

Tree Equity Grants for Disadvantaged Communities

Request for Proposals

Funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service through the
Inflation Reduction Act

Grant funding administered by The Morton Arboretum, an equal
opportunity provider.

**Proposals Due: September 13,
2024**

The Morton Arboretum
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Lisle, IL 60532

Contact: Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org

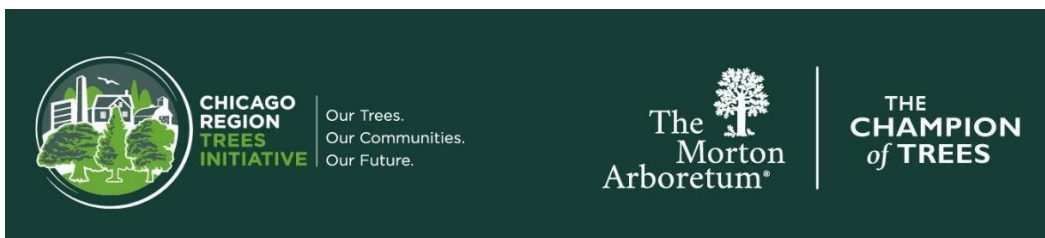


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For more information, please visit:

<https://chicagorti.org/grants>

Or please contact Grants.CRTI@Mortonarb.org

Introduction and Allowable Projects

These grant funds are provided by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry allocation of the Inflation Reduction Act and are to be made available through competitive subawards to nature-deprived populations and disadvantaged communities for a variety of urban and community forestry-based activities including: tree inventories, urban forest management plans, tree planting, urban wood utilization, urban food forests, extreme heat mitigation, and workforce development. This request for proposals provides funding assistance to disadvantaged communities in Illinois to improve the urban forest. Organizations eligible to apply include both local government entities as well as specific nonprofit organizations, described in [General Criteria](#).

A total of \$7,899,131 in funding is available. The total maximum allowable funding amount for any one community is \$500,000. The minimum allowable funding amount is \$25,000.

One hundred percent of work must take place in or benefit disadvantaged communities and, therefore, the requirement to match funding is waived. This match waiver must be passed on to any subawardees as described in the [General Criteria](#) section.

All funded projects and final reporting must be completed by June 1, 2028.

Assistance is available for any applicant needing assistance to complete a proposal. Assistance can be provided by contacting Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org. All requests for assistance must be received by August 16, 2024.

Applicant Eligibility

Communities are eligible for program funding in one or more of the following situations. A flowchart describing this eligibility requirement is available in [Appendix D](#).

1. **Municipalities** listed as eligible in [Illinois's Municipal Inflation Reduction Act Eligibility Screening Tool \(MIRA-Tool\)](#) are able to apply for program funding. This tool combines data from the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), [EPA Environmental Justice Screening Tool \(EJScreen\)](#) and HUD Opportunity Zones. Census tracts that are in the environmental justice index percentile range of 80-100 on the EJScreen are considered disadvantaged.

Allowable projects are listed in this RFP in the section [Eligible Program Areas](#) and fall into two types: site-specific (for example, tree planting, tree maintenance, and hazardous removals) and community-wide projects (for example, tree inventories, management plans, staff training or hiring).

- a. **Site-specific projects:** Municipalities must complete 100% of a site-specific project in census tracts considered to be disadvantaged by CEJST, EJScreen, or HUD Opportunity Zones. These applicants must submit a list of census tracts in which their project will take place as part of their application. A map that combines all applicable census tracts is available [here](#).
- b. **Community-wide projects:** Municipalities with disadvantaged areas may complete projects that benefit the entirety of their community. While these projects may benefit the whole community, they must focus on engagement, outcomes, and action in

disadvantaged areas. Municipalities may use the CEJST, EJScreen, and/or HUD Opportunity Zones to determine areas that are considered disadvantaged. A map that combines all applicable census tracts is available [here](#).

All community-wide projects must be accompanied by request for funding for on-the-ground implementation work solely in disadvantaged areas and engage those residents in a meaningful way. See the [Improving Community Forestry Programs](#) section for details.

2. **All other nongovernmental organizations and nonmunicipal units of local government**, described in [General Criteria](#), are eligible for funding. All grant-funded work performed must occur exclusively in census tracts that are considered disadvantaged by CEJST, EJScreen, or HUD Opportunity Zones. A map that combines all applicable census tracts is available [here](#).

All proposals with project components listed in the [Improving Community Forestry Programs](#) section must be accompanied by a request for funding for on-the-ground implementation work solely in disadvantaged areas and engage those residents in a meaningful way.

3. **Past IRA awardees** for urban and community forestry projects are eligible to apply for this grant, but they will be considered after all applicants who have not yet received IRA funding. This includes direct grants from the USDA Forest Service, as well as all pass-through organizations such as Trees Forever, Faith in Place, The Morton Arboretum, etc.

All applicants must specify the disadvantaged census tracts in which work will be performed in their application.

Requested Notice of Intent

To ensure an efficient and streamlined application process, we request that all potential applicants submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) before the formal grant application. The NOI is a nonbinding expression of your intent to apply and will aid us in planning for the upcoming grant review process.

The NOI serves as a brief overview of your organization's intended project, allowing us to better understand the scope and focus of your proposed request. This overview allows us to better match our review panel to the needs of the applicants.

Please submit your NOI by August 16, 2024, using the form available [here](#). Submission details and the online form link can also be found on ChicagoRTI.org/Grants. If you miss the August 16 deadline, please contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org as soon as possible to express your intent.

Grant Program Goals

The Morton Arboretum, through the Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI), will assist communities in Illinois to plant and care for trees to mitigate and improve resilience to climate change, improve community health, and address environmental inequities in disadvantaged diverse communities.

All of the funding from this program will be used to help communities enhance a resilient and equitable urban forest in disadvantaged communities in Illinois.

This project will address goals of the Justice40, Congressional, State Forest Action Plan and Ten-Year National Urban and Community Forestry Plan by increasing equitable access to urban tree canopy cover and associated human health, environmental and economic (workforce) benefits in disadvantaged communities, broadening community engagement in local urban forest planning, and improving resilience to climate change, pests, storms, and extreme heat events through best management and maintenance practices.

As needed, The Morton Arboretum will work with elected officials, staff, and community members to increase awareness of the importance of a healthy urban forest tree canopy cover, learn community concerns and values, help develop a project and project plan, apply for funding, and help communities to carry out their projects to successful completion.

Allowable Project Overview

Program areas funded through this proposal must benefit communities in disadvantaged areas and include one or more of the following program goals.

1. Increasing tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of communities through diverse tree planting on public and private property and care post planting
2. Improving forest health in disadvantaged areas of communities through pruning, dead tree removals, ash treatment, pest treatment, tree mulching, and watering
3. Creating or improving community forestry programs that will benefit disadvantaged areas of the community through completion of a tree inventory paired with an urban forest management plan, development or update to a tree preservation or protection ordinance, staff training, contracting with a certified arborist for program development, development of programs for wood utilization, and the creation of paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry. All projects must directly benefit disadvantaged areas of the community.

Applicants may complete the projects listed above by using a qualified contractor, in-house staff, and volunteers (lead by qualified staff). Each program is explained in detail in the [Eligible Program Areas](#) section of this RFP.

No work shall start on the project until the applicant is awarded funding. All work shall be completed within the specified grant time period.

