2024 Request for Applications

Colorado Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Grant Program

Background

In March of 2024, the Colorado State Forest Service secured a five-year award from the USDA Forest Service through Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding to create a grant program for urban and community forestry (UCF). The IRA UCF grants are dedicated to enhancing the urban forest canopy and management within disproportionately impacted (DI) communities across Colorado. All grant-funded projects will prioritize capacity building and community engagement to improve forest canopies in DI areas, identified using the CEJST (Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool) under the Justice40 initiative, although projects may extend to surrounding areas to ensure comprehensive planning.

Eligibility

Nonprofit organizations and local government entities including, but not limited to, municipalities, counties, cities, schools, special districts, LLC's representing neighborhood groups, and Tribal agencies or programs are eligible to apply for Colorado IRA UCF grant funding.

In addition, all applicants must be able to function as the fiscal agent or have a designated fiscal agent, and nonprofits must be registered and in good standing with the Secretary of State's Office.

Qualifying Projects

Qualifying projects will include tree planting, pruning, removal and watering and irrigation installation and must occur within DI boundaries or be immediately adjacent to them, according to USDA Forest Service guidance. Additionally, projects will include urban forest management plans, capacity building activities, urban wood utilization, tree inventories and green career development within and around DI areas. While the primary focus remains on DI communities, projects may extend to surrounding neighborhoods to ensure comprehensive planning of urban forest areas.

In addition, qualifying projects will show a comprehensive approach to outreach within DI areas to ensure that the opinions, preferences and choices of residents help direct the final outcomes of the project. No grantee will be allowed to plant trees using grant funds within the first six months after receiving final approval, to allow for outreach activities to residents, training of Tree Stewards (volunteers within DI neighborhoods), and proper timing on selection and tagging of trees at nurseries. Tree removals and pruning, forest management plans, forest inventories and green career development projects will also require metrics for outreach in DI areas as part of project outcomes.

Projects may include tree planting, removals and pruning on private property in DI areas. To perform any activities on private property, grantees must obtain permission from the property owner, along with a liability release form for their organization and the CSFS. The permission and liability release can be obtained during the project, but language should be included in the project proposal to ensure this is completed.

At the conclusion of the project's four-year grant term, the CSFS will conduct a comprehensive review of the project to ensure a minimum of 90% survival rate for newly planted trees. Grantees will collaborate with the CSFS to conduct a thorough inventory of all newly planted trees using the Colorado Tree View (CO-TreeView) platform. Completion of this inventory is mandatory before final reimbursement of the grant can be processed.

To meet the targeted 90% survival rate for all newly planted trees, the following project factors must be followed:

- Tree giveaways are not allowed unless they are followed up by an inspection for proper planting immediately after the tree is planted.
- Grantees must track the location and condition of all newly planted trees and ensure that if any die or are damaged, they are replaced within the next planting season. If a tree dies, then it must be replanted by an experienced tree planter during the replanting (minimum 2 years of experience).
- Grantees are highly encouraged to perform winter watering and plan for this as an outreach activity, as described in the online training noted in the How to Apply section.
- Grantees are highly encouraged to budget for a minimum of 25% of trees to be replaced within their grant budget due to extreme weather factors and stress on urban trees in Colorado.

To identify DI communities in their area, applicants should use the CO-TreeView (**cotreeview.com**) platform. They can click on the canopy button in the top left corner to locate eligible DI areas (CEJST data are included in CO-TreeView). Applicants may also locate eligible DI areas by searching the CEJST map directly (**screeningtool.geoplatform.gov**). They can enter their location in the search bar on the map to identify DI areas.

For plantings, proposals must include at least one volunteer resident per DI area to serve as a Tree Steward for that neighborhood to help advocate and monitor the health of plantings for the four-year duration of the grant. This Tree Steward should be paid a minimum of $150 per month as participant support costs to offset travel, food and out-of-pocket costs for their volunteer efforts. This is a reimbursable cost and should be included in the proposed budget. Volunteer participant support costs should be recorded in the project's details based on project tracking needs, such as number of trees monitored and dates and times of monitoring.

For tree removals, trees proposed to be removed must be completely dead or considered hazardous or an undesirable species (e.g., ash, Russian olive, tree of heaven). All removals must be approved by CSFS staff either in person or by confirmation with aerial and/or onsite photos. Any removal not pre-approved will not be reimbursed. Trees that are completely dead do not have to be replaced (however, it is highly encouraged that they are replaced). Trees that have any portion of their crown alive must be replaced one to one.

Budget

$1.6 million is available for the 2024 grant cycle. The CSFS reserves the right to award full or partial funding to successful applicants. Grants are provided in two levels: $20,000 to $99,999, and $100,000 to $250,000. These levels are provided to allow smaller communities and organizations to compete solely against other smaller organizations.

Budget requests must be clearly explained in the budget narrative section of the grant application. A description of specific outcomes generated by the proposed budget and methods for successfully expending resources within the proposed timeline is required.

