



REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

Alabama Forestry Commission's Urban and Community Forestry Tree Planting Assistance Grants

(Also known as the "Trees4AL" Program)

Sponsored by the USDA Forest Service

Application Deadline:

All applications must be submitted online by

5pm CDT, Thursday, 08/29/2024

Submit from the webpage at:

[Click to Start Application](#)

INTRODUCTION

The **Alabama Forestry Commission**, in cooperation with the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (USFS)**, announces the Alabama Forestry Commission's Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Tree Planting Assistance Grants Program – 23-DG-11083101-500 (also known as the "**Trees4AL**" Program). The program is designed to encourage communities to create, improve, and support long-term and sustainable urban and community forests throughout Alabama.

AUTHORITY, OBJECTIVES, AND GOALS

Legislative Authority

[Public Law 117-169, Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 \(a\)\(2\)](#) [Approximately page 210]. The USFS State and Private Forestry Conservation Program, through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), appropriated \$1.5 billion to provide multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants

to specific entities for “tree planting and related activities.”. From this total allocation \$750,000 was allocated to Alabama.

Because this grant is a form of **federal** financial assistance, any awards to sub-recipients are also subject to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance in subparts A through F of 2 CFR Part 200, as adopted and supplemented by the USDA in 2 CFR Part 400. Adoption by USDA of the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 400 gives regulatory effect to the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 200, where the full text may be found. Acceptance of an award obligates the applicant to follow all requirements for federal funds. The requirements may be found at this link; [2 CFR Part 200](#).

Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) is also covered under the Biden Administration’s [Justice40 Initiative](#) established through [Executive Order 14008 Sec. 223](#). 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 in Alabama experiencing low tree canopy and environmental injustice**. 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 USDA also participates in the [America the Beautiful Initiative](#) which supports the prioritization of locally led conservation and park projects in communities that disproportionately lack access to nature and its benefits.

Federal Program Objectives

The federal program 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.

Program Goals for Alabama

State program goals from the 2020 Forest Action Plan for Alabama regarding the Urban and Community Forestry Program are listed below:

- 1) Implement activities to assess the condition of Alabama’s urban forestry resource.
- 2) Increase public awareness of urban forestry.
- 3) Acknowledge and show appreciation for the achievements of individuals, organizations, and communities that contribute to Alabama’s urban forestry

program.

- 4) Improve public policy and governance to guide regional and local decision making.
- 5) Increase the level of professionalism in urban forestry private and public sector practice.

More specifically, the Alabama Forestry Commission also supports projects that improve extreme heat mitigation, urban wood utilization, urban food forests and workforce development.

FUNDING AND ELIGIBILITY

Available Funding

Funding available under this grant, Trees4AL, is intended for tree planting in disadvantaged areas of Alabama. Applications will be restricted to between **\$40,000 and \$100,000 and will run from award execution date until as late as June 1, 2028. Earlier completion dates are preferred.** The desired grant timeline must be specified within the application.

Up to 20% of the total grant request may be used for **administrative purposes** in addition to the indirect charges as allowable. The budget submitted with the application should clearly show the administrative charges, and supporting documentation is required for indirect expenses. Both administrative and indirect costs must be reasonable for the application to be competitive.

The Alabama Forestry Commission reserves the **right to reject and approve partial** funding for all proposals. **Records** must be maintained for at least three (3) years following final payment. **Acknowledgement** of IRA U&CF contribution is required for printed materials and signage.

Grant Eligibility Information

Funds may be awarded to units of local governments (city, town, county), non-profit organizations (charitable organizations) meeting section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, tribal entities, or educational institutions. Other organizations, such as community tree volunteer groups, neighborhood associations or civic groups which do not have current 501(c)(3) status 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 ([EIN](#)) and a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Information on UEI may be found by clicking this hyperlink: [UEI Info](#).

Funds MUST be used in Alabama for DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES as identified at the time of application by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool ([CEJST](#)). CEJST is a geospatial mapping tool used 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.