General Criteria

1. The maximum allowable funding amount per eligible organization is \$500,000. The minimum grant request is \$25,000.
2. Only proposals focused on or directly benefiting disadvantaged areas of a community will be considered. **For all eligible communities in this grant, no matching funds from the community are required.**

3. Projects with the largest positive impact on disadvantaged communities will be prioritized for funding. Projects that result in a substantial increase in tree canopy in disadvantaged communities will be prioritized for funding.
4. Technical assistance is available to help you write the grant application and develop a proposal. Please contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org no later than August 16, 2024.
5. You can access the grant application form at <https://chicagorti.org/grants>. Additional resources for this grant will be posted to this site as well.
6. The deadline for completed applications is September 13, 2024, 5:00 p.m.
7. The deadline for completed grant-funded projects is June 1, 2028.
8. Projects must conform to laws and authorities in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (Section 9. [16 U.S.C. 2105] Urban and Community Forestry Assistance. Costs must conform to Chapter 2 [CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).
9. Organizations eligible for funding shall be units of government other than federal or state, and specific nonprofit organizations. These include:
 - a. municipalities, townships, county and tribal governments
 - b. forest preserves and conservation districts
 - c. park districts
 - d. public school districts
 - e. nonprofit organizations (for example, 501(c)(3))
 - f. public and state-controlled institutions of higher education
 - g. community-based organizations with an eligible fiscal agent
10. Noneligible entities include for-profit and other groups.
11. Applicants are encouraged to include partner organizations in the project via decision making, volunteer work, community outreach, education etc. Applicants that include contributing partners must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the partners. Partner organizations from disadvantaged communities must be full partners in the project. A letter of commitment is required to be submitted by each contributing partner.
12. Eligible applicants may apply for funding for a project to be conducted on nonfederal lands such as:
 - a. public land owned or managed by local government
 - b. public or private land owned or managed by homeowner associations
 - c. private lands
 - d. tribal or native corporation (includes trust lands).
13. Applicants that pass-through funding (subaward) for work in disadvantaged communities must pass the match waiver to subawardees performing the work and must waive all requirement to match awarded funds.
14. Ordinance requirement:
 - a. Prior to reimbursement of funding, all awarded municipal, township, and county governments must have a codified, council/board approved tree protection/preservation ordinance that meets or exceeds the criteria listed in the [Tree Protection Ordinance Requirements](#). An existing tree protection/preservation ordinance/policy is not required to apply.
 - b. Awarded park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts shall submit board-approved policies that stipulate natural resource protection with specific urban and community forest management guidance similar to the criteria listed in the [Tree Protection Ordinance Requirements](#) section of this RFP. Please contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org for details on this requirement.

15. All applications shall be submitted electronically by email to Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org by September 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.
16. The funding period is approximately three years. All work related to this grant, except for the final report, must be completed by May 1, 2028. Final reporting and reimbursement must be submitted by June 1, 2028. Recipients will be required to implement and demonstrate measurable progress within 12 months of award.
17. All aspects of all categories of this proposal shall meet or exceed the most current American National Standards Institute (ANSI), or Best Management Practices from the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).
18. Funding will be awarded based on score, need, and alignment with the grant's program goals.
19. Incomplete applications will not be scored.
20. Awarded applicants shall publish in an organization announcement, publication, newsletter, or website, recognizing the source of the funding for this project (USDA Forest Service and Inflation Reduction Act through the direction of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources).

Financial Information

1. The minimum award for this grant is \$25,000 and the maximum is \$500,000.
2. To encourage a diverse group of high-quality proposals, funding will be awarded using the following approximate guidelines. These guidelines may be adjusted as needed based on merit of applications and number of proposals submitted.
 - a. \$3,500,000 total is available for proposals requesting funding between \$300,000 and \$500,000
 - b. \$3,000,000 total is available for proposals requesting funding between \$100,000 and \$300,000
 - c. \$1,000,000 total is available for proposals requesting funding between \$50,000 and \$100,000
 - d. Approximately \$400,000 total is available for proposals requesting funding between \$25,000 and \$50,000
3. Only proposals focused on disadvantaged communities will be considered. An organization that is unsure of eligibility can reach out to Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org to clarify if your community is eligible.
4. The applicant's labor cost, using its qualified employees to implement grant activities, can be reimbursed. Supporting documentation must be included for reimbursement. Approved documentation includes timecards, person-power records, or other documentation.
 - a. An hourly proration for the share of fringe benefit costs paid by the applicant may be included in the labor cost.
 - b. The skills or qualifications of individuals completing the work, including contractors, shall meet nationally recognized standards and certifications.
 - c. The applicant will submit records for employee hours, and shall include the base rate of pay for the employees. Overtime hours are not allowed.
5. All contractors and suppliers completing grant projects must meet nationally recognized training and certification requirements, and evidence is required for reimbursement.
6. If using a qualified contractor, the applicant must collect at least three quotes to determine the best-qualified contractor for any contract over \$10,000. The applicant must follow any applicable state and federal laws and the applicant's purchasing regulations and policies.
7. In addition to the regulations above, no part of the grant funding can be used to pay for the following expenses:
 - a. land acquisition or rental

- b. equipment purchase (Equipment is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. Equipment is considered more permanent and longer lasting than supplies, which are used up quickly.)
- c. food expenses
- d. site modifications, unless it is directly related to tree planting or forest restoration
- e. herbaceous plants or removal of invasive herbaceous plants
- f. prescribed burning done in efforts to improve nonforested land (for example prairie or open space burning with the intent to keep a space free of trees is not allowed, but burning to remove invasive understory or prepare for oak restoration is).

Tree Protection Ordinance Requirements (Government Entities Only)

For government entities, prior to final reimbursement of funding, a tree protection ordinance related to your community's public trees shall be approved by the governing body of the relevant municipality, county, or township (for example, city council) that shall meet all the requirements detailed below. Awarded park, conservation, and forest preserve districts shall submit board-approved policies that stipulate natural resource protection with specific urban and community forest management guidance similar to these criteria. **A pre-existing ordinance or policy is not required to apply.**

The Morton Arboretum will provide free assistance with this requirement to awarded participants.

To receive final reimbursement, your tree ordinance shall include regulations for trees located on public property and include the following criteria.

1. Be in effect 24/7 365 days a year.

In other words, the policies for tree planting, care, and removal of trees codified in the ordinance must be continuous, not triggered by an event such as landscaping requirements or the land development process.

2. Assign authority over your public trees.

A key section of a qualifying ordinance is one that assigns authority over public trees. Authority must be assigned in your ordinance to an individual or a specific department. This could be through the establishment of a tree board or forestry department, or both, and gives one of them the responsibility for public tree care.

3. Provide clear guidance for planting, maintaining, and removing trees from streets, parks, and other public spaces.

Your ordinance must provide clear specifications and standards for tree management, referencing the most current American National Safety Institute, International Society of Arboriculture, National Association of Nurserymen or a reference to such in an accepted urban forest management plan for the following:

- a. nursery source production standards (for example, ANSI Z.60.1)
- b. tree planting (for example, ANSI A300)
- c. tree care (for example, ANSI A300)
- d. tree pruning (for example, ANSI A300)

These requirements are designed to be achievable for any community. The Morton Arboretum provides ordinance revision assistance free of charge to participating communities. Please contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org for more information.

Eligible Program Areas

There are three eligible program areas that grant funding can be spent on. They are detailed below. Projects that protect, enhance, and expand equitable urban tree canopy cover to maximize community access to human health, social, ecological, and economic benefits in disadvantaged areas of communities experiencing low tree canopy cover, extreme heat and frequent flooding will be prioritized.

Proposals consisting of multiple program areas are allowable, for example a city may propose to hire a contractor to conduct an inventory and develop a management plan, and also plant trees based on the recommendations in the new plan.

Increasing Tree Canopy in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities

Including: diverse tree planting and commitment to care for the trees after planting.

Tree planting, on properties located within disadvantaged areas determined by the approved tools within the applicant's boundaries, may be completed as a project. These are site-specific projects. See [Introduction and Allowable Costs](#) for information on eligibility. Trees planted must meet minimum quality metrics and be planted as described below. The Tree Planting Plan and Maintenance Agreement (located in the grant application) are required for all tree planting projects. These projects must include specific consideration for increasing tree species diversity. A commitment to care for newly planted trees is required as described below. Projects that foster individuals, groups, and organizations in the communities served to become engaged participants in planting are encouraged.

Tree Planting Requirements

1. Trees may be planted on public or private property. Applicants planting on public property must include a letter of support from the property owner (if different from the applicant) with permission to plant on their land. For example, if you represent a nonprofit that wishes to plant on city-owned rights-of-way, you must have a letter of support, MOU, or other current documentation from the city giving permission to plant on the land related to this project.
2. Applicants planting on public or private property must follow the regulations outlined in [Appendix E](#).
3. Trees planted shall be between 1 inch and 2.5 inches caliper measured at 6 inches above the root flare. An exception to this requirement may be made for replanting after invasive species removal in natural areas. Please contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org for more information.
4. Tree planting projects must be planned and executed to promote the long-term survival of the trees.
5. Tree species selected must be a diverse selection appropriate to your community. A statement

of diversity explaining how the selected species will improve tree diversity in your community is required as part of the tree planting plan.

