What is a grant?

Grants are funds awarded to an organization or entity based on a set criterion for specific applicants and projects. These are not loans and do not need to be paid back.

Why should I apply?

Healthy urban and community forests are essential to the economic, environmental, physical and mental well-being of all Texans. Urban and community forests provide over \$6 billion per year to the economy through ecosystem services, otherwise defined as benefits provided by trees for people. These high-value benefits can be divided into the categories of biodiversity, carbon sequestration & energy reduction, cultural, economic, human health, and watershed management.

\$3.3 million/year | Biodiversity of forests are essential to support human existence through living and non-living relationships, habitat, soil conservation and formation, and pollination.

\$291.8 million/year | Trees act as carbon sinks, meaning that carbon dioxide is absorbed from the atmosphere (carbon sequestration) and is stored in wood (carbon storage), increasing over time as a tree grows. Additionally, trees save on energy costs by shading homes, thereby reducing the electricity use during hot weather.

\$1.8 billion/year | Urban and community forests contribute to spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection and aesthetic experiences.

\$243.2 million per year | Trees increase property value between 3-15% and decrease the overall need for energy to heat homes in the winter and cool homes in the summer.

\$3.4 billion/year | Trees reduce air pollution by improving air quality and trapping pollutants, and reduce excess medical costs related to obesity, stroke and mental health.

\$106.3 million/year | Trees filter polluted water, reinforce eroding soils in watersheds, recharge aquifers, and reduce impervious cover in urban environments.

Essentially, trees and forests—especially urban ones—save our communities money, time and resources.

What can I expect from the grant application process?

We understand that the application process can be complicated, we'll sum it up into three steps:

1. Pre-Award

Potential applicants will review grant categories that have been made available through our website and examine their eligibility for grants they are interested in. Applicants can apply to multiple categories, but will only be awarded up to 1 grant.

Timeline

Applications can take months to develop. The final deadline for submission of applications is February 16, 2024. Applicants should be using the time from announcement (Sept 2023 Texas Tree Conference) to December 2023 to determine their grant proposal, coordinate community partnerships, basic organizational information, register for a UEI number, explanations of proposed work and financial data including budgets.

2. Award

The Selection Committee, composed of representations from a variety of government and non-profit groups will review all applications according to a predefined rubric for each grant category. We will notify grant applicants on the status of their application. Applicants who have not been awarded a grant are encouraged to apply the following grant cycle or to use their application to apply to other grants through the federal and state governments, Arbor Day Foundation, Keep Texas Beautiful and many other state and national organizations who are seeking grant applications from communities.

3. Post Award

After the awardee receives notice that they have been awarded a grant, the project will begin. The awardee is responsible for meeting the administrative, financial and programmatic reporting requirements of the award.

How does my project qualify?

Eligible entities for community forestry grants must be public or non-profit and must have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) and a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) through SAM.gov. Examples of eligible entities include:

Non-Profits (501c3)

Municipalities

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Educational Institutions

Non-Governmental Organizations

Public Utility District (PUD, MUD, etc.).

State and local governmental agencies

Individuals, businesses and federal agencies are not eligible.

Can Texas A&M System members or affiliates apply?

Texas A&M System members or affiliates cannot apply directly to our grants, but can be listed as a partnering organization on grant applications.

How can I write a competitive application?

Proposals that complement existing regional and national initiatives addressing critical issues affecting community forests in Texas, such as climate adaptation and equitable distribution of community forests and trees, are encouraged.

General Application Requirements:

- All grant related projects must occur in Texas.
- Applicant must provide at least 50% of the grant proposal budget in cash, in-kind services, or donations.
- Fees for equipment usage may be included (but not for purchasing of equipment).
- All funds related to grant may not be used as a match for any other Federal cost-share projects.
- Applications must be for projects, programs, or activities not currently being funded, and may not be a substitute for existing funding.
- This is a reimbursement type grant.
- All grant funds (except for Schoolyard Forests & Community Greening) must be matched at least dollar for dollar. Non-federal match may include in-kind donations, volunteer assistance, and private or public (non-federal) monetary contributions.

We have staff members dedicated to answering questions and providing grant webinars to applicants during the application cycle.

Helpful Tips:

Grant recipients will submit applications for projects that are innovative and well-thought out. Grant reviewers want applicants to include specific step-by-step processes and collaborative relationships with local community partners.

See 2023 [Request for Proposals](#)

Can my organization apply to more than one grant category?

Yes. 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.

What are Letters of Intent (LOI) and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)?

LOIs and MOUs are only required for the Schoolyard Forests Grant. Both documents inform Texas A&M Forest Service (or the organization that will be dispersing grants) that the separate organizations which are applying for the grant and are planning the project together have come to an agreement. A LOI is not legally binding, but a MOU is.

What should a LOI/ MOU include?

A LOI/ MOU is an agreement which should be broad outline that the organizations involved in the grant have: discussed the project, are aware of each organization's participation, each organization's goals have been made apparent and are aligned, general duties have been distributed among the organizations. Essentially, the MOU and/or LOI should be a much shorter, much broader version of the final grant application.