

USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry 2025 Challenge Cost Share Grant Program

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

Proposals are to be received by:

Thursday February 27, 2025, 5:00 PM Eastern.

INTRODUCTION:

Urban forests provide trees for people where they live, work, and play. These natural resources, on public and private property, contribute to quality of life, support community development, green infrastructure, and provide a wealth of benefits to cities and towns. The [Urban and Community Forestry Program | US Forest Service](#) is the only dedicated urban forest program in the federal government. It is a technical, financial, and educational assistance program that delivers nature-based solutions to more than 84 percent of Americans. The program works in partnership with State and local forestry agencies, non-profit and tribal organizations, and institutions of higher education to restore, sustain, and manage more than 140 million acres of urban and community forest lands for the benefit of communities across the United States. Healthy urban & community forests and green infrastructure are not only critical to all our nation's forests, but research and studies have also shown that our urban and community forests are essential to the economic, environmental, physical, and mental well-being of our citizens.

The USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program was established in the 1990 Farm Bill (as amended) within Section 9 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. This legislation includes its citizen's National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council as part of the Urban and Community Forestry Program to advise the Secretary of Agriculture, Forest Service, other applicable Federal agencies, and partners on urban and community concerns and opportunities. Part of the Council's duties is to include the establishment of a National Urban and Community Forestry Ten-Year Action Plan developed in conjunction with the public. The Council also develops the grant categories for the Forest Service's National Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Cost Share Grant Program. The grant categories assist in implementing the goals in the Action Plan.

The FY 2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) will be addressing the [National Ten Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan \(2016-2026\)](#), (Action Plan) -

Goal 3: Cultivate Diversity, Equity and Leadership Within the Urban Forestry Community

Strategy A: Increase diversity, equity, and accessibility in urban and community forestry.

Strategy B: Engage underserved communities in urban and community forestry.

Strategy D: Increase workforce development opportunities and green jobs in urban and community forestry, with particular attention to underserved communities.

Goal 5: Improve Urban and Community Forest Management, Maintenance and Stewardship

Strategy B: Develop comprehensive programs, policies, and resources for enhancing urban Forestry stewardship.

Strategy C: Promote better use of technology and tools in urban forestry.

According to the [National Ten Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan \(2016-2026\)](#), (Action Plan) *Vocal and visible champions need to be developed at all levels in the next decade to bring attention to the ability of urban forests to offer comprehensive and cost-effective solutions to critical community issues and to apply those solutions within their own communities.*

The [National Action Plan's Five-Year Benchmark Accomplishment Report](#) recommends *expanding, refining, and customizing technology tools for different regions. Robust technology should be prioritized to provide accessible data for a range of foresters, decision-makers, and community members.*

2025 GRANT CATEGORY:

SUSTAINABLE GREEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

This year's category addresses components of Goal 3, and Goal 5 in the National Urban and Community Forestry Ten-Year Action Plan (Action Plan) as noted above.

The Council is seeking proposals to identify or develop successful sustainable green workforce development programs for urban and community forestry/green infrastructure for disadvantaged communities. Many existing workforce development programs have good training programs, but may be missing a clear path for advancement, business management, or ultimate ownership of one's own company. This is especially true in disadvantaged communities. These successful existing or new creative, and innovative workforce development programs are to be tested and adapted in pilot disadvantaged communities across the country, Indian Country, and U.S. Territories.

Key factors to be included in an existing or proposed sustainable workforce development program are:

- Safety standards and procedures are a priority: Tree Care Industry Association Inc, TCIA, American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Tree Care standards, 300, A300, Z133.
- Utilizes American Nursery Stock Standards
- Adaptable and suitable for different geographical areas around the country, territories, and Indian Nation.
- Identify successful existing program(s) and how they could be improved.
- Training certification to be scalable at different size levels as applicable (local, State, National).
- Leads to certification recognized by the green industry, local government, and/or State organizations.
- Include partnering or collaboration with key professional organizations for feedback and technical support. To consider but not limited to i.e. International Society of Arboriculture,

State Urban Forestry Coordinator, Urban and Community Forestry Society, Society of American Foresters, Cooperative Extension Urban Foresters, Green Latino's, Hispanic Access, Urban League, Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Tree Care Industry Association, Tribes for Trees, American Society of Landscape Architects, National Association of Landscape Professionals, American Nursery and Landscape Association, Utility Arborist Association (UAA), urban tree product conversion, etc.)