6. Shrubs (species that do not grow beyond 15 feet in height), and any other non-tree vegetation are ineligible for funding.
7. Tree species to be planted should be specified in the grant application. The selected species and the site conditions must be identified. Grant participants are encouraged to plant native species. The planting tree list and plan may be subject to change based on new information you receive during the grant period (for example, an updated inventory indicates a need for different species). Any changes from the original proposal must be approved by The Morton Arboretum prior to implementation.
8. Tree species that have invasive qualities shall not be planted under this program. Prohibited species includes the following, and any other invasive species. Planting projects will not install any [state-listed invasive species](#), including invasive species listed as “restricted,” “pending further review,” or “non-restricted,” or that are on a watch list, including but not limited to:
 - Callery pear (Bradford pear) or other exotic pear species *Pyrus spp.*
 - Tree-of-heaven *Ailanthus altissima*
 - Autumn olive *Elaeagnus umbellata*
 - Mimosa *Albizia julibrissin*
 - Norway maple *Acer platanoides*
9. An International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist must approve the accompanying tree planting plan for all trees that are funded through this proposal. If you do not have a certified arborist on staff or know of one a list can be found on the [Illinois Arborist Association](#) website. This approval may occur after you are awarded, but must occur before planting begins. Any proposed changes to your plan must be approved in writing by The Morton Arboretum.
10. The applicant must commit to properly caring for trees purchased through this program by including a maintenance plan. The plan must identify who will water and the frequency for watering and mulching trees over the required three years post-planting period. (A copy of the proposed maintenance plan must accompany the application. A Tree Planting and Maintenance Agreement is required and is attached to the application packet.)
11. All trees purchased through this proposal shall be from nurseries that are licensed by the [Illinois Nursery Inspection Program](#). Trees must be purchased from entities that are compliant with all applicable state and federal regulations including spongy (gypsy) moth compliance agreements and pesticide licensure. Please contact Grants.Crti@mortonarb.org if you have questions about obtaining plants from out-of-state nurseries.
12. All trees must have any packaging such as burlap, rope, and wire baskets removed (or be a low-profile basket) at time of planting and must be planted in accordance with the ANSI A300 Standard. (also see Appendix C for a planting standard example).
13. Immediately after planting, all trees shall receive a 2 to 3-inch layer of hardwood mulch over the root ball. Mulch shall not touch the bark of the tree.
14. Tree planting shall take place in the spring or fall.
15. Newly planted trees must be digitally inventoried, or recorded, at planting. Communities may use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, or their own inventory software of choice. Information that must be collected includes: a photo of each planted tree, GPS coordinates, tree species, tree size (DBH), and tree condition. Communities without access to a digital inventory may use The Morton Arboretum’s Canopy Counts system.

The Arboretum may periodically conduct site visits to ensure the accuracy of this digital inventory.

Improving Forest Health in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities

Including: pruning, dead tree removals, ash treatment, tree mulching, watering, and recovery of damaged or deteriorated landscapes to more healthy and resilient conditions.

Applicants may propose a project, located within disadvantaged areas determined by the approved tools within the applicant's boundaries, that improves the health of individual trees, public safety, or canopy cover. These are site-specific projects. See [Introduction and Allowable Projects](#) for information on eligibility. This includes maintenance, such as pruning, removal of standing dead trees and high risk or hazard trees, removal of invasive tree or shrub species, treatment of ash trees not already infested with emerald ash borer, mulching of trees, and watering of trees planted within the last three years, and prescribed burning done in efforts to improve forested land (for example, prairie or open space burning with the intent to keep a space free of trees is not allowed, but burning to remove invasive understory or prepare for oak restoration is). These projects encourage proactive and systematic maintenance and monitoring of urban trees and forested natural areas to improve forest health through pruning, mulching, watering, and caring for trees.

1. All tree care and maintenance work must be completed in accordance with the ANSI A300 and Z133 standards.
2. A plan for proposed maintenance activities and the census tract number of the census tract where work is to be performed must be submitted with the grant application, including number of trees to be pruned or removed and the cost estimates for the work.
3. Only activities in disadvantaged areas are eligible.
4. Any tree removed with grant funding must fit the conditions in a. or b. below, and comply with c.:
 - a. Present a significant harm or risk to the community, as documented by an ISA Certified Arborist. (Documentation shall be submitted by an ISA Certified Arborist and approved by The Morton Arboretum **prior to removal**.) Trees posing a significant risk that are removed must be replaced with one year (and within the grant period) at a rate of at least 1:1, OR the number of trees planted during the grant project before or during removals will equal or exceed the number of trees to be removed.
 - b. Be an invasive exotic tree or shrub species. Invasive species removed from a managed area (e.g. street trees) that are not dead or high risk to public safety must be replaced at a rate of at least 2:1 (that is, you must plant more stems than you remove). Allowable invasive removals include:
 - i. buckthorn (glossy and common buckthorn): *Rhamnus cathartica*, *Grangula alnus*
 - ii. honeysuckle: *Lonicera maackii*, *Lonicera tatarica*, *Lonicera morrow*
 - iii. Callery pear (Bradford pear): *Pyrus calleryana*
 - iv. tree-of-heaven: *Ailanthus altissima*
 - v. autumn olive: *Elaeagnus umbellata*
 - vi. mimosa: *Albizia julibrissin*
 - vii. Norway maple: *Acer platanoides*
 - viii. multi-flora rose: *Rosa multiflora*
 - ix. burning bush: *Euyonomous Alata*

- c. Eligible invasive shrub and tree removal in natural areas does not require a stem-for-stem replacement, but must be coupled with planting activities that ensure long-term canopy percentage retention or growth.
5. Work may be completed by qualified in-house staff or by a qualified contractor. Proof of qualifications to complete tree work, such as arborist certification, is required to be submitted to The Morton Arboretum upon selecting a contractor.
6. Proof of completion for invasive removal, landscape restoration work, and burns, will be required.

Improving Community Forestry Programs

Including: community engagement strategies in disadvantaged areas and focus on improving service to disadvantaged areas; completion of a tree inventory paired with an urban forest management plan; development or update to a tree preservation or protection ordinance; staff training; contracting with a certified arborist for program development; development of programs for wood utilization; and the creation of paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry.

For municipalities, community forestry programs may be completed as community-wide projects. Community-wide projects, such as planning and policy development for the entire community, are allowable if the focus is on disadvantaged communities and includes community engagement that collects input to influence decisions. For example, a city may complete a full street tree inventory and write an urban forest management plan for their whole city, including areas not considered disadvantaged, if they focus their plan and on-the-ground implementation in disadvantaged areas of the community. See [Introduction and Allowable Projects](#) for information on eligibility.

While these projects may benefit the entire community, the projects shall directly benefit disadvantaged areas. Municipal applicants completing community-wide projects in this category must also request funding for on-the-ground (site-specific) implementation work in disadvantaged areas of the community. For example, communities requesting funding for a full, community-wide tree inventory and management plan must also request funds for tree planting, maintenance, or other action in a disadvantaged area of the community that addresses recommendations of the management plan.

For nonmunicipal applicants, community forestry program projects must occur exclusively in disadvantaged areas.

All proposals with project components listed in this section must be accompanied by a request for funding for on-the-ground implementation work solely in disadvantaged areas and engage those residents in a meaningful way. All projects must include meaningful community engagement during the term of the grant, in which the community provides input and influences decision-making.

Example projects include:

- Conducting tree inventories, writing accompanying urban or community forest management plans and a site-specific implementation action in disadvantaged areas, such as tree planting. Urban forest management plans shall include significant and thoroughly-explained and documented community engagement (seeking input to influence decisions). Plans must include

strategies for improving service to disadvantaged communities and one or more components specific to increasing the percentage of the area covered by tree canopy or improving the condition of the tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community.

