

## USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry

### 2024 Challenge Cost Share Grant Program

#### Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Proposals are to be received by **Thursday February 29, 2024, 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 **USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) Program** 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.

Through this Notice of Funding Opportunity, the Forest Service is seeking proposals to address the [National Ten Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan \(2016-2026\)](#), (Action Plan) - Goal 4 and Goal 5 in the Ten Year Action Plan:

**Goal 4 Strategy A: Action 1:** Increase the biodiversity, health, and resilience of trees in urban and community forests.

**Goal 5: Strategy A:** Support the use of more locally grown, regionally adapted, insect and pest-resistant, and diverse native or site-appropriate species. **Action 1:** Facilitate funding to promote planting higher quality trees in urban forests with less emphasis on the quantity of trees planted (such as the published International Society of Arboriculture guidelines).

According to the [National Ten Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan \(2016-2026\)](#), (Action Plan) urban and community stewardship has made progress over the last decade to address the health of urban and community forests. For example, sixty (60%) percent of cities are utilizing new and emerging tools to assist propagation, planting, management, maintenance, and stewardship.

Past events and current issues show us that there are numerous ways a forest can be crippled, fragmented, and destroyed, whether it is from invasive species, pests, extreme heat, drought, hurricanes and/or development.

Work still remains to strengthen the resiliency and availability of quality nursery stock within the next ten years to meet increasing demands for trees that will increase the biodiversity, health and resilience of urban and community forests. The most frequently reported challenge was the lack of data.

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.*

## **CATEGORY: Urban and Community Forestry Climate-Resilient Tree Nurseries**

This year's category addresses components of Goal 4 and Goal 5 in the Ten-Year Action Plan:

**Goal 4 Strategy A: Action 1:** Increase the biodiversity, health, and resilience of trees in urban and community forests.

**Goal 5 Strategy A:** Support the use of more locally grown, regionally adapted, insect and pest-resistant, and diverse native or site-appropriate species. **Action 1:** Facilitate funding to promote planting higher quality trees in urban forests with less emphasis on the quantity of trees planted (such as the published International Society of Arboriculture guidelines).

In order to address these goals and strategies we need to know what urban tree species are available for purchase that are suitable for urban conditions and potentially withstand climate change impacts.

The Forest Service's National Reforestation, Nursery, and Genetic Resource unit (RNGR) nursery directory on <https://rngr.net> is the most comprehensive directory of forestry and conservation nurseries in the United States. The unit is currently updating their national database of tree nurseries to be more user-friendly by allowing for additional details and more accurate searching. The directory is also expanding to include suppliers of products and services from seed to out planting. Soon, there will also be a marketplace to facilitate supply/demand.

The RNGR nursery directory currently does not identify nurseries that address trees suitable for urban or developed environments or of those tree species, which may be resistant to climate change impacts such as, extreme heat, extreme temperature variations, pests, flooding, salt intrusion, high wind events, increased fire events, and ice storms to name a few.

**The Forest Service is seeking an entity to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the existing RNGR nursery inventory. This may include additional inventories to identify new nurseries that can provide suitable urban and community forestry nursery stock, document urban tree species availability and / or public requests for desired suitable tree species from urban cities and communities across the country and U.S. Territories.**

Applicants are to follow the existing inventory template that the Forest Service RNGR unit has established but may introduce key components that are unique to urban and community forests. This may include specific desired tree characteristics, (i.e., native species or pest resistant species), innovative technologies, and methodologies to make it easier for a public search of the database.

Nurseries are public and private enterprises that are responsive to consumer demand, so the focus of this assessment is to develop a comprehensive list of tree species that are best suited to the geography, climate, and culture of urban and community forests across the country.

Successful urban forest nursery inventories should include but are not limited to:

- A national inventory and assessment of the existing Forest Service's RNGR tree nursery database.
- Identifying any additional inventory of suitable urban forestry nurseries and their assessment, to be included into the Forest Service's RNGR tree nursery database.
- Include in the database key elements/characteristics that are unique for suitable urban tree species.
- Disseminate available and suitable urban trees species database to state forestry urban program managers, Inflation Reduction Act – Urban Forestry tree Planting grant recipients, Conference of Mayors, tribal organizations, and other applicable entities in the U.S and U.S territories.
- Provide a list of **stock type** and species in highest demand for different metro areas across the country and U.S. territories. Identify and include demand for cultivars and native seed sources.
- The tree needs assessment should include, but is not limited to, filters for:
  - resistance to climate change impacts,
  - variety of species
  - stock types (tree sizes)
  - identification of genetically modified species, native species, cloned species
  - anonymity blocks as necessary to protect sensitive areas/species
  - inventories are to note availability and barriers to securing urban tree species.
  - customer feedback/reviews for urban nurseries
  - identify existing nursery programs that provide training, internships and job opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to inform and empower members of disadvantaged communities on how to develop their own climate resilient urban tree species lists as applicable.
- Identify assistance, training, and workforce development around urban nursery establishment, development, and management for disadvantaged community members.

## **PROPOSAL EVALUATION**

Details on how proposals will be evaluated can be found in the [Proposal Evaluation Criteria 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 4 or Goal 5, Strategy A of the [National Ten Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan \(2016-2026\)](#).
- **Partnership collaboration is required:** Two or more related partners must be involved in these proposals and include formal letters of partnership describing their contribution. They 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 cooperative agreements.
- **Time Limit:** The Cooperative Agreement is to be **completed within 3 years**.
- **The grant review** and award process may take up to 6 months.
- **Eligible Applicants:** Non-profits, any U.S. State or Territory, educational institutions of higher learning, and federally recognized tribal organization that are operating within the United States or its territories. Local governments may apply if their proposal includes other local governments/eligible entities around the country. Private entities are not eligible 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 stating their pro bono role in the project.*
- **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>
- If applicable, ensure all Indirect Cost Rates are current.
- [Definitions and Resources](#)
- Hard copy versions of this NOFO are available upon request.  
Please email [SM.FS.nucfac@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.nucfac@usda.gov)

## How to Apply?

Click on this link [2024 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.

All applications must be completed and submitted by **Thursday February 29, 2024, 5:00 PM Eastern**. Once submitted, the applicant will receive an email notice confirming their application was successfully submitted.

## Contact:

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