- Identify geographical pay rates as applicable.
- Identify barriers that may prevent disadvantage community members from participating?
- Address translation to languages other than English.
- Consider cultural micro certifications
- Outline and implement a glide path to certification and ownership
- Address environmental safety: i.e. High heat days, severe storms, flooding, cold, etc.
- Identify repeated success of existing work force development programs or for new workforce development programs demonstrate success of similar programs and why it would work for green workforce development with disadvantaged communities.
- Include a list/links for support resources, successful case studies, and other identified resources.
- Include successful business development protocols.
- Identify any applicable or new technology to assist in this effort.

Successful workforce development pilots will be compiled and placed on a Forest Service, national nonprofit, Tribal, State, local partner websites and made available to interested public.

Please see below on how to apply after the Additional Information page below.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Details on how proposals will be evaluated can be found in the [Proposal Evaluation Criteria PDF document](#).

DEFINITIONS AND RESOURCES

Definitions and Resources can be found in the [Definitions and Resources pdf document](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Proposals must meet the **Urban and Community Forestry Program Authorities** as designated by Congress in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, (Section 9 PDF, pp. 19-24) [State & Private Cooperative Forestry Handbook of Programs](#) and identity with Goal 3 and Goal 5 noted strategies of the [National Ten Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan \(2016-2026\)](#).
- **Required Registration in System for Award Management (SAM):** Please allow at least two (2) weeks to apply or renew this registration. All prospective awardees must be registered in SAM <https://sam.gov/content/home>
- **Partnership collaboration is required:** Two or more related partners must be involved in these proposals. One must be a designated disadvantaged community. Include formal letters of partnership describing their role/contribution. Proposals may also include letters of support from other key stakeholders, as applicable.
- **Available Funding:** Aligns with the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260), the U.S. Forest Service may provide approximately \$1,000,000 (**Based on availability of funding**, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations.)
- **Awards** will be made as domestic grants.
- **Time Limit:** The grant is to be **completed within 3 years or sooner**.
- **The grant review** and award process may take up to 6 months.
- **Eligible Applicants:** Non-profits, any U.S. State or Territory, local government, educational institutions of higher learning, and federally recognized tribal organization that are operating within the United States or its territories. Private entities are not eligible to apply but may be partners in the project.
- **Matching Requirements:** All grant funds are to be matched at least equally (**dollar for dollar**) with non-federal match, which may include in-kind donations, volunteer assistance, and private and public (non-federal) monetary contributions.
- **Federal Agencies: *Other Federal dollars or technical support may contribute to the project, but their contributions may not be used to match the Urban and Community Forestry Program dollars.***
 - *Federal Urban and Community Forestry Grant Dollars may not pay for any Federal employee salary, travel, or per diem, etc.*
 - *Federal partners must provide a letter of support clearly stating their pro bono role in the project.*
- If applicable, ensure all Indirect Cost Rates are current.

HOW TO APPLY?

Click on this link [2025 National UCF Grant Application Website](#) to complete the on-line grant proposal application. The on-line application workflow process is self-explanatory with help links to guide you through the application process.

Hard copy versions of this NOFO are available upon request. Please email SM.FS.nucfac@usda.gov

All applications must be completed and submitted by **Thursday February 27, 2025 5:00 PM Eastern**. Once submitted, the applicant will receive an email notice confirming their application was successfully submitted.

All applications are to be submitted in English.

CONTACT:

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