- Writing of urban or community forestry management plans based on an existing current, digital inventory and a site-specific implementation action in disadvantaged areas, such as tree planting. Urban forest management plans shall include one or more components specific to increasing the percentage of the area covered by tree canopy or improving the condition of the tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community. Plans must include strategies for improving service to disadvantaged communities and one or more components specific to increasing the percentage of the area covered by tree canopy or improving the condition of the tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community.
- Urban Tree Canopy Assessment to identify portions of the community with a low percentage of land area covered by tree canopy which must be coupled with on the ground tree planting, maintenance, and/or protection measures solely in low-canopied, disadvantaged census tracts.,
- Assessing risk to forests from pests, disease, and adverse climate impacts and formulating adaptive management strategies to improve forest resilience.
- Increasing staff professionalism through education or credentialing. Staff supported through this grant must work to enhance the condition of the tree canopy or increase the percentage of land area covered by tree canopy in disadvantaged areas.
- Enhancing volunteer efforts, such as formation of a tree board that includes representation from disadvantaged communities.
- Developing paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry for members of disadvantaged communities.
- Establishment of wood utilization programs.
- Aiding in planning, goal setting, and skill sharing with other professions such as urban planners, engineers, educators, recreational and public health officials who focus on improving service to disadvantaged areas.
- Improving preparation for severe storms to improve response and recovery in disadvantaged areas.
- Ordinance development or revision including significant and thoroughly explained and documented community engagement (seeking input to influence decisions) that does not result in overburdening disadvantaged communities.

Additional requirements are described in the following sections. All projects must include community engagement strategies in disadvantaged areas and focus on improving service to disadvantaged areas. Projects in this program areas must include on-the-ground work that occurs solely in disadvantaged areas of your community.

Tree Inventory Requirements

A tree inventory is a database containing specific, standardized information recorded for individual trees in an identified area of the community. Inventory projects must cover between 15% and 100% of the focus tree population (for example, a municipality must inventory at least 15% of their tree population; a park district must inventory at least 15% of an individual park).

An urban or community forest management plan that addresses some part of the inventory results must accompany any inventory funded by this grant. An accompanying implementation action is required for applicants completing inventory and management planning. Applicants must include implementation work in disadvantaged census tracts, such as implementing one or more of the management plan's recommended action items for disadvantaged areas of the community as part of the proposed grant project. See [Improving Forest Health in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) and [Increasing Tree Canopy in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) section for examples of implementation projects. Inventories and community forest management plans shall include one or more components specific to increasing the percentage of land area covered by tree canopy or improving the condition of the tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community.

The inventory must inform management decisions and be regularly updated. The inventory may contain information about the immediate area surrounding a tree, as necessary for tree management and planning. Sample size must be statistically appropriate to provide accurate conclusions for management recommendations.

Eligibility: Only tree populations that do not have a full inventory, or whose inventory has not been updated in the last three years are eligible for funding for an inventory.

A contractor or qualified staff or volunteers may be used to complete a new, or expand an existing, inventory. Staff, contractors, or volunteers shall have the requisite professional experience to complete the work. Verification of this training and skills is required. All work completed through this grant shall meet the nationally recognized requirements and standards. Additional inventory features including software subscriptions that run concurrent to the grant term are eligible for funding. All costs for subscriptions must be paid by the end of the work period. Grant funds cannot be retained past the grant period for future subscription payments.

Street or managed park tree inventory deliverables

1. Required individual tree data fields
 - a. GPS coordinates
 - b. street address and relative location
 - c. land use (such as residential, business zone, natural area, park)
 - d. growing space (such as parkway, park)
 - e. species
 - f. diameter at breast (standard) height (DBH)
 - g. single or multi-stem designation
 - h. condition rating including defects (roots, wounds, rot, deadwood)
 - i. risk assessment
 - j. maintenance recommendation
 - k. general comments or notes
2. Optional deliverables
 - a. plantable spaces
3. At a minimum, the inventory shall be delivered as a digital spreadsheet, such as Excel.
4. Training and education
 - a. If a contractor is used, before the project starts, the contractor shall meet with the community to outline project goals and plans specific to the community.
 - b. Immediately after the inventory is complete, the contractor should provide a

minimum of 3 hours of technical assistance to ensure that the community understands how to use the inventory effectively.

- c. Following the initial 3 hours, the contractor should provide an additional minimum of 3 hours of assistance, as needed.
5. The applicant shall provide a dated copy of the inventory and urban forest management plan to The Morton Arboretum. The Morton Arboretum requests a copy of the completed inventory to facilitate its development of outreach materials that assist communities in managing their trees. (Please contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org for more information about how inventory data is used by the Arboretum or to waive Morton Arboretum's request.)
6. A Tree Inventory Maintenance Agreement must be signed (see application for details)

Natural area forest inventory exceptions

1. Applicants may inventory natural areas in disadvantaged areas as part of a street or park tree inventory or as a stand-alone project.
2. Individual tree data fields may be adapted for natural areas as appropriate. Any deviation from the criteria above must be explained in the application.
3. Applicants must produce an appropriate management plan for the area inventoried based on the data collected as described in the next section.

Urban and Community Forest Management Plan Requirements

Completion of a new or updated management plan is allowed as a project for this grant. It may accompany a tree inventory or be a proposal on its own, as long as it is based on an inventory that was updated no more than four years ago. Community-wide management plans (municipalities only) must include significant and thoroughly explained and documented community engagement (seeking input to influence decisions). The plan must include strategies for improving service to disadvantaged communities. Applications must include funding requests for implementation of one or more management strategies on-the-ground, solely in disadvantaged census tracts. See [Improving Forest Health in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) and [Increasing Tree Canopy in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) sections for examples.

A management plan's scope shall have established priority goals to improve the condition of the tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community. The plan may have appropriate subsections, such as a specific plan for disadvantaged neighborhoods, an ash tree preservation or replacement plan, risk abatement plan, cyclical pruning plan, or community tree planting plan. Urban forest management plans are further described in [Appendix A](#) of this document.

Eligibility: only applicants whose existing management plans are older than five years or are not based on a full inventory are eligible to receive funding for a management plan.

Qualified staff or a contractor shall complete a management plan that is based on an up-to-date inventory and shall include the following.

Management plan deliverables

1. Plan goals and format
 - a. This plan shall be developed to outline the future standards, specifications, and goals for management of the community's trees and forests over the next five to seven

- years.
 - b. This plan shall include prioritized action items for a five to seven year period to ensure the applicant can effectively and efficiently manage their trees.
 - c. This plan shall be delivered in a document format that can be easily edited and updated, for example, Microsoft Word or another similar program.
2. Plan components shall include establishing one or more priority goals to improve the condition of the tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community and may include some of the following, as needed and appropriate, for each community. At least one component from item (a) is required. It is recommended that plans contain all of the following.
- a. Recommended and prioritized urban forest management action items, based on an inventory; one component from this list is required.
 - i. A description of the organization’s urban forest tree canopy cover and composition
(Canopy cover data can be provided to organizations in Will, Lake, Kane, Kendall, Cook, DuPage, and McHenry by the Chicago Region Trees Initiative)
 - ii. Prioritized planting locations, including replacements and new plantings
 - iii. A cyclical pruning schedule and map
 - iv. Prioritized hazard abatement informed by inventory data
 - v. A list of preferred species, prohibited species, and species to be planted in limited quantities
 - vi. How the urban forest inventory will be used to inform decisions and how it will be updated
 - vii. A strategy for improving forest age and species structure
 - b. Short and long-term urban forest goals, 2023–2030
 - i. Long-term goals such as:
 - 1. Urban forest management goals and risk mitigation
 - 2. Canopy cover goals
 - 3. Climate change response
 - ii. Short-term goals (for example, annual goals) such as:
 - 1. Tree pruning schedules
 - 2. A plan for replacement and removals
 - 3. A plan for hazard abatement
 - 4. Mitigation of pests and diseases
 - 5. Benchmarks to ensure progress towards long-term goals
 - c. Specifications for planting, pruning, removals, and protection
 - i. Specifications from ANSI, ISA, and/or other nationally recognized standards for tree care (pruning, planting, etc.)
 - ii. Establishing a pruning and maintenance cycle so that care is regularly scheduled
 - iii. Protection and standards for trees in construction zones
 - d. Required and recommended certifications, qualifications, and training for staff, contracted labor, and consulting,
 - e. Formulating these requirements to mitigate and manage risk, including climate impacts.
 - f. Material equipment, and budget considerations
 - i. Short- and long-term budget projections and needs
 - ii. A plan for acquisition and replacement of equipment and resources

- g. A program for education and outreach of residents
 - i. Engaging private landowners and managers within the organization's boundaries
 - ii. Developing a marketing strategy for engaging residents so they are familiar with urban forestry in their community
- 3. Training and education
 - a. If a contractor is used, before the project starts, the contractor shall meet with the community to outline project goals and plans specific to the community.
 - b. The contractor should provide a minimum of three hours, as needed, of outreach and education (that is separate from inventory outreach) to ensure that the community is able to use the management plan effectively.

