

Planning



NJ Urban & Community Forestry Program (NJUCF)

NJUCF Stewardship Grant
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Announcement Date: May 11, 2021
Due Date: July 9, 2021

Education & Training



Electronic Grant Application System

[NJDEP SAGE](#)

Management



NJ Forest Service | Mail Code 501-04, PO Box 420, Trenton, NJ 08625 | 609.292.2532 | www.communityforestry.nj.gov

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I. Purpose

Pursuant to the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act, N.J.S.A.13:1L-17.4(c), one purpose of the New Jersey Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program (NJUCF) is to provide grants to local governments and shade tree commissions to assist in the implementation of an approved comprehensive Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP) to the extent monies are appropriated or otherwise made available. The NJUCF Stewardship Grant was established to provide this financial assistance.

Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to encourage projects that strongly link the use of best management practices to achieve urban and community forestry management goals defined in the CFMP.

II. Source of Funding & Statutory Citations

Grant funding comes from the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forest Preservation License Plate Fund (N.J.S.A. 39:3-27.81), and the No Net Loss Compensatory Reforestation program (N.J.S.A. 13:1L-14.2(c)).

III. Eligibility (Applicants & Projects)

Only municipal and county governments and their shade tree commissions, tree committees, tree boards, or tree councils are eligible to apply for a grant.

Only projects carried out on public property owned or maintained by a municipal or county government are eligible for grant funding. Reforestation and tree planting projects that take place on Board of Education (BOE) lands are allowed, but the applicant must have formal agreement with the BOE in place which details the long-term maintenance requirements and responsibilities in relation to the reforestation or tree planting.

Applicants must be NJUCF Accredited according to the current program guidelines (www.communityforestry.nj.gov). Accreditation means that the applicant has:

- A current, approved Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP).
- Two (2) Core trained representatives - one (1) municipal employee and one (1) volunteer.
- Satisfied the annual Continuing Education Unit (CEU) requirement - a total of eight (8) CEUs between at least two (2) individuals each calendar year. (This requirement does not apply to applicants who are in the initial year of CFMP implementation).
- Submitted an Annual Accomplishment Report by February 15 for the previous calendar year.

Applicants cannot have an open Community Stewardship Incentive Program (CSIP 2016, CSIP 2017) grant or NJUCF Stewardship Grant (2018 or 2019) from the NJUCF.

Applicants cannot have an open No Net Loss (NNL) grant from the NJUCF.

Only projects that link to one of the two (2) grant categories detailed below in this RFP, and that specifically refer to goals, objectives, and actions addressed in the applicant's current, approved CFMP are eligible for funding consideration.

IV. Grant Categories & Funding Allocations

Two (2) grant categories are available for 2021 NJUCF Stewardship Grant funding:

1. Resiliency Planning

Grants up to \$50,000 may be awarded for resiliency planning. These projects can entail, but are not limited to:

- Tree inventories;
- Risk tree assessments;
- Storm assessments;
- Insect and disease management projects such as emerald ash borer¹ (EAB) survey, ash tree risk assessment, and EAB suppression/Ash tree conservation planning, or;
- Any combination of these activities.

The intent of these grants is for communities to understand their urban and community forest composition and structure, and to amend or update existing management plans based on that knowledge to better inform management decisions.

2. Reforestation & Tree Planting

Grants up to \$150,000 may be awarded for reforestation and tree planting. Applicants are free to develop reforestation and tree planting projects with tree material (e.g. B&B, container, saplings, seedlings) and reforestation activities that ensure the growth and establishment of trees and forests that best suit the needs of their communities and their reforestation and tree planting goals.

Planting must take place within one (1) year of the start of the work period. All trees should be planted during one (1) planting season (eg. Spring 2022 or Fall 2022).

Reforestation and planting projects must be based on an existing inventory and the CFMP. The CFMP and the inventory must be uploaded to the electronic application.