Projects or programs of work completed entirely (100%) in disadvantaged communities identified by CEJST in Alabama will qualify for IRA funding.

Other government sanctioned data sources, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's [EJScreen](#), may be considered for supporting identification of disadvantaged communities, but project areas must be shown as disadvantaged in CEJST. The following tools are accepted:

- Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)
- EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen)
- EPA [EnviroAtlas](#) Interactive Map, Opportunity Zones
- And other government sponsored vulnerability tools as approved by the USDA Forest Service AND the Alabama Forestry Commission.

For community work the definition of "community" within the Justice40 formal guidance, [M-21-28](#), will be used. Project match is waived under USDA Forest Service waiver permitted under Public Law 117-169, Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (b) since all projects must be in disadvantaged communities in Alabama. Applications must clearly describe the scope of work to be performed in applicable disadvantaged communities and identify online data tools used to designate the service area as a disadvantaged community. Applicants are strongly encouraged to print off and save the CEJST map showing parcels served for the final report and census tract numbers must be reported also.

Multiple tools may be used, but identification of the planting area(s) as disadvantaged under CEJST is required. All work must be tracked at the level that clearly shows the disadvantaged communities served.



Figure 1. CEJST map of Alabama with disadvantaged parcels shown in grey as of April 25, 2024.

Eligible Projects

Eligible Projects must meet Federal and State Program Objectives. The U&CF Grant Program is intended to support new initiatives, programs, projects, and/or activities not currently fully funded through other sources. Examples of eligible categories for applications with an approved grant narrative are described in detail below.

Tree Planting Projects

All projects should include a site plan, plant list, tree planting specifications, tree protection needs, site photos, and maintenance plan. Applications should include a letter of permission/support for the project proposal if the planting site and/or access is not on the applicant's property. Applicants may be required to complete a liability waiver as part of the grant agreement. Private property owners are not eligible unless applying in partnership with a non-profit organization or with their local government. Grant funds will not pay for trees larger than two inches in caliper. Grants should range from **\$40,000 to \$100,000**.

COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING projects include any tree planting on public lands.

All tree planting projects funded under this category **must be for at least one of the following purposes:**

- 1) Addressing tree equity,
- 2) Mitigating the effects of extreme heat and climate change,
- 3) Replacing storm damaged canopy,
- 4) Creating greenspaces,
- 5) Reducing stormwater runoff and/or
- 6) Increasing the environmental and social benefits of trees.

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 Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) if applicant is not the property owner.
- 5) Include signage in the most visible placement on the planting site for public viewing, near trees planted, recognizing that funding comes from the Alabama Forestry Commission and the USDA Forest Service. Valid logos and verbiage will be provided to successful applicants. As an example, see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf/insignia-approval> for the USDA Forest Service's Insignia Approval for Communication Products.

Note: If your application is approved, your project will be assigned to an AFC Forester to review and approve the planting and maintenance plan. If applicable, AFC approval will also be required for the impervious surface removal plan.

The cost of removing and **stump grinding** diseased, high risk or invasive trees to create planting spaces for new trees is an allowable expense. Also eligible are projects that include the cost of **removing impervious surface** to create appropriate planting spaces/soil volume for each tree's critical root space at maturity. These impervious surface removal projects must follow the soil reconditioning technical specifications approved by the Alabama Forestry Commission. Minimal educational materials promoting the value of trees is also permitted. All communications as signage will attribute projects as made possible by a grant from the Alabama Forestry Commission in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program as part of the Inflation Reduction Act (See criteria 5 above).

STREET TREE PLANTING projects including planting strips and cutouts. Cutouts must be at least 4'x10' or equivalent to be considered for funding under the program. Proposed projects with planting strips or cutouts less than 3' wide will not be considered.

RIPARIAN TREE PLANTING in [non-Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \(CREP\)](#) areas, including urban areas and private lands. Plantings should be a minimum of 35 feet wide. A maximum of 435 seedlings per acre will be paid for by the grant on a 10 x 10 spacing.