The community shall provide proof that the management plan was completed and submit a copy of the document to The Morton Arboretum.

Staff Improvement, Workforce Development, and Volunteer Development

1. Staff may be hired, or existing staff may be trained to undertake urban forestry enhancement activities focused on disadvantaged areas of the community. Allowable expenses include:
 - a. personnel and fringe funding for community arborist positions that are additive to existing capacity.
 - b. ISA credentialing: courses and exam fees for ISA Certified Arborist, Municipal Specialist, Tree Risk Assessment Qualification, or Certified Tree Worker
 - c. staff education: Tree Keepers courses, SMA Municipal Forestry Institute, iTree Academy, contractor training for staff, continuing education costs
 - d. staff time and course expenses to complete and pass relevant trainings
2. A contractor may be hired to serve in the role of community forester to undertake urban forestry enhancement activities that are focused on disadvantaged areas of the community.
3. Volunteer development
 - a. development of volunteer protocols and activities (for example volunteer pruning, volunteer tree inventory training) that targets disadvantaged areas of the community
 - b. development of a tree board or other advisory group (see [Appendix B](#)) that includes residents of disadvantaged areas of the community
4. Workforce development, including the creation of paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry, is an eligible project.
 - a. Applicants are expected to clearly outline their proposed workforce development pathways, detailing the structure of on-the-job training opportunities, the curriculum for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, and the anticipated impact on participants' skill development. Additionally, proposals should emphasize the inclusivity of the program, addressing how it will reach and benefit individuals from disadvantaged communities and diverse backgrounds.
 - b. Successful applicants will be required to establish robust reporting mechanisms to track the progress of their workforce development initiatives. Regular updates on the number

of participants, their achievements, and any challenges encountered during the project's implementation will be essential.

Before grant reimbursement, a summary report must be submitted detailing how any funded position contributed to benefiting disadvantaged areas of the community. Proof of successful training completion must be submitted with your reimbursement packet as applicable. Training that is started but not completed will not be reimbursed.

All staff improvement or workforce and volunteer development projects must be coupled with grant funding for on-the-ground action in disadvantaged portions of your community.

Proposal Scoring

Your proposal will be evaluated and ranked by a scoring committee. The criteria listed below will be used to score each proposal. In the event of a tie, the following additional factors will be used to score proposals: applicant need and leveraged benefits; orderliness of the overall application.

Criteria	Highest Possible Score
Required: Proposal shall clearly state how the proposed work will benefit the disadvantaged areas of the community	Met/Not Met
<p>Project Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The applicant indicates a clear scope of the project that includes key numeric deliverables (for example, number of trees planted, number of management plan sections). ● The applicant identifies who will be involved in the project and where it will take place. ● The applicant describes key outcomes that will arise from this project and show how these outcomes will result a higher percentage of land covered in tree canopy or improved urban forest in disadvantaged areas. 	10
<p>Purpose and Need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The applicant clearly describes the community's unique challenges (for example, tree canopy loss, staff capacity and training) and identifies reasons why this grant is needed to address these specific challenges. ● The applicant understands their current programmatic capacity to carry out the project and articulates how this grant will improve capacity. ● The project will help fulfill priorities in other relevant strategic goals or plans, including Justice 40 Initiative and Illinois Forest Action Plan. ● The applicant demonstrates attention to equity and environmental justice, supported by information such as the Climate and Economic Justice 	20

<p>Screening Tool, EJScreen, or HUD Opportunity Zones. Projects that are in disadvantaged areas of communities experiencing a low percentage of land area covered by tree canopy, extreme heat, and frequent flooding will be prioritized.</p>	
<p>Scope of Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The applicant shows capability and clear plans for carrying out the project and maintaining long-term project benefits. ● The applicant and partners show adequate expertise to address technical elements of the project or will seek out contractors with adequate expertise. If applicable, the applicant describes the role, training, and qualifications of any partners and potential volunteers. ● The project is designed to be resilient to the effects of climate change and other ecosystem stressors. ● Support letters are required from any partner entity completing a portion of the project and should describe that entity’s commitment to and role in this project. 	15
<p>Leveraged Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Established goals of the proposal describe how the community will use this project to provide ongoing support to benefit the community’s disadvantaged populations. ● The applicant shows clear intention that the project will benefit the forestry program or community for the long term. ● Projects that describe how this grant would expand a community’s urban forestry efforts (not just supplement) will receive higher scores. ● For staff credentials and hiring projects, the applicant has communicated a plan for employee retention during and after the grant period. 	20
<p>Tree Protection Ordinance Creation or Update (governments only; this section will not be scored for NGOs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The applicant shares the current status of their ordinance, and whether it already fulfills the requirements of the grant. (Note: A pre-existing ordinance is NOT required to apply.) ● The applicant identifies who will be responsible for communicating with The Morton Arboretum regarding the ordinance update. ● The applicant identifies who will be responsible for coordinating with the community or organization’s governing body to ensure that the tree protection ordinance requirement is met during the grant period. ● Proposals that commit to going above the requirements will receive higher scores. 	10
<p>Budget Details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The budget indicated in this table is balanced and realistic. ● The applicant provides a clear explanation of the process and resources used to calculate project cost (for example, quotes, previous projects). 	15

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant describes all expenditures including contracted services, personnel salary and fringe, material purchases, and community organization support. • The applicant details any other expenses listed in the budget matrix. 	
<p>Community Engagement and Sharing Knowledge and Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant clearly identifies strategies for engaging the community to collect input that influences how the project is implemented. • The project includes outreach to and engagement with the community before, during, and after project implementation. • The project includes efforts to share knowledge, tools, or innovations that have practical application beyond the grant period. • The project includes international efforts to reduce barriers to engagement in disadvantaged areas. 	10
<p>Timeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant’s timeline is clear, realistic, and achievable. • Major milestones and required approvals are detailed. 	10
<p>Your final score will be a percentage of the total possible points for your organization type.</p>	<p>Government Entities out of 110</p>
	<p>NGOs out of 100</p>

Award and Execution of Agreement

1. All completed proposals shall be submitted electronically, including all attachments, to Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org by September 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.
2. Any applicant requiring assistance either to complete the application or to submit it electronically shall contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org no later than August 16, 2024.
3. Each proposal will be scored according to stated criteria by independent grant reviewers. The highest scoring proposals will be recommended for funding. Partial funding is possible. The Morton Arboretum maintains the authority to withhold funds for future allocations in the event that an insufficient quantity of high-quality project that adhere to the stipulated grant criteria and demonstrate meritorious attributes are submitted.
4. The applicant must notify any applicable contractors to receive an estimate of cost. The awarded community is responsible for paying all expenses up front and submitting for reimbursement at the completion of significant milestones for the project.

