



Trees Across Georgia (TAG)

Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program

Administered by the
Georgia Forestry Commission



INTRODUCTION

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (USFS) announces the Trees Across Georgia (TAG) Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Grant Program. The program is designed to encourage projects that plant trees and increase the benefits of tree canopy, create and support long-term and sustained urban and community forestry programs, and promote the care of trees in communities throughout Georgia with an emphasis on disadvantaged communities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

Legislative Authority

The USDA Forest Service, authorized by the Inflation Reduction Act and the Community Forestry Assistance Act of the 1990 Farm Bill, has allocated funding to the Georgia Forestry Commission for statewide distribution.

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 \$9,750,000 was allocated to Georgia to be distributed statewide 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 should deliver the benefits of IRA investments through established partnerships with local organizations working to support disadvantaged communities experiencing low tree canopy and environmental justice.

The 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.

There are two sources of funding for this grant opportunity. One source is Georgia's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding. These **IRA funds MUST be used in 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 change, pollution or other environmental or socioeconomic factors. These communities identified through CEJST are considered disadvantaged because they are overburdened and underserved.

Other government sanctioned data sources may be considered for identifying disadvantaged communities, but priority will be given to those applications that use the CEJST tool. Also visit <https://treeequityscore.org> to learn more about why trees are critical for every community and how to determine a community's tree equity score, a measure of how well a neighborhood is benefitting from healthy community trees.

The other source of funding is through non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance funds. These projects do not have to have an exclusive focus on disadvantaged communities but the potential amount that can be awarded is substantially less and requires a match.

Projects or programs of work completed 100% in disadvantaged communities identified by [CEJST](#) will qualify for IRA funding. **IRA qualified** projects will be eligible for funding up to \$300,000 per year for up to four years based on need and completed milestones. In addition, **IRA qualified** projects will not be required to provide a match.

Projects which do not focus 100% on disadvantaged communities do not qualify for IRA funding. **Non-IRA** projects may be selected to receive up to \$30,000 in non-IRA Community Forestry Assistance funds which require a dollar for dollar match. These projects must be completed within a one-year timeframe.

Federal Program Objectives

The objectives of the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program are to:

- 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 Urban and 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

State Program Goals

In Georgia's Statewide Forest Resources Strategy 2020, the goals for the Urban and Community Program are described as:

- 1) Foster strong partnerships with various organizations, city and county governments and the Georgia Tree Council
- 2) Improve urban forestry knowledge
- 3) Increase the number of communities participating in the Tree City USA program
- 4) Increase participation of communities in priority areas in community forest management through comprehensive planning strategies
- 5) Encourage communities to recognize the public health benefits of trees
- 6) Increase community preparedness by encouraging communities to develop storm mitigation plans

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Eligible projects must meet Federal and State Program Objectives. The Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program is intended to support new initiatives, programs, projects, staff positions or activities not currently being funded through other sources.

Some examples of eligible categories you could use depending on your approved narrative are described in detail below.

A. URBAN FORESTRY PROGRAM SUPPORT – projects that encourage improved management of community forest resources.

1. **Professional staffing** - Full or part-time employment of an urban forestry professional to assist in community forestry program management. A draft position description and qualifications must be submitted with the application. Examples: staff or contract arborist positions

Note: All funding for staff positions is expected to be used as seed monies to help establish or build local program capacity. Applicants are strongly encouraged to identify and secure other future sources of funding to maintain staff positions. Grant funding for subsequent years is not guaranteed or if awarded, may be reduced.

2. **Workforce development** - Projects that help move towards a more diverse and inclusive workforce in urban forestry and arboriculture. Grant funding may be used to build leadership, conduct outreach activities, increase capacity, or provide training and education to support local community development efforts. Examples: Youth Development programs, training programs, internships, apprenticeships, professional certifications.
3. **Technical Assistance** – projects that develop or collect data needed for efficient management of community forestry resources. Examples: Canopy mapping/assessments, tree inventories, tree management plans, greenspace master plans, and/or urban heat island mapping.
4. **Tree Ordinance/Policy Development or Revision** - Projects that develop or revise ordinances or policies needed for efficient management of community forestry resources. The ordinance or policy should address the establishment of municipal authority over public trees; assign responsibility to a public department, arborist position, or established tree board or commission; and set maintenance and management standards. The ordinance or policy may also address other issues such as landscape requirements and tree retention or replacement on development sites, riparian buffers, and for the protection of urban forest ecosystems.
5. **Storm Readiness & Resiliency** – projects that develop a cohesive strategy to help communities prepare for storms. Example: Developing a storm readiness plan addressing pre-storm contracts, tree risk assessments along critical routes, and vegetative debris staging areas. A maximum of 30% of the grant award can be used for risk mitigation pruning/removals along critical routes.
6. **Invasive species removal** – projects that address invasive plant species that adversely impact community forests.