URBAN ORCHARDS may be organized to address food insecurity on any public lands. **Food Forests** are eligible if the project's primary focus is establishing canopy to mitigate extreme heat with the secondary benefit being food products. Tree selection for these Food Forest projects should prioritize species that are low maintenance and native to Alabama such as pecan, mulberry, pawpaw, and persimmon.

NEIGHBORHOOD OR NEIGHBORHOODS TREE PLANTINGS may be organized by the local civic groups or neighborhood associations or by the community government. Projects should be located on common grounds or within 35 feet of the roadway.

TURF TO TREES PROJECTS include conversion of regularly mowed lawns greater than 0.1 acres to trees, usually using tree seedlings, saplings, or small potted trees. The cost of tree protection is an allowable expense. Annual mowing between the seedlings is also allowed.

Ineligible projects or activities include, but are not limited to:

- Research
- Property/land acquisition and related costs
- Construction and capital improvement projects
- Equipment or machinery purchases
- Food or beverage purchases
- Gift cards
- Planting or purchase of plant material classified as an invasive species
- Costs incurred before or after the grant period
- Costs not approved by U&CF Program Manager during initial award or any grant modifications

TIME CONSTRAINTS, REPORTING, AND PAYMENTS

Timetable

All applications must be submitted online through the software, "Submittable", on the AFC website found on the title page link under "Click to Start Application" by 5:00 p.m. CDT on Thursday, August 29, 2024. No exceptions.

The Urban Forestry Coordinator will notify successful applicants of funding approval as soon as possible, but with the intent to make notification by September 26, 2024. Successful applicants **must submit required federal forms within thirty (30) days** of the date of the award notice. Municipalities needing city/town council or Board of Supervisor approval must contact the Alabama Forestry Commission if a time extension is needed.

Grant Timeframe

Approved projects can begin only after you have received a fully executed copy of your grant award. Costs incurred **PRIOR TO** the date on your award letter must be pre-approved by the Program Manager. This is a four-year grant, but awardees should plan on the shortest time feasible to complete the project. However, all work and the final report must be concluded by June 1, 2028.

Reports

Periodic progress reports and a final report are required of all grantees. Grants may be terminated for the lack of timely progress toward project objectives. A final report must be submitted at the conclusion of the project prior to final payout.

Payment Process

The funds awarded under the grant are available on a reimbursement basis after report submittal and in accordance with a payment schedule agreed to in advance. Grantees must file a *Request for Reimbursement* (included in award paperwork package) and send records of expenditures along with documentation of all costs to the state. The state reserves the right to make partial payments subject to completion of scheduled work. The Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program Manager (currently Dale Dickens, see contact information on last page) will evaluate the progress of the project to determine eligibility for full payment.

APPLICATION FORMAT

Written proposals, clearly describing the scope and work for the project, will be entered into the grant application online. This includes the initial introductory information on the first page of the application form with signature and Budget Worksheet. The proposal narrative **should not exceed five pages**. Applicants may also include maps, photos, etc. in addition to the narrative. Clear and concise proposals should address an urban and community forestry need and meet one or more of the objectives of the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program (see bottom half of page 2). While you can save your application in Submittable as you go, we recommend having most of the information described below in hand before logging in to Submittable, the grant application software.

The narrative and budget include:

1. The **purpose, objective, or mission statement** of the applying organization and the purpose and objectives of the project. The project's purpose should be explained in one concise paragraph.
2. Explain **why the project is important**. Identify the project audience, why they should be addressed and describe what condition will be changed because of the project. The narrative should include these elements:
 - ◆ **Activities** – List all the activities awardee will undertake to finish the project.