5. The awarded community may submit for reimbursement twice a year. Reimbursement is described in the [Payment](#) section of this RFP.
6. Awarded applicants will be provided an Award Agreement via email. This agreement must be executed by the applicant's executive authority and returned by email no later than 15 business days from receipt. Failure to return a signed agreement by the due date may cause the funding award to be revoked.
7. Once executed by The Morton Arboretum, the agreement will be sent by email to the applicant. Once the executed agreement has been received by the applicant, the applicant may begin work as outlined in the approved proposal.
No work shall be started prior to the approval and execution of the agreement.
8. Applicants shall submit a realistic timeline with major milestones listed that will be used to track progress throughout the grant term. Failure to complete deliverables and milestones that jeopardize on-time completion of the project may result in cancellation of the current grant.
9. Awardees are required to report quarterly on project progress. Emailed reminders with reporting templates will be supplied quarterly. Recipients will be required to implement and demonstrate measurable progress within 12 months of award and make continual progress throughout the grant period. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in cancellation of the current grant, loss of all funding, and potential for disqualification from future grants.
10. Applicants will be required to submit a final report with their final reimbursement request which will include a narrative and budget form.
11. All work related to this grant, except for the final report, must be completed by May 1, 2028.
12. **Final report and reimbursement materials must be received by June 1, 2028.**

Payment

1. The applicant is responsible for all expenses until submitting for reimbursements.
2. The applicant can expect payment 45 to 60 days after The Morton Arboretum has received and approved the fully completed reimbursement report containing valid invoices and canceled checks.
3. The applicant shall review the reimbursement materials and all reporting requirements to ensure that all materials are ready for reimbursement by the grant deadline, including all payments and proof of payment.
4. Awarded applicants may submit for reimbursement twice a year (from June 1 through June 15 and from September 1 through September 15) upon the completion of approved deliverable milestones. Exceptions will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Projects must show proof of adequate deliverable completion and proof of spending to be approved for reimbursement. Examples of approved milestones include:
 - a. Trees have been planted and The Morton Arboretum has inspected the planting.
 - b. Staff has been hired or trained and can report on work completed in disadvantaged areas.
 - c. Tree maintenance has occurred and approved documentation has been submitted to

The Morton Arboretum.

- d. The urban forest management plan or tree inventory has been completed or a measurable portion has been completed (25% of the inventory, 50% of the inventory, 75% of the inventory, 100% completion of the full inventory and completion of the urban forest management plan). Final payment will only be allowable after completion of the urban forest management plan and on-the-ground implementation action.
5. No government entity is eligible for reimbursement of more than 50% of the awarded amount until the ordinance or policy requirement is fulfilled.

The Morton Arboretum is dedicated to the success of these projects and the support of disadvantaged communities. If you have any questions about this RFP, the application process, or any part of the grant, please reach out to Grants.CRTI@Mortonarb.org for assistance.

Appendix A: Urban Forest Management Plan Description

Intent: Developing, using, and periodically updating a management plan demonstrates a community's commitment to the comprehensive management of its community tree and forest resources.

Definition:

- a. A detailed document or set of documents that identify and prioritize action items based on professionally-based, relevant inventories and/or resource assessments, that outline the future management of the community's trees and forests. At a minimum, the plan must address public trees. The plan must be actively used by the community to guide management decisions and/or resource allocation and updated as needed to incorporate new information.
- b. A plan for trees in a portion of the community, as long as it includes a written explanation of why there is a focus on that area (i.e., the importance of that space to the community) and action items regarding the establishment, protection, conservation, and maintenance of public trees.
- c. Management plans for forested tracts may be counted if they meet the above and the forest meets all the following criteria:
 - i. located in or near a town/municipal/community population center, business district, or residential area,
 - ii. primarily managed for the benefit of the residents and to keep the land forested, and
 - iii. owned by the local government (i.e., in public ownership).

Examples: (Examples include but are not limited to items on this list. Anything counted must meet the definition above.)

- An Urban Forest Master Plan, based on satellite imagery/GIS or other inventories and assessments, that sets goals for tree canopy cover, recommends areas for reforestation, recommends areas for preservation, promotes community education and outreach efforts, recommends tree maintenance policies for town/city/county properties and provides action items for the management of trees and forests (such as establishment, protection, and maintenance).
- A Public Tree Planting and Maintenance Plan based on an inventory of trees and open spaces in street rights-of-way and parklands. These plans include information such as a prioritized list of tree pruning and removals, a prioritized list of replacements and new tree plantings, a recommended yearly budget, and a recommended list of tree species for replanting.
- A community's comprehensive Land Use Plan that incorporates specific management recommendations for the community's trees and forest resources.
- A Tree Risk Reduction and Replanting Plan based on an inventory of community trees.
- A tree inventory with recommended action items for managing public trees and forests (i.e., establishment, conservation, protection, and maintenance) that is actively being used.
- Other plans, such as those below, as long as they address the required elements in the definition: Urban Canopy Master Plan; Open Space Plan; Long-Term Tree Planting Plan that addresses planting and care; Pest, Storm, or Disaster Preparedness Plan that addresses trees; Town Forest Management Plan; Urban Forest Management Plan for a downtown business district; Community Wildfire Protection Plan; Community Development Plan that has an urban forest management component

Appendix B: Tree Board/Advisory Group Description

Intent: Many local urban and community forestry programs began through the efforts of local community groups, and these groups often serve as a catalyst to encourage active local urban forest resource management for the long term. This performance element aims to ensure that community residents and program stakeholders are informed, educated, and engaged in the development and implementation of a sound community forestry program at the local level.

Definition:

Advisory Groups: Organizations that are formalized or chartered (i.e., organizations established by the local government) to advise (during the reporting year) on the establishment, conservation, protection, and maintenance of urban and community trees and forests.

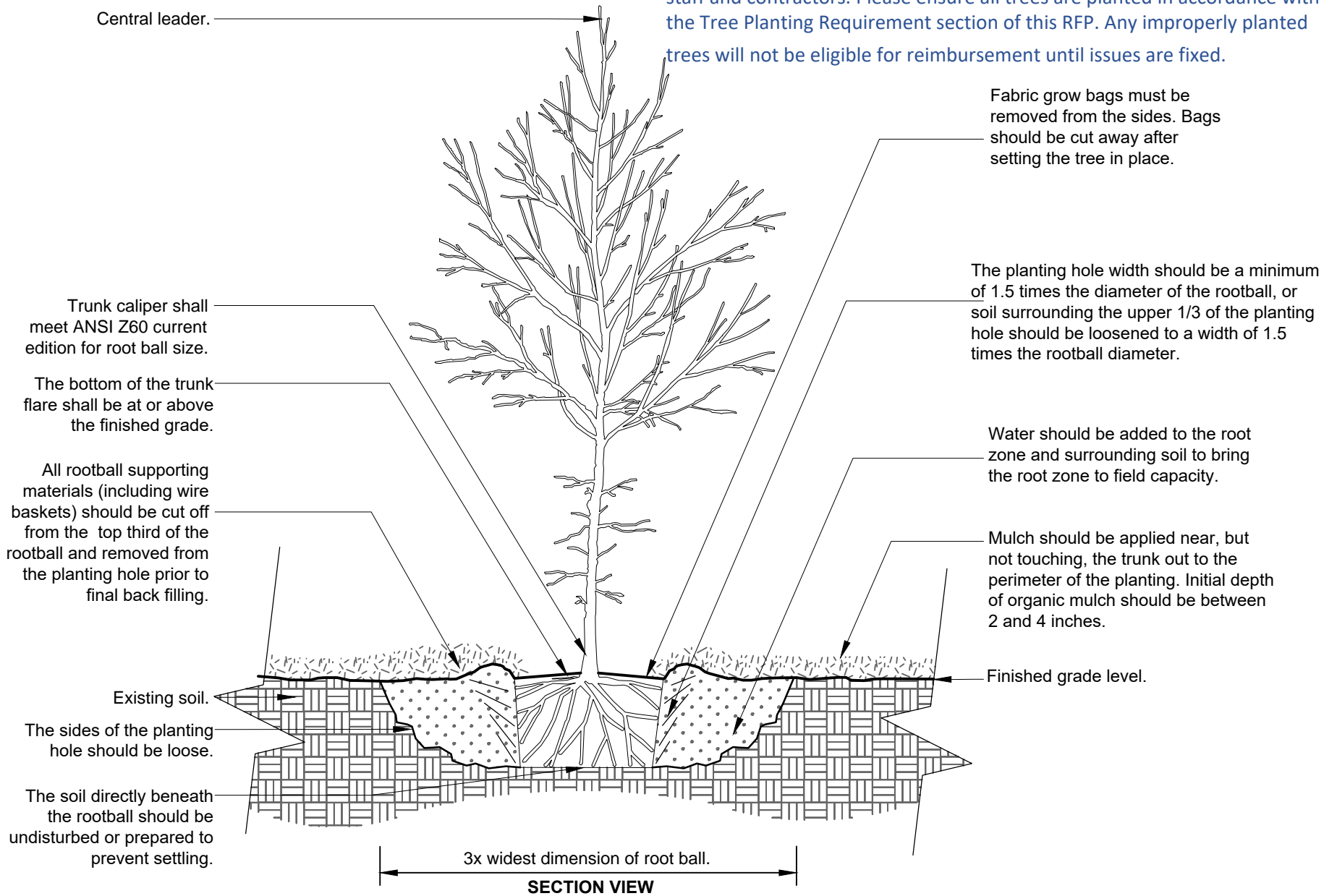
a. Advocacy Groups: Non-governmental organizations active in the community that advocate or act for the establishment, conservation, protection, and maintenance of urban and community trees and forests during the year.