All projects may use a portion of the grant funds to support the development of a reforestation, tree planting, and maintenance plan in accordance with the current [NJUCF Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan Guidelines](#), the most recent tree care industry standards ([ANSI Z60.1](#) and [A300](#)), and [forestry best management practices](#). Up to

¹ [Emerald Ash Borer Sample Management Plan and Community Resources](#)

seven percent (7%) of the total grant amount may be used for professional services including the design of the Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan, as well as the supervision of the reforestation or tree planting contract and work.

All Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance plans are subject to NJUCF approval (see Section VIII (2) below for details). Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance plans must receive NJUCF approval within six (6) months of the start of the work period, as defined in Section V.

Proposals will be fully funded to the extent possible. NJUCF reserves the right to reallocate the number and amount of grant awards based on the quantity and/or quality of proposals received.

V. Grant Requirements

All grant recipients must comply with the general terms and conditions as defined in the grant agreement including, but not limited to:

- Grantees agree to comply with all applicable federal, state, and municipal laws, rules, regulations, and written policies.
- All projects must be completed within the defined work period in the grant agreement. If a project will not be completed during the work period, the grantee may request an extension consistent with procedures defined in the grant agreement.

The work period commences on the date the grant award announcement is distributed via the NJDEP SAGE system, and ends on:

- **Resiliency Planning: two (2) years from the start of the work period.**
 - **Reforestation and Tree Planting: three (3) years from start of the work period.**
- Grantees are only reimbursed for expenses incurred.
 - The salaries or wages of an employee of the grantee are not eligible for reimbursement from grant funding, even though the employee may be engaged in work that is necessary for grant preparation or for the oversight or conduct of grant implementation. That work may count as grantee match defined below in this RFP. Only the cost of services provided by the vendor or contractor that the grantee hires to develop and carry out the workplan may be reimbursed. This includes the cost of the services of both the contractor's forestry professional and any contractor support staff aiding the professional in the conduct of the work. The contractor's forestry professional should be a [NJ Approved Forester](#), a [NJ Licensed Tree Expert](#), a [Society of American Foresters Certified Forester](#), an [International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist](#), or other professional who abides by the current forestry best management practices and arboricultural industry standards.

- Payment will be made upon submission of a properly executed state invoice form and all invoices, bills, and other documents necessary to justify the payment.
- Funding cannot be used to reimburse for expenses incurred outside of the work period as defined in the grant agreement.
- Reforestation and tree planting grants will only support the natural or intentional stocking of trees. No reimbursement will be made for the planting of shrubs or herbaceous plants.
- All invoices must be paid in full to be considered for reimbursement; advanced payments will not be made.
- Grantees will use their own procurement procedures that reflect applicable state and local laws and regulations, and applicable state requirements shall be incorporated into any subcontracts under the agreement.
- All grantees must maintain records that adequately identify the source and application of funds provided for projects. Accounting records must be supported by such source documentation as cancelled checks, paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records, contract and sub-grant award documents, etc.
- All grantees are required to comply with all financial and performance reporting requirements, including interim and final financial and performance reports.
- All grantees are **required to maintain NJUCF Accreditation** in accordance with the NJUCF guidelines (www.communityforestry.nj.gov) **throughout the entire grant work period**. NJUCF Accreditation means that the applicant has:
 - A current, approved Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP),
 - Two (2) Core trained representatives - one (1) municipal employee and one (1) volunteer,
 - Satisfied the annual Continuing Education Unit (CEU) requirement - a total of eight (8) CEUs between at least two (2) individuals each calendar year. This requirement does not apply to applicants who are in the initial year of CFMP implementation,
 - Submitted an Annual Accomplishment Report by February 15 for the previous calendar year.
- Grant funded inventories must be submitted electronically as a final deliverable to NJUCF in Excel (.xls) or comma separated values (.csv) format.
- Grant funded inventories must use [USDA Forest Service i-Tree ECO species codes](#).
- For Reforestation and Tree Planting grants the release of the final payment of the grant may be contingent upon attaining 100% establishment of the planted trees.
- All reforestation and tree planting projects must comply with the following terms and conditions:

