

SFI'S URBAN FOREST IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



SELECTION AND RANKING CRITERIA

PURPOSE

Evaluate your urban or community forest against the SFI Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard. This will give insight on how sustainable the forest is, areas of excellence, and areas for improvement.

TO APPLY

1. Visit forests.org/urban-grant and learn more about the application process
 - Review the supplementary selection criteria below
2. Complete your application as soon as possible via the link on our website by 11:59 PM Eastern Time, May 30, 2027
 - Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis between now and May 30, 2027, or until all funds are awarded—whichever comes first
 - Emailed or mailed applications will not be considered
3. Completed applications will be reviewed and notified of decision within 45 days of submission

BUDGET

Funding for this project is provided by the Inflation Reduction Act and the USDA Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry Program. Successful grantees will be expected to summarize how their budget aligns with the project's goals and should explain categories and rationales behind costs.

This section should be detailed and specific around the following categories:

- **Supplies:** Physical or digital resources
- **Salaries and Wages:** List each position, the percentage of time they will spend on the project, and their salary. Justify why each role is essential for the project
- **Fringe Benefits:** Explain the fringe benefits provided, such as health insurance, retirement contributions, etc., and justify the rate used
- **Subcontractors or Consultants:** Describe the services provided by subcontractors or consultants, the cost, and why external expertise is required
- **Overhead or Administrative Costs:** Explain the indirect cost rate, what it covers, and how it was determined. Limited to 10%, unless negotiated rate with the U.S. Government

De minimis rate: Any Non-Federal entity (except State and local governments that receive more than \$35 million per year in

Federal funding) that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect rate (NICRA) may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in 2 CFR 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

Sample Budget for In-House Assessment

Budget Category	Description	Request
Personnel	Jane Doe: Director of Sustainability Salary-Part Time to Complete Assessment	\$18,000.00
Supplies	N/a	\$0.00
Contractual	N/a	\$0.00
Indirect Costs	Overhead Expenditures	\$1,800.00
TOTAL		\$19,800.00

The City of SAMPLE is requesting the following:

Compensation for Jane Doe, Director of Sustainability, in the sum of \$18,000.00

Jane will be tasked with orchestrating and collecting the necessary documentation for the Assessment Survey

Estimated time spent on this is: X hours

Hourly Rate for Jane Doe is: \$ X

Indirect costs requested for operations for the institution.

Sample Budget for Contracted Services

Budget Category	Description	Request
Personnel	N/a	\$0.00
Supplies	N/a	\$0.00
Contractual	John Doe Consulting	\$24,000.00
Indirect Costs	N/a	\$0.00
TOTAL		\$24,000.00

The City of SAMPLE is requesting the following:

Compensation for John Doe Consulting in the sum of \$24,000.00

John will be tasked with orchestrating and collecting the necessary documentation for the Assessment Survey

Once notified of acceptance, successful grantees will be expected to:

- Execute the funding agreement with SFI
- Utilize the [SFI Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard](#) for the evaluation
- Report progress biannually (June 1 and December 1) with updates on progress of the assessment, including:
 - Monthly check-ins with SFI
 - Which Objectives and Indicators have been achieved, in progress, or not applicable
 - For specific indicators have been designated as “in progress” and “not applicable” by the grantee, explain the reasons for these designations
 - Insights regarding lessons learned, challenges or opportunities that the organization has realized as they have benchmarked against the standard
 - Fiscal reporting prior to reimbursement (reimbursement can be requested as often as monthly or at least bi-annually)
 - Copies of paid invoices and expenditures
- Upon completion of the project, provide a full report on the same criteria above with lessons learned and participate in an exit interview with SFI

RANKING CRITERIA

Priority will be given to applicants who meet the following criteria:

- Positively impact the greatest number of disadvantaged communities (as defined by the [EPA's Environmental Justice Screening Tool](#))
- Are NOT a previous recipient of a USDA Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act grant (+1 to ranking)
- Have NOT had active exclusions in the System for Award Management, SAM.gov (an exclusion in SAM.gov will disqualify applicants)
- Size of the organization and population of city or community (small and medium sized) the project supports
 - Small: Under 100,000 (+1 to ranking)
 - Medium: Between 100k-499,999k (+1 to ranking)
 - Large: Over 500k
- Project demonstrates the greatest impact (+1-3 to ranking)
- Projects demonstrating dedication to their urban and community forest program (+1-3 for ranking)
 - [Definitions](#) of acceptable ordinances, advisory groups, and other terms
 - Management plans for their urban forest (a master plan, strategic plan, etc.)
 - Tree ordinance
 - Advisory or advocacy group
 - Professional managing the urban or community forest
 - Tree City USA
 - Tree City of the World
 - Growth Award from Tree City USA Program in the last five years
 - Tree Campus (University)
 - Accredited with the Urban and Community Forestry Society
 - Other demonstrable dedication to urban or community forest management

Eligible applicants must:

- Be located within the United States
- Represent a municipality, university or college, non-profit organization, Tribe or Indigenous community, managing an urban or community forest which contains a disadvantaged community as designated by the U.S. Forest Service
- Actively engage in managing and sustaining your urban and community forest



QUESTIONS?

Connect with the SFI Team:

[Michael Martini](#), SFI Director of Urban and Community Forestry in the U.S., 202-918-4701

[Paul Johnson](#), VP, Urban and Community Forestry and Career Pathways, 202-719-1389 ext 473