- ◆ **Partnerships and Participants** – List project personnel, volunteers, participating organizations, etc.
 - ◆ **Public, Educational Benefits, and Community Engagement** – Strategies for the project should also be described. Communications and signage will attribute projects as made possible by a grant from the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program as part of the Inflation Reduction Act.
 - ◆ **Underserved/Disadvantaged Benefit** – Provide a written description of how funds will benefit underserved and disadvantaged communities in Alabama. Also, provide a screenshot of the geographic area and/or areas from the approved online data tools.
 - ◆ **Administration** – Specify who will be responsible for project management and record keeping.
 - ◆ **Timetable** – Show project start date, project milestone completion dates, and total project completion dates.
 - ◆ **End Product/Result** – List specific **deliverables** to be accomplished with funds (i.e., trees planted, brochures, packets, videos, publications, websites, proposed newsletter articles, street tree inventory, management plans, etc.) and identify the recipients of or target audience for the deliverable (i.e., students, employees, civic organization, Chamber of Commerce, citizens in benefitted community). This may be written as a bulleted list with descriptions.
3. A detailed project **budget** should include sources and description of materials, maintenance costs, and costs of professional services. Applicants should use the budget worksheet attached to this Request for Application Package as a guide. The budget will be compared to the project narrative to determine if proposed expenditures are reasonable and allowable. A maximum of 20% of the total award may be used towards administrative expenses.

Categories that might be used in the budget include:

- ◆ **Personnel*** – List all staff positions by title. Give annual salary, percentage of time assigned to the project, and total cost for the budget period.
- ◆ **Fringe Benefits** – Identify the percentage used, the basis for its computation, and the types of benefits included.
- ◆ **Travel** – Specify the mileage, per diem, estimated number of trips, and other costs for each type of travel. Please visit www.gsa.gov/perdiem to determine the appropriate federal rates.
- ◆ **Supplies** – List all tangible personal property, other than “equipment” which is valued at \$5,000 or more, necessary for the project. Individual supply items must not exceed \$5,000 in value. The budget detail should identify supplies to be purchased.

- ◆ **Contractual*** – Identify each proposed contract and specify its purpose, nature, and estimated cost.
- ◆ **Other** – List each item in sufficient detail for grant administrators to determine the reasonableness of the cost.
- ◆ **Indirect** – You may use the de minimis amount, currently 10% of salary and fringe benefits, or use your Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) as approved by the Federal Government. A copy of the NICRA paperwork must be included in your grant agreement. Indirect costs do not include administrative costs of the grant.

*State assumes no liability for any contractors, volunteers, or local government employees working on any projects.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

1. Fill out and sign as appropriate the **grant proposal application online form with budget table, screenshot of CJEST disadvantaged area, and W9 form**. These documents must be submitted with your proposal package.
2. Non-profit organizations must submit documentation of 501(c)(3) status (IRS letter or copy of annual tax filing).
3. Submit your application online through Submittable.

FUNDING CRITERIA AND PROPOSAL REVIEW

Review of fully correct and complete applications will be based on the following criteria:

- ✓ Clearly defined purpose or objective of project.
- ✓ Goals, purpose, or mission statement of the applicant is clear.
- ✓ Meets a demonstrated urban forestry need.
- ✓ Helps strengthen and develop local urban & community forestry capacity.
- ✓ Meets federal and state program objectives.
- ✓ Involves various partnerships.
- ✓ Local visibility or awareness of the project.
- ✓ Long-term benefit of the project.
- ✓ Clarity of budget presentation and use of budget worksheet (enclosed).
- ✓ Cost effectiveness.
- ✓ Has a realistic time frame for completion.
- ✓ Acknowledgment of IRA UCF contribution language/signage.
- ✓ Can be duplicated and/or used as a model in other cities.
- ✓ Demonstrated ability of the applicant to follow through on project completion.
- ✓ Enhances environmental, social, cultural, historical, psychological, and economical values.
- ✓ Clearly defined maintenance plan for planting.

GRANT PREPARATION ASSISTANCE

Assistance in developing project proposals for this request for applications is available, as time and other resources allow, to all potential applicants from the AFC Urban and Community Forestry Group (U&CF). See contact information below.