- All reforestation and tree planting grantees must submit a reforestation/tree planting and maintenance plan to NJUCF for approval within six (6) months of the start of the work period. No planting shall begin until the Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan is approved by NJUCF.
- All reforestation and tree planting grantees must comply with the most current [NJUCF Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan Guidelines](#).
- No reforestation and tree planting work shall begin until the Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan is approved. No work will be reimbursed if it is conducted prior to Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan approval.
- All reforestation and tree planting grantees must conduct the work (reforestation, planting, and maintenance) according to the specifications detailed in the NJUCF approved Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan.
- A minimum of three (3) inspections may be conducted by NJUCF to ensure compliance with the approved Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan and tree establishment. If NJUCF is unable to conduct inspections due to COVID-19 or other restrictions, the grantee must provide inspection documentation as detailed and requested by NJUCF.
- All trees planted with the NJUCF grant must be guaranteed for a two (2) year establishment period.

VI. Reporting and Accountability

Funded projects must comply with accounting, progress, and accomplishment reporting requirements defined in the grant agreement. At a minimum, all grants will require:

- Interim reports due annually beginning one (1) year after the start of the work period of the agreement until the end of the work period.
- A final report at the end of the work period.

VII. Proposal Requirements

- Only one proposal may be submitted by a local government unit. That proposal may only address one grant category defined in this RFP.

- The grant request cannot exceed the funding allocations described in this RFP.
- All proposals must be accompanied by resumes and consultant qualifications as defined in Section VIII and IX of this RFP.
- All proposals must be accompanied by letters of support as defined in Section VIII and IX of this RFP.
- All proposals must identify a Project Manager that will have primary responsibility for coordinating project work, communicating with NJUCF, and reporting on implementation and performance.
- All proposals must identify a Grant Manager that will have the primary responsibility of ensuring compliance and communication regarding all matters pertaining to the execution and implementation of the grant agreement between the local government and NJUCF. This includes ensuring that the execution of the grant agreement in SAGE is signed by the proper municipal official, the resolution to accept and match the grant award is passed by the governing body, the project manager submits progress reports on time, and the required documentation for payments are submitted.
- Matching funds are required and can be met through in-kind volunteer contributions and cash from local, state, federal, or other entities (Appendix 2).

VIII. Grant Proposal Requirements and Scoring Criteria

A Project Overview is required as part of a complete grant proposal application but will not be scored or used as part of the selection criteria.

1. Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP) Implementation (35 points)

Scoring will be based on the degree to which the project's work in the chosen grant category directly supports the goals and objectives in the current, approved CFMP. There should be a direct link between the project, CFMP goals, objectives, statement of plan implementation, and CSIP practices.

- Demonstrate a focus on a specific goal or goals in the CFMP that will be addressed and how the proposed project will bring the community toward realizing that goal.
- Identify the objective(s) from the plan that will be carried out through the proposed project and how the proposed project is a step taken toward achieving the identified objective(s).
- Address how the proposed project coincides with the CFMP's Statement of Plan Implementation. Explain how the proposed project is a priority action item as identified in the plan.

- Clearly articulate the CSIP practices that the proposed project will address and how they relate to the goal(s), objective(s), and implementation plan addressed through this project.
- Indicate whether the project is in an overburdened community as defined by the NJ Environmental Justice Law¹. To find out if your municipality or county contains overburdened communities visit the [NJDEP Environmental Justice Mapping Tool](#).

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2. Workplan (25 points)

For the relevant grant category, proposed projects should be presented with a clear and articulate plan for what the work is and how the work will be carried out as described below.