Note: **IRA qualified** projects are limited to a total of \$300,000 in funding whether project term is one year or multi-year. **Non-IRA** projects can only be funded one time at \$30,000.

B. TREE PLANTING - All projects funded under this category must be for the purpose of addressing tree equity, mitigating the effects of extreme heat and climate change, replacing storm damaged canopy, creating greenspaces, reducing stormwater runoff and/or increasing the environmental and social benefits of trees. The cost of removing and stump grinding diseased, high risk or invasive trees to create planting spaces for new trees is an allowable expense. Food forests are eligible if the project's primary focus is establishing canopy to mitigate extreme heat with the secondary benefit being food products. These Food Forest projects should [use species from this list](#) which contains mostly native species that require less maintenance such as pecan, mulberry, pawpaw and persimmon. Also eligible are projects that include the cost of removing impervious surface to create appropriate planting spaces/soil volume. These impervious surface removal projects must follow these [soil reconditioning technical specifications](#) created by Virginia Tech and the Virginia Department of Forestry.

All tree planting projects must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Take place on non-federal **public property** such as city/county parks, schools, playgrounds, greenspaces, rights-of-way, business districts, parking lots, and downtown areas.
- 2) Include a tree planting **site plan and map** using aerial photography or GIS. Locations (addresses, zip codes or GPS coordinates) of all trees must be provided by the end of the project. If applicable, include details of impervious surface removal.
- 3) Include a **3-year maintenance plan**.
- 4) Include a **letter of support from the local government or from the Department of Transportation**, if applicant is not the property owner
- 5) Complete and sign the **liability waiver** included in the application.

Note: If your application is approved, your project will be assigned to a GFC Community Forestry Specialist to review and approve the planting and maintenance plan. If applicable, GFC approval will also be required for the impervious surface removal plan.

C. TREE ADVOCACY GROUP DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

1. **Tree Board Creation/Development** - Projects to organize a new tree board/commission or provide training or planning assistance for existing tree boards. A new tree board or commission should be charged by ordinance to act on behalf of local government in coordination with the community's urban forestry program
2. **Non-profit Program Development** - Projects that develop or enhance a non-profit 501(c)3 group's ability to support tree care, tree planting, or tree education efforts in a community or area. Ex: non-profit establishment, tree care training program, staff position to conduct tree planting and education programs, staff position to outreach to disadvantaged neighborhoods or groups to provide tree care education or encourage tree care activities.

Note: All funding for staff positions is expected to be used as seed monies to help establish or build local program capacity. Applicants are strongly encouraged to identify and secure other future sources of funding to maintain staff positions. Grant funding for subsequent years is not guaranteed or may be reduced.

D. URBAN WOOD UTILIZATION - Projects that increase knowledge, awareness, and visibility of urban wood utilization and recycling. Grant funding may be applied to education and outreach materials, demonstration of specialized equipment and techniques for working on smaller interface woodlots, and assessments of the feasibility of recycling and processing urban waste wood. Funds can also be used to develop a business plan for an emerging urban wood program for public entities or non-profits.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Ineligible projects include, but are not limited to;

- beautification projects
- research
- trail design, construction or maintenance
- property acquisition and related costs
- construction projects
- equipment purchases
- gift cards

ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS

Funds may be awarded to units of local governments (city, town, county), non-profit 501(c)3 organizations, or public educational institutions. Other organizations, such as community tree 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.

Non-profit organizations will need to upload a copy of their IRS 501(c)3 Letter of Determination.

All applicants must have BOTH a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on obtaining a UEI can be found at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov). This video may also be helpful. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uv1YNAsINk&t=17s>

GRANT TIMEFRAME

All applications must be submitted online by 5PM EDT on September 27, 2023. Applicants will be notified of proposal status in mid-November 2023. Approved projects can begin only after a grant agreement and Federal Assurances are signed by the grantee.

All Non-IRA projects and most IRA qualified projects must be completed within one (1) year from the date of the finalized grant agreement.