Examples: (Examples include but are not limited to items on this list. Anything counted must meet the definition above.):

- A board of community members appointed by local elected officials to advise policymakers on tree ordinances, policies, and management.
- A volunteer group such as “City ReLeaf” that is active in advocating for tree planting, preservation, and management in communities.
- A local Conservation or Environmental Commission that has an urban forestry sub-group or has urban and community forestry included in the organization’s action plan or charter and organizes at least one tree- or urban forestry-related activity during the year.
- A non-profit organization that advocates for community trees in multiple communities, as long as citizens in each community are engaged in the organization’s urban and community forestry advocacy or activities during the reporting year.
- An advocacy group that focuses on a public park, greenway, or neighborhood if the group organized at least one tree- or urban forestry-related activity during the reporting year.

Appendix C: Example Tree Planting Standard

This example tree planting standard may be used when you are working with staff and contractors. Please ensure all trees are planted in accordance with the Tree Planting Requirement section of this RFP. Any improperly planted trees will not be eligible for reimbursement until issues are fixed.

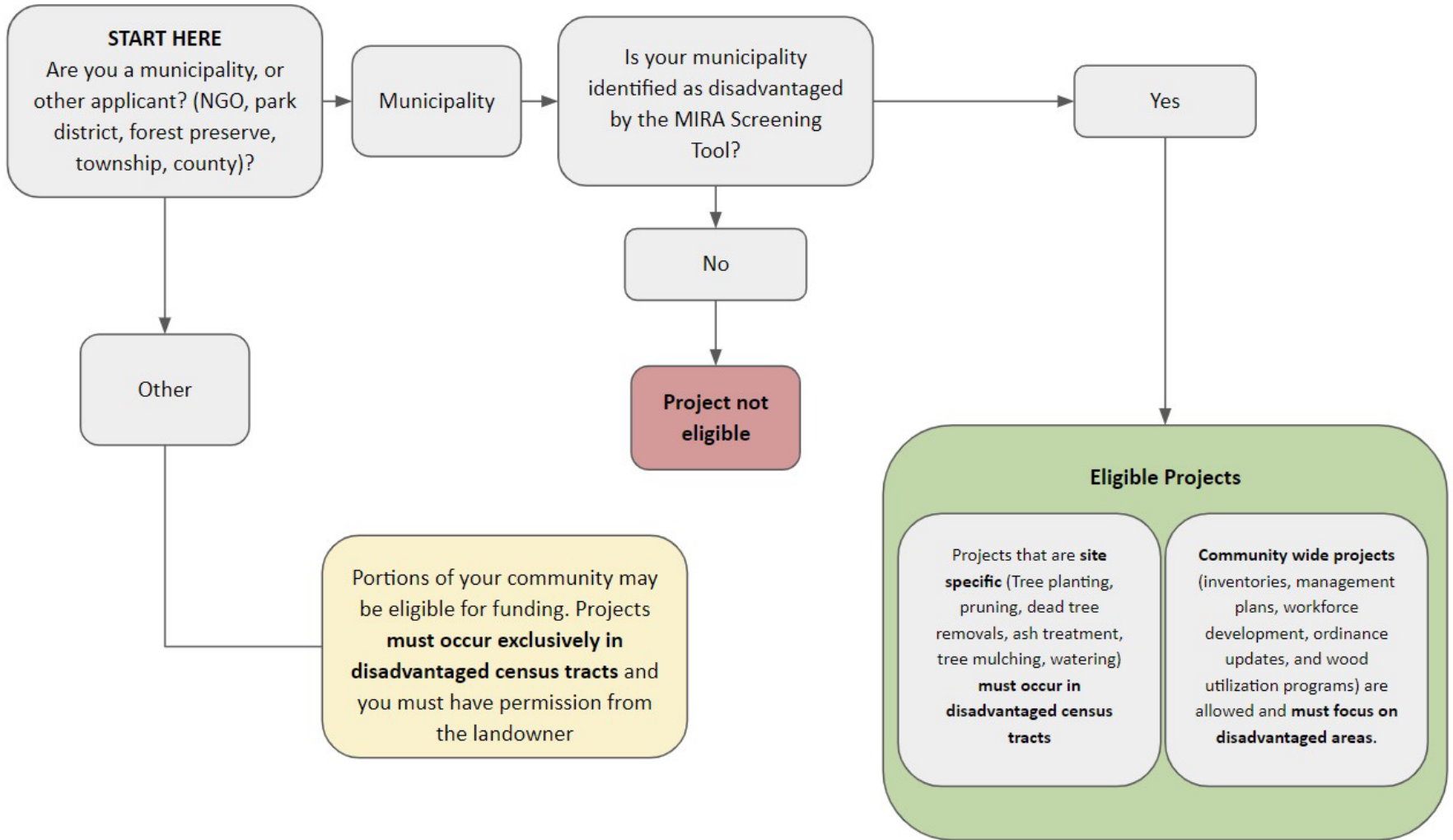


P-X

TREE w/ BERM (EXISTING SOIL NOT MODIFIED)

URBAN TREE FOUNDATION © 2014
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Appendix D: Disadvantaged Community Project Eligibility Flowchart



Appendix E: Tree Planting on Public and Private Property

Adapted from *Guidance for Preparing Project Proposals for Landscape Tree Planting in the USDA Forest Service Eastern Region*.

Introduction and Purpose

This appendix is intended to inform the development of proposals for community tree planting projects funded by this grant program.

Tree planting, establishment, and long-term care are an important part of urban forest management, either as part of urban forest expansion, reforestation, or recovery from an infestation or other natural disaster. This includes making sure the correct species are selected for the site and that trees are watered as needed; mulched correctly; weeded; protected from deer, rodents, and equipment; inspected for pest and disease problems; and structurally pruned while young.

When funding is awarded for projects primarily focused on tree planting, the following guidance will apply (unless otherwise specified in the terms of the grant). Trees planted on public property must also meet guidelines set by local ordinances and policies where applicable.

Allowable Costs

In general, funds can be spent on purchasing, planting, maintaining, and protecting trees during establishment. Associated administrative and outreach costs are also eligible. Construction costs (installing permanent structures) are not allowable, but some costs, such as protective fencing and watering systems for new trees, may be approved if proven necessary to ensure the survival of the planted trees.

Efforts should be made to be cost effective by using local resources; keeping administrative costs down; and getting competing bids on contracts.

Applicants may have specific policies in addition to those of this grant. If your organization has funding or procurement requirements, those requirements and policies should also be followed.

Administration

The Morton Arboretum will work closely with the grantee to assist with planning and monitoring the project.

On complex projects, including tree plantings with large numbers of trees, installation over the course of three or more planting seasons, a long-term management plan should be developed to ensure that proper maintenance and continuing project goals are addressed.

There must be a single point of contact at the project level to coordinate, administer, and document tree planting and establishment, including maintenance. If the primary contact leaves his or her position, The Morton Arboretum must be made aware of this change immediately in writing.

Reporting

Information about all trees planted as part of the project must be documented. The grantee will provide a periodic report as required in the grant agreement using a standard format. The report should document the number of trees planted; location (street address, map, or GPS); species; size; date planted; and other outcomes as required in the grant agreement. If problems arise that require changes to the scope of work and budget, these must be discussed with The Morton Arboretum and addressed in the project reporting.