A. Resiliency Planning

- Describe the project location and existing conditions of the urban and community forest. If the forest condition is unknown, state that and describe the need to carry out this work and to acquire this information. Describe how this information will be applied to the CFMP and to urban and community forest management. If the forest condition is known, describe the need to carry out this work and to acquire new information. In both cases, describe how this information will be applied to the CFMP and to urban and community forest management.
- Explain the methods to be employed (e.g. inventory – sample, complete, partial; windshield survey; tree risk assessment to update current inventory; rapid count and measurement of ash trees). For tree inventories, see Appendix 1 for a list of available software programs and basics on the types of inventories and their uses.
- Identify the deliverable(s) that will be produced as a result of this grant (e.g. tree inventory report, amended management plan, risk assessment report, risk mitigation plan).
- Identify the municipal staff, shade tree commission volunteers, contractors, consultants and/or contracted nongovernmental organization or partners who will be responsible for the project implementation. This includes the people that will be managing the grant itself as well as the people that will be carrying out the proposed project. Clearly identify the

¹ An **Overburdened Community (OBC)**, as defined by the law, is any census block group, as determined in accordance with the most recent United States Census, in which:

1. at least 35 percent of the households qualify as low-income households (at or below twice the poverty threshold as determined by the United States Census Bureau);
2. at least 40 percent of the residents identify as minority or as members of a State recognized tribal community; or
3. at least 40 percent of the households have limited English proficiency (without an adult that speaks English "very well" according to the United States Census Bureau).

roles and responsibilities of each of the project partners.

- Provide resumes and consultant qualifications for all parties as identified above who are involved in implementing the grant. If a consultant or contractor is not yet identified, provide the qualifications that will be required of these parties.
- Include letters of support from project partners clearly identifying their role in the project.
- Provide a project timeline either narratively or via a diagram that clearly illustrates when project tasks and milestones are going to be carried out within the defined work period for this grant category: two (2) years from the effective date of the grant agreement.

Significant project milestones must be indicated. Milestones can include but may not be limited to: issuing an RFP for work, awarding a contract, start/end of work, and submitting required grant reports (see Section VII).

B. Reforestation & Tree Planting

- This workplan should be developed in accordance with the current [NJUCF Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan Guidelines](#). All plans must be approved by NJUCF prior to commencement of work.
- Describe the project location and existing conditions of the urban and community forest. Explain how the need for tree planting has been identified (e.g. a tree inventory identifies tree planting opportunities; a new park is being developed; open space has been acquired).
- State whether the local government is a No Net Loss impacted community (see Section IX below).
- Explain the methods to be employed (e.g. contract plantings, street trees, parks, protected area reforestation).
- Identify the municipal staff, shade tree commission volunteers, contractors, consultants and/or contracted nongovernmental organization or partners who will be responsible for the project implementation. This includes the people that will be managing the grant itself as well as the people that will be carrying out the proposed project. Clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each of the project partners.
- Provide resumes and consultant qualifications for all parties involved in implementing the grant as identified above.
- Include letters of support from project partners clearly identifying their role in the project.
- Provide a project timeline either narratively or via a diagram that clearly illustrates when project tasks and milestones are going to be carried out within the defined work period for

this grant category. The project timeline should be developed in consultation with the [NJUCF Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan Guidelines](#) for establishing milestones for plan submission and approval as well as inspections.

- Significant project milestones must be indicated. Milestones can include, but may not be limited to: issuing an RFP for work, awarding a contract, start/end of work, submission of reforestation/tree planting and maintenance plan for approval by NJUCF (within 6 months from the effective date of the grant), initial tree planting inspection by NJUCF (refer to the tree planting and maintenance plan guidelines for the inspection procedures), Year-1 tree planting inspection by NJUCF, final tree planting inspection, and required grant report submission deadlines (see Section VII).

3. Community Capacity (20 points)

Describe the local government's unique strengths and past demonstrated commitment to managing the urban and community forest resource. Evidence of sustained participation in Tree City USA, successful completion of grant funded tree planting programs and studies, certification in the Sustainable Jersey program, evidence of long-term partnerships with tree-focused groups including statewide or regional nonprofits, universities or state associations and an active and engaged shade tree commission or committee should be clearly described.

