



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Community Forestry Grant Program

Texas A&M Forest Service
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<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/communityforestrygrants/>

All applications must be submitted online by **5PM (CST) on March 1, 2026.**

Introduction

Texas A&M Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program helps communities develop sustainable programs that provide Texans with healthy trees and forests. In cooperation with the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (USFS)**, Texas A&M Forest Service is now accepting proposals for the 2026 Community Forestry Grant Program (CFG). These competitive grants are designed to establish sound urban and community forestry principles that promote the protection and enhancement of urban and community forest ecosystems throughout the state of Texas. By applying for a Community Forestry Grant, applicants can not only make a positive environmental impact but also contribute to the well-being, resilience, and sustainability of the communities they serve.

Objectives and Eligibility

Grant Program Objectives

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

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

Eligible Entities

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

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

General Grant Requirements

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

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

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

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

Funding Sources

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

Matching grants:

- Match requirements are on a 1:1 ratio, i.e., 50 percent federal, 50 percent non-federal (local) match from eligible groups.
- These non-federal funds cannot be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project. The match may include in-kind contributions, volunteer assistance, and private and public (non-federal) monetary contributions.
- In-kind contributions include on-hand supplies, third-party donations of supplies or equipment, and the value of time (including fringe benefits) spent by the awardee's staff or volunteers on eligible project activities.
- These are reimbursement-type grants. Awardees will send invoices to Texas A&M Forest Service of eligible expenses as laid out in the grant agreement and be reimbursed by grant funds.
- Reimbursable expenses are direct, out-of-pocket expenditures for eligible project activities that are supported by paid invoices, signed receipts, or official payroll records. The use of in-kind (non-cash) match is valid and encouraged. In-kind match can take the form of volunteer hours, donated materials, donated services, donated office space, or donated equipment associated with the project. Volunteer hours may be applied to the project at rates appropriate to the skill level of the volunteer and/or the nature of the work being performed.
- The base value for adult volunteer time on a project is **\$33.49** per hour. This is the updated rate by the [Independent Sector](#), under the research tab. Staff time applied as either grant share or match must be valued at the employee's regular rate of pay.
- Fringe benefits are also allowable.
- Projects that require match must be completed in 12 months from when the award letter is signed, unless otherwise noted in category description.
- All matching funds must be specifically related to the proposed project. Documentation of all matching funds must be provided before reimbursement of the grant award will be issued.

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

Match waiver grants:

- Up to 20% of the total project budget can be used as administrative costs. These are included in any indirect expenses required by an applying organization. Indirect costs are allowable but supporting documentation is required.
- Acknowledgement of Texas A&M Forest Service and the US Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act Urban and Community Forestry Program contribution is required for printed materials and signage.

Grant Timeframe

All applications must be submitted online by **5PM CST on March 1, 2026.**

Applicants will be notified of proposal status in May 2026. Approved projects can begin only after a grant agreement and Federal Assurances are signed by the awardee. All projects must be completed within the specified date of the finalized grant agreement. Some projects that qualify for match waiver may have deliverables over multiple years. Applications for multi-year funding must justify the need for an extended project term and define activities, timeline, and deliverables for each year of the project term. All funds must be encumbered by December 31, 2028. All funding of grants is contingent on federal appropriations.

FY2026 Matching Grant Categories

CATEGORY 1 – Community Resiliency

1 Award for \$50,000

Description: The Community Resiliency grant category is designed to support projects that focus on enhancing the adaptability of urban ecosystems to create more resilient and sustainable Texas communities. With increasing volatile 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 variability, especially low-canopy, low resource communities, and develop tools and strategies that not only increase urban tree cover and the related benefits those communities will receive but also lead to a more resilient community forest.

CATEGORY 2 – Human Health Enhancement and Access

1 Award for \$50,000

Description: The Human Health Enhancement and Access grant category is dedicated to supporting projects that aim to support 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 access to treescapes in areas with little to no public tree canopy, 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 healthy, vibrant environments for all residents.

CATEGORY 3 – Municipal Forester

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

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

Education, Experience and Certification Requirements

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

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

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

Funding schedule:

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

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

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

CATEGORY 4 – Workforce Development

Up to 2 Awards, for up to \$50,000 each

Description: The Workforce Development category is designed to train citizens and students in essential skills for community tree care and management. By empowering individuals with both technical skills and awareness for the value of community trees, the program aims to enhance community engagement in urban forestry efforts. Successful applicants will teach participants proper tree planting, maintenance, and management techniques through hands-on learning experiences such as workshops and projects. Collaboration with local industry professionals is encouraged to connect participants with job opportunities and enhance their readiness for careers in urban forestry. While career pathways are prioritized, the primary goal is to foster a well-informed community that actively contributes to the health and sustainability of urban forests.

CATEGORY 5 – Tree Planting

Up to 14 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

FY2026 Match Waiver Grant Category**CATEGORY 6 – Watershed Protection Implementation**

Up to 13 Awards for \$50,000

Description: The Watershed Protection Implementation Grant (WPIG) is designed to provide funding for the implementation of forestry components of active EPA accepted Watershed Protection Plans (WWPs) or plans that are in development. The grant promotes, supports, and enhances the use of trees and forestry in WWPs. A WPP is a framework for implementing integrated water quality protection and restoration strategies driven by environmental objectives. Watershed protection planning is locally driven to address complex water quality problems that cross multiple jurisdictions. Using nature-based solutions that increase strategically placed tree cover protect water quality while increasing equitable access to urban tree canopy and associated health, environmental and economic benefits.

Proposal Format and Funding Availability

Applications may be found at <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/communityforestrygrants/>. There are five available categories. Applications are online forms with multiple sections. Applicants will provide short responses with limited character count for each of the following sections.

- Contact Info
- Partnering Organizations and Collaboration
- Overview of Project
- Goals and Objectives
- Proposed Activities
- Organizational Experience Completing Similar Projects
- Deliverables, Timeline, Outputs and Outcomes
- Innovation
- Project Budget
 - Personnel
 - Fringe
 - Travel
 - Supplies
 - Contractual
 - Other Expenses

Attached Documentation Required:

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

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

Ineligible Expenses for All Grants

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

Funding Criteria and Proposal Review

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

- ✓ Clearly defined purpose or objective of project
- ✓ Goals, purpose, or mission statement of the applicant is clear
- ✓ The degree to which the project meets a local need, provides community improvement, and supports the Texas Forest Action Plan
- ✓ Level of community engagement and volunteer involvement
- ✓ Local visibility or awareness of the project
- ✓ Sustainability of the project after the grant period
- ✓ Long-term benefit of the project
- ✓ Clarity of budget presentation
- ✓ Cost effectiveness
- ✓ Appropriate proposed time frame for completion of the project
- ✓ Demonstrated ability of the applicant to follow through on project completion

Payment Process

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

Project Inspection, Reporting, & Payment

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

Review of Projects

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

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

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

Payments to Grant Recipients

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

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

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

Project Completion Report

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

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

Execution of Agreements and Documents

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

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

Federal and State Regulations

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

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

Inflation Reduction Act

Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (a). State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) appropriated \$1,500,000,000 for multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants. Of this total \$21,750,000 was allocated to Texas to be distributed over a 5-year period.

Grant Preparation Assistance

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

Michelle Moore, Forest Systems Department Head

Phone: 936-639-8184, Email: CommunityForestryGrants@tfs.tamu.edu

Cateri Dixon, Urban and Community Forestry Program Specialist

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