IRA qualified projects may be eligible for multi-year funding. 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. Multi-year projects may be renewed each year based on successful completion of project milestones. All projects must be completed by December 31, 2027.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program funds will be awarded on a competitive basis. Sub-awards will be awarded and projects completed as single year funding, unless otherwise specified. Funding is for programs, projects, or activities not otherwise currently funded, and cannot be used to substitute for existing funds. **Funding is not available for entertainment, food and beverages, purchase of equipment, or construction.** The Georgia Forestry Commission reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to approve partial funding for any and all proposals.

IRA qualified projects can apply for amounts between \$10,000 and \$300,000. Multi-year IRA projects may apply for a maximum amount of \$300,000 per year for four (4) years. Maximum award for multi-year **IRA qualified** projects is \$1,200,000.

Non-IRA projects may apply for amounts between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

IRA qualified projects that provide 100% of the benefits to disadvantaged communities may qualify for a match waiver as per the IRA guidelines. To justify the match waiver, verification of the project's location on the CEJST tool must be provided along with a written explanation of how the project will impact a disadvantaged community.

Non-IRA projects must provide a dollar for dollar (50/50) match with non-federal funds. 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. 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. To determine the average dollar value of adult volunteer labor, refer to the Independent Sector at <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>. For children, use the Federal minimum wage as a standard. **Assistance provided by Federal employees or Georgia Forestry Commission staff may not be claimed as part of the match.**

All matching funds must be specifically related to the proposed project. The source of the match, cash and in-kind, must be identified and quantified in the application by enclosing letters of intended support. If the match is coming from several sources, you must have a letter from each source including the applicant organization. **All letters of support must include the amount and source of the intended match including, if applicable, a breakdown of the value of personnel time (wage rate, number of hours).** Funds expended prior to the date of the grant agreement cannot be used as match. **Funds expended for entertainment, food and beverages, equipment purchase, or construction cannot be used as match.** Documentation of all matching funds must be provided before reimbursement of the grant award will be issued.

REPORTS

Periodic progress reports and a Final Report are required of the grantee. The schedule and content of final and periodic reports will be set in advance of initiating the project. Final Reports must be submitted within 30 days of project completion.

PAYMENT PROCESS

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a reimbursement basis after project completion and review of the Final Report, or according to a payment schedule agreed to in advance. Grant recipients must submit a *Request for Reimbursement* (included in award paperwork package) and include records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs. The Georgia Forestry Commission reserves the right to make partial payments subject to completion of scheduled milestones and proper documentation of grant expenses and match. The Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program administrator will evaluate the progress of the project to determine eligibility for full payment.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Only applications that meet all requirements will be reviewed. Project proposals will be evaluated on whether or not the information provided about the project indicates that the project:

- Provides benefits to a disadvantaged community
- Meets a demonstrated urban forestry need
- Meets Federal and State Program Objectives
- Helps strengthen and develop local urban & community forestry capacity
- Has a realistic time frame for completion
- Is cost effective
- Has documented cash and in-kind matching commitment (does not apply to IRA funded projects)
- Has continued effect after completion
- Uses innovation or involves research and new technology
- Has culturally diverse values
- Enhances volunteer involvement
- Involves various partnerships
- Utilizes personnel that have qualifications to complete activities
- Generates local visibility, incorporates public relations and awareness
- Can be duplicated and/or used as a model in other Georgia cities
- Enhances environmental, social, cultural, historical, psychological and economical values
- Shows demonstrated ability of the applicant to follow through on project completion
- Accomplishes one or more goals in the community's comprehensive plan

Note for Non-IRA Funding: Applications from current certified Tree City U.S.A. or Tree Campus Higher Education locations in Georgia will be awarded additional points during the review of applications. For more information about the Tree City U.S.A. and Tree Campus programs go to GaTrees.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Potential applicants can contact the Georgia Forestry Commission or other resources as appropriate to obtain additional assistance or information.

Resources for TAG projects: gatrees.org/urban-community-forestry/trees-across-georgia-tag-grant-program/

Georgia Forestry Commission: gatrees.org

To find your local GFC Community Forester: gatrees.org/about/county-contacts/

Georgia Tree Council: www.gatreecouncil.org

International Society of Arboriculture: www.isa-arbor.com

Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA Program: www.ArborDay.org

USDA Forest Service: fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf

APPLICATION PROCESS

For more information, please attend the following webinar:

Webinar: Applying for a TAG Grant
Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 10am EDT
[Registration](#) is required

All applications must be submitted by **5PM EDT on September 27, 2023** through the [online grant portal](#). No paper applications will be accepted.

To complete and submit your application:

[Click here to Submit](#)

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Questions?

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