Provide supporting documentation of Tree City USA certification and/or Sustainable Jersey certification.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation (10 points)

Demonstrate how the project links to and promotes progress on specific objectives included in the CFMP in relation to specific plan practices. Identify specific, significant, and measurable on-the-ground outcomes. Describe the project's monitoring and evaluation plan. Specific monitoring and evaluation submission elements include:

- Goals and objectives consistent with the CFMP
- Specific practices
- Measurable outcomes
- An explanation of the monitoring and evaluation plan

5. Budget (10 points)

Complete the budget table in the grant proposal application.

- A. Grant / Request** - only provide the amount requested through the grant. **Note that grantee employee salary and wages are not eligible for funding; they can be used as a cash match.**
- B. Match** – a twenty-five percent (25%) cash and/or in-kind match (Appendix 2) of the total grant amount is required for this round of grants. Matching funding sources may be federal,

state, local government, private foundations or non-profits, volunteers, or other. Enter the value contributed by each source in the appropriate budget column.

Volunteer time as in-kind contributions are encouraged. The current [independent sector volunteer rate for NJ](#) may be applied to volunteer hours including shade tree commission or committee members contributing to the implementation of the project or management of the grant.

It is important to account for all time local government time contributed to the execution of the project and the grant. The salary rate for all municipal employees implementing the project and/or managing the grant can be applied as cash match by the local government.

Documentation accounting for all volunteer and employee hours will be required with all financial reporting to release grant payments.

- C. Total Project Cost – values should be the sum of requested funds plus the required matching funds (25% of the grant request) stated for each line item (Total Project Cost = Request + Match).
- D. Total – total values should be the sum of all the values in each column for each funding source. The sum of the Total Project Cost column should reflect the total amount for the entire project.
- E. Budget Narrative -
 - Describe how the grant funds will be spent.
 - Describe source of matching funds.
 - Explain how the project will supplement the applicant’s existing local urban and community forestry budget to achieve holistic, sustainable, and effective urban and community forestry projects.

IX. Project Submission and Selection

All proposals are due Friday, July 9, 2021.

ALL NJUCF STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROPOSALS MUST BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY USING THE [NJDEP SYSTEM FOR ADMINISTERING GRANTS ELECTRONICALLY \(SAGE\)](#).

Local governments interested in applying for NJUCF grants must **first register and obtain a User ID and Password** via [NJDEP SAGE](#).

[NJDEP SAGE](#) registered users can identify the grants NJUCF has available, submit grant applications, monitor applications under consideration, communicate with the NJUCF grant team, as well as request changes and manage grants via the [NJDEP SAGE](#) system.

All submissions must include complete grant proposal application forms and all supporting documentation. This includes:

- **Grant Proposal Application Forms** – available online after registering in [NJDEP SAGE](#).
- **Resumes and consultant qualifications** – Provide resumes and documentation of qualification (e.g. copy of Certified Forester, NJ Certified Tree Expert, or ISA Certified Arborist credential) for all parties involved in implementing the grant.
- **Letters of Support** - Include letters of support from ALL project partners clearly identifying their role in the project.
- **Proof of Certification** - Tree City USA, Sustainable Jersey

NJFS staff and the NJ Community Forestry Council will review, evaluate, and score project proposals. Eligible and complete applications will be scored according to the criteria defined in this RFP.

Priority for reforestation and tree planting grants will be given to local governments that were directly impacted by a No Net Loss (NNL) reforestation project, and do not currently have an open NNL grant. This means that a State project subject to NNL requirements took place within the local government boundaries, and that the deforesting agency paid monetary compensation in-lieu of conducting reforestation. Local governments must be NJUCF Accredited as defined in the community forestry guidelines (see Section III of this RFP). If a NNL impacted community is not currently NJUCF accredited, it may work to achieve Accreditation, and apply for a tree planting grant in another round.