Planning

Tree planting must follow a planting plan developed by, or in consultation with, a qualified person (for example, certified arborist, degreed forester, landscape architect). The plan should describe the process for site and species selection, procurement, planting, maintenance, and owner outreach. If there is a specific purpose for the planting (energy conservation), this should also be documented. Drawings or maps should be included for areas involving large numbers of trees planted in groups (such as a park tree planting). Planting plans, planting lists, and drawings must be made available to The Morton Arboretum grant monitor or included as part of interim reports prior to planting.

Appropriate Planting Locations

Public Property

Most tree planting should occur on public property or rights-of-way, such as in parks, along street rights-of-way, and in other public areas. Tree planting on public land must complement existing community plans and policies for tree planting and maintenance.

Private Property

Where there is a clear public benefit, planting on private property may be allowed. In this case, the approach to identifying sites and ensuring long-term maintenance on private property should be described in the grant narrative.

Examples of acceptable private property plantings are as follows:

- Trees in front yards but near the street (setback plantings);
- Trees on private property that is open to the public; and
- Trees visible to the public and providing significant community benefits, such as trees planted in front or side yards bordering streets to provide energy conservation for homes.

When trees are planted on private property, property owners must sign an agreement to confirm that they will maintain and protect the tree and provide access to the organization responsible for planting and maintenance. The Morton Arboretum does not accept any liability for work performed on public or private property. Grantees must maintain appropriate insurance for the work performed and follow any and all applicable law or policy.

The proposal should outline an appropriate strategy for tree retention and highlight how the project will ensure the trees grow and flourish beyond the grant period in the proposal. Examples may include written agreements or pledges by the resident, education workshops, municipal- or partner-provided maintenance, monitoring schemes and schedules, or recognition awards for tree survival at a particular year. Example language for a written agreement may include:

- I will plant and care for my tree according to the Tree Owner’s Manual (or similar state-level best practices document) for as long as it is within my right to do so.
- I agree to plant my trees immediately at the address listed above, to give my trees ongoing care while I own them (or for X years), and to adhere to guidelines related to inhibiting the movement and dispersal of invasive pests and disease, such as not moving any mulch received at the event outside of the distribution county. I understand the trees are under no warranty or guarantee.
- In addition to providing appropriate care, I have no plans to further expand any buildings or pavement on my property in the next X years that would result in the removal or reduction of planting area for my newly planted trees.

Applicants must demonstrate the capacity for monitoring tree health or provide additional technical assistance related to tree health should the resident need it. Funding for this capacity during the grant period may be included in the budget.

For tree planting on private property, the grantee must:

- Identify disadvantaged census tracts in which plantings will occur.
- Obtain written permission to plant from the resident, or the landowner if different from the resident.
- Hold appropriate insurance for work performed.
- Plant trees according to ANSI Standards.
- Mulch trees at the time of planting.
- Care for trees for three years, or clearly lay out support for the property owners in caring for trees.
- Track trees planted in an inventory or use The Morton Arboretum’s Canopy Counts system.

For tree distribution to private property owners or renters, the grantee must:

- Host a fair and transparent request sign up and screening process.
- Obtain written permission from the landowner, if different from the resident.
- Host an accessible tree pickup or drop-off event.
- Provide a minimum of one 2-cubic-foot bag of hardwood mulch with each tree.
- Send watering and other care reminders to tree recipients throughout the three-year maintenance agreement period.
- Track trees planted in an inventory or encourage the use of The Morton Arboretum’s Canopy Counts system by residents to inventory trees.

Spacing

Trees must be located appropriately on the site, allowing adequate rooting space and distance from utilities, other trees, buildings, roads, sidewalks, and other infrastructure.

Species Selection

A species list should be developed for planting projects. Tree species must be appropriate for the site, noninvasive, and not a host for a high-risk insect or disease already confirmed in the area. Species diversity should be emphasized.

For maximum environmental benefits, trees with larger canopy size at maturity are preferred. Exceptions are for trees planted under power lines, trees producing edible fruit and nuts, or in situations where there are planting site constraints. Plantings may only consist of trees. No shrubs or herbaceous plants may be purchased or planted with grant funds.

Tree Quality, Size, and Handling

Tree planting stock must, at a minimum, meet the current American Standard for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60.1; see Helpful Resources section for link). If a container size is specified for container-grown trees, the specification is incomplete if it does not provide a corresponding minimum plant size (see Section 13, American Standard for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60.1)).

Tree size must be appropriate to ensure survival at the site. Large-caliper trees (greater than 2 inches) are prone to greater transplant shock and require more maintenance and are not allowed. Purchased trees must be protected during transportation and storage (including adequate irrigation) and be in good condition on delivery and prior to planting.

Installation

Tree planting, timing of installation, and protection must meet the most recent ANSI A300 Standard Practice for Planting and Transplanting and should follow the guidelines outlined in the latest edition of the International Society of Arboriculture's Best Management Practices for Tree Planting (see Helpful Resources section for links to where to purchase. Costs of standards may be included as a supply cost in your application). Written specifications for planting should be developed and provided to contractors, staff, or volunteers who are doing the planting. Their work should be supervised and inspected during and after planting.

Where trees are planted or maintained by volunteers or property owners, the grantee must provide appropriate training and supervision. It is also suggested that each property owner receive a written guide for tree care (such as the Forest Service document Tree Owner's Manual).

Trees planted under contract should include a warranty for replacement (due to poor condition or mortality), unless otherwise stated in the grant agreement. The grantee should be prepared to fully replace all trees that are in poor condition or die prior to the end of the project grant agreement, unless loss was due to natural disaster beyond the control of the project manager.

Maintenance

The project must have written specifications and a tree maintenance plan that addresses watering, mulching, removal of guy wires or stakes if used, pruning, and protection according to the International Society of Arboriculture Best Management Practices for Tree Planting.

Property owners must sign an agreement that they will maintain, water, and protect newly planted trees or provide access to the organization responsible for planting and maintenance.

Inspection and Monitoring

A project manager or qualified designee must inspect every tree planted to be sure that tree selection, planting, maintenance methods, and planting locations are correct. The Morton Arboretum staff will also inspect the completed plantings prior to the grant end date for the same purpose.

Between one and three years after planting, a sample survey evaluating survival rate and condition of planted trees should be completed annually to assess survival rates and inform future projects.

Guidance for Saplings

Some aspects of planning, implementation, and maintenance may vary for projects that use smaller stock such as bare-root saplings. In an urban and community setting, this may occur on restoration projects in parks or natural areas or in establishing forested buffers.

Considerations for smaller stock include the following:

- Bare-root trees and other saplings must be planted as soon as possible. Bare-root trees must be kept damp and stored in a cool location until planting occurs. Under no circumstance should bare-root tree roots be allowed to dry out. If planting is to occur more than seven days after arrival, trees should be unpacked, inspected, watered if necessary, and resealed. The longer the planting is delayed and the higher the storage temperature, the greater the mortality rate.
- Projects should include a description of how new trees will be protected from competing vegetation, animals, mowing, other human impacts, or other anticipated mortality.
- Grant narratives and planting plans should document the target survival rate at the end of the grant. Replanting should occur if this target is not met, unless otherwise approved by The Morton Arboretum.

Helpful Resources

- American Standards for Nursery Stock – ANSI Z60.1 <https://www.americanhort.org/nursery-standards/>
- American Standards for Planting and Transplanting – ANSI A300 (Part 6) <https://www.isa-arbor.com/store/category/117/>
- International Society of Arboriculture Best Management Practices for Tree Planting <https://www.isa-arbor.com/store/category/117/>
- American Standards for Pruning – ANSI A300 (Part 1) <https://www.isa-arbor.com/store/category/117/>
- Resources and Assistance Available for Planting Hardwood Seedlings – Lenny D. Farlee, Purdue Extension FNR-226 <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-226.pdf>
- Bentrup, G. 2008. Conservation Buffers—Design guidelines for buffers, corridors, and greenways. Gen. Tech. Rep. SRS-109. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station. 110 p. <https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/33522>
- Link to Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guides with conservation practices for each state <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg>
- USDA Forest Service [Tree Owner's Manual](#)