For administrative costs, grantees are allowed to utilize 10% of the total grant budget for costs associated with grant paperwork and tracking over the four-year grant period.

Matching Funds

No matching funds are required for this grant. An example budget is included for reference in the application instructions to ensure applicants understand how to utilize this grant.

Reimbursements & Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants will work with the CSFS to finalize approved project activities prior to beginning work on their projects. **Only after a project agreement is issued by the CSFS may a successful applicant begin their project**. The CSFS will review the project's budget and all proposed activities prior to issuance of a project agreement. If any activities are considered unachievable, they may be modified or removed from the final award.

Successful applicants will be reimbursed for actual (cash) costs incurred in implementing the project after the following requirements: 1) completion of project activities outlined in approved award packet and 2) submittal of reports and reimbursement paperwork. For tree plantings, there is a targeted 90% survival rate and mandatory inventory of newly planted trees before final reimbursement, as described in the Qualifying Projects section.

At the completion of the project, awardees must share their project with the CSFS to ensure the final product meets the standards outlined in the approved Scope of Work in the award packet. Yearly reporting along with a final report will be required. Details for reporting requirements will be provided to awarded grantees.

How to Apply

All grantees are required to complete an online training on planting and performing urban tree projects within DI areas in Colorado prior to submission of their application. The online training will be available by May 1, 2024, on the CSFS website (csfs.colostate.edu/) and Colorado Tree Coalition website (www.coloradotrees.org/).

Upon completing the training, applicants may submit an application. The Colorado IRA UCF grant application is available as a PDF and Google Form. They are the same application. **Submit either the PDF or the Google Form.**

PDF Application

Follow these steps to apply for a Colorado IRA UCF grant using the PDF application:

- Visit the CSFS website at csfs.colostate.edu/grants/.
- Follow the link on the webpage to the Colorado IRA UCF grant program page.
- Follow the link to the PDF application and download it.
- Fill out the grant application thoroughly and accurately.
- Follow the link to the 2024 Detailed Budget Form. Download and complete the form for your project's budget.
- Fill out and sign the Signature Form included at the end of the PDF application.
- Review all information to ensure it is complete and correct before submitting the application.
- Submit the application once satisfied with it and the Detailed Budget Form to CSFS_UCF@colostate.edu before the deadline of July 31, 2024.

Google Form Application

Follow these steps to apply for a Colorado IRA UCF grant using the Google Form application:

- Visit the CSFS website at csfs.colostate.edu/grants/.
- Follow the link on the webpage to the Colorado IRA UCF grant program page.
- Follow the link to the Google Form application.
- Sign in to your free Google email account if you have one. Applicants do not need a Google email account to fill out the application, but one is necessary to save progress on the application.
- Fill out the grant application thoroughly and accurately.
- Follow the link to the 2024 Detailed Budget Form. Download and complete the form for your project's budget. Upload the completed form as an attachment.
- Follow the link to the Signature Form. Download, fill out and sign the Signature Form. Upload the completed form as an attachment.
- Review all information to ensure it is complete and correct before submitting the application.
- Submit the application once satisfied with it, the Detailed Budget Form and the Signature Form via the Google Form before the deadline of July 31, 2024.

Assistance with Applying

After submission, applicants won't be able to make changes. However, if they realize they made a mistake before the deadline, applicants may contact the CSFS at CSFS_UCF@colostate.edu for assistance.

CSFS staff members are available to assist grantees throughout the process and are committed to providing technical support to any organization in need. Contact the CSFS at CSFS_UCF@colostate.edu. Additionally, applicants may send questions to the CSFS UCF listserv at https://lists.colostate.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/urbanforestryserv.

The USDA Forest Service also has provided Community Navigators to help with Google Forms, grant budget, narrative assistance or anything else to support applicants, as described in the USFS Grant Navigator Help section.

2024 Grant Cycle Timeline

- Request for applications (RFA) release – April 26, 2024
- Application deadline – **July 31, 2024**
- Award announcement – September 1, 2024
- Project agreement process initiated - September 10, 2024
- Project completion deadline – February 27, 2029

Proposal Evaluation / Scoring

Applications will be independently scored by an anonymous group of 11 committee members made up of volunteer urban and community forestry experts from across Colorado. Applications will be evaluated by someone from a different geographic region of the applicant's project. The evaluation/scoring criteria used to score applications are included in the application instructions.

USFS Grant Navigator Help

Applicants who need help filling out an application or logging into the Google Form to access the application may contact Community Navigators at the following organizations for technical assistance.

First Nations Development Institute: Home | First Nations Development Institute

Point of contact: Lindsay Riggs (lriggs@firstnations.org)

Coalitions & Collaboratives: Community Navigator Program – Coalitions & Collaboratives, Inc. (co-co.org)

Point of contact: Therese Ryley (therese.ryley@co-co.org)

Hispanic Access Foundation: Hispanic Access Foundation - Community Navigator

Point of contact: Jessyca Saavedra (jessyca@hispanicaccess.org)