NNL impacted communities:

- **Atlantic County:** Egg Harbor Township, Somers Point City
- **Burlington County:** Lumberton Township
- **Camden County:** Borough of Bellmawr, Borough of Runnemede
- **Gloucester County:** Deptford Township
- **Passaic County:** City of Clifton, Township of Little Falls, City of Paterson, Borough of Woodland Park
- **Sussex County:** Hardyston Township

X. Helpful Links:

NJ Forest Service, [Urban & Community Forestry Program](#)

NJDEP System for Administering Grants Electronically ([NJDEP SAGE](#))

[ANSI 300 \(Parts 1-9\)](#). Available from the Tree Care Industry Association

[ANSI Z60.1 – American Standard for Nursery Stock](#). 2014. American Nursery and Landscape Association.

[Independent sector volunteer rate for NJ](#). Make sure to find the rate specific for NJ as it is higher than the national average.

[Vibrant Cities Lab](#)

For more information, contact:

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NJ Forest Service, Urban & Community Forestry

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Appendix 1

Tree Inventories: Introduction & Available Software

An urban forest inventory is a process that documents, evaluates, characterizes, and locates individual trees or groups of trees in an urbanized community. Some communities undertake an inventory for community safety and maintenance planning such as identifying and locating individual trees requiring pruning, watering, or removal. Sites for potential tree plantings and even condition of the sidewalks, utility lines and other community needs within the public right-of-way can be identified. An inventory is also used to assess and characterize large groups of trees such as the type of trees, their size, condition, and location (e.g., street trees) within a community.

An important objective of any community should be to maximize the benefits of trees and to minimize the costs in achieving these benefits. Documenting, assessing, characterizing, and locating individual trees or groups of trees in the community (i.e., an inventory) is one way of doing this. In addition, a tree inventory will assist communities in their efforts to manage their trees and provide a leveraging tool to increase budget. A tree inventory can increase a community's standing in the state because it demonstrates a commitment to understanding and caring for this valuable asset.

Things to consider in deciding to do an inventory are:

- How it will be used;
- What information needs to be collected, and;
- Who will use the inventory and collect the data?

Communities have options for conducting the inventory. A simple assessment of the number of trees and the type of tree in the right-of-way or a more complex survey determining the health and risk of the trees. In NJ all grant supported inventories require the use of a certified arborist - NJ Licensed Tree Expert. As the amount of information desired from the tree inventory increases, then the level of expertise required for the professionals conducting the inventory will also increase. It is recommended that risk assessments be conducted by an ISA TRAQ trained NJ Licensed Tree Expert.

[Software programs](#) should be used to manage inventory data. The price of urban tree inventory software is variable (e.g. free to \$10,000).

Grant funded inventories must be submitted electronically as a final deliverable to NJUCF in Excel (.xls) or comma separated values (.csv) format.

Appendix 2

Meeting the Matching Requirement for the NJUCF Stewardship Grant

Match or cost-share is the portion of project costs not paid by the NJUCF Stewardship Grant.

All activities and expenses for the match must take place and be earned within the work period of the grant agreement and documented thoroughly.

Volunteer Match

The average [hourly rate for volunteer time in NJ from the Independent Sector](#) should be used to establish a value. Make sure to find the rate specific for NJ as it is higher than the national average. If a volunteer is contributing time in their professional capacity, they may use the hourly rate consistent with standard professional fees charged for their services.

- Time spent in the selection of the project contractor.
- Telephone conversations, email exchanges, and meetings with the contractor about implementing the project.
- All Shade Tree Commission or Environmental Commission meetings held within the work period of the grant agreement where the grant project would be discussed or event and activities promoting the work and benefit of this grant.
- Time spent watering or mulching trees planted under the grant agreement.

Cash Match

The employee's standard hourly rate of compensation should be used to establish a value. Fringe benefits can be counted but should be calculated separately.

- Employee time spent in the management of the grant such as preparation of financial documentation for payment, record keeping, reporting, and communicating with NJUCF.
- Employee time spent in the selection of the project contractor.
- Employee time spent in the preparation of documents to hire