Dale Dickens, Urban Forestry Coordinator
Alabama Forestry Commission
513 Madison Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104
Or
P.O. Box 302550
Montgomery, AL 36130-2550

(334) 467-7971

dale.dickens@forestry.alabama.gov

Website: www.forestry.alabama.gov

Successful applicants will be required to attend an IRA **grant training workshop on October 10, 2024**, or watch the recording of the training shortly after the 10th. We will also provide guidance as to a project's suitability under this grant program and answer questions up until August 28, 2024, the day before the deadline. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss potential projects with the U&CF before application submittal.

A copy of this request for applications may be found at: [RFA Online](#).

Appendix A – Sample Budget for Trees4AL Grant Requests**Sample Budget****Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program****Budget Worksheet**

| Budget Items by SF 424A Object Class Categories | Grant Share Direct Expenses or Cash Purchases | Totals by Category |
|--|--|-------------------------------|
| a. Personnel | | |
| <i>[Buster Brown - Planting Coordinator, 500 hours at \$37.35/hour</i> | \$18,675.00 | |
| <i>Municipal Employee in charge of planting sites, 10 hours at \$55/hour</i> | \$550.00 | \$19,225.00 |
| b. Fringe Benefits | | |
| <i>Fringe benefits for above personnel at 43%</i> | \$8,266.75 | \$8,266.75 |
| c. Travel | | |
| <i>Pickup Rental - 160 hours @ \$10.00 per hour</i> | \$1,600.00 | \$1,600.00 |

| | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| e. Supplies | | |
| <i>Planting Stock- 50 2.5-inch caliper catalpa @ \$250 each</i> | \$12,500.00 | |
| <i>Planting tools and mulch</i> | \$500.00 | \$13,000.00 |
| f. Contractual | | |
| <i>Tree Planters, 30 planters at \$200 per day</i> | \$6,000.00 | |
| <i>Consultant Services</i> | \$3,000.00 | \$9,000.00 |
| h. Other | | |
| <i>None</i> | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| i. Total Direct Charges (sum of a- h) | \$51,091.75 | \$51,091.75 |
| j. Indirect Charges claiming 10% de minimis | \$2,749.18 | \$2,749.18 |
| k. Totals (i + j) | \$53,840.93 | \$53,840.93 |

Appendix B – First Page Information Worksheet

This is the information to anticipate and gather for the online form. **Do not submit this as a paper form.** All official information and application must be submitted online.

Application Form - First Page

Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program

| Project Information | | | | | | |
|--|----|--------------------------------|--|-------------------|--|-------------|
| Project Title (20 words or less): | | | | | | |
| Category: | | | | | | |
| Brief Description of Project (3 sentences or less): | | | | | | |
| Applicant Information | | | | | | |
| Organization Name: | | | | | | |
| Organization's Federal ID No.: | | Unique Entity ID (UEI): | | | | |
| Project Manager (Person responsible for project reporting and activities. All correspondence will be directed to this contact.) | | | | | | |
| First Name: | | Last Name: | | | | |
| Title: | | | | | | |
| Mailing Address: | | | | | | |
| City: | | County : | | State : | | Zip: |
| Daytime Phone: | | | | | | |
| E-Mail Address: | | | | | | |
| Web Site: | | | | | | |
| Financial Information | | | | | | |
| <i>U&CF Funds Requested + Total Cash Match + Total In-Kind Match = Total Amount of Project</i> | | | | | | |
| U&CF Funds Requested | \$ | | | | | |

| | |
|---|-------|
| | |
| | |
| Signature of Agreement | |
| <p>As the duly authorized representative of the applicant named above, I hereby certify that all parts of this grant application have been read and understood and that all information submitted herein is true and correct. If awarded a grant under the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program of the state, said organization agrees to comply with all Federal and State guidelines for completion of the grant.</p> <p>(Actual signature will be an “e-signature” within Submittable.)</p> | |
| Signature of Authorized Representative | Date |
| _____ | _____ |
| Name and Title of Authorized Representative (Please print or type) | |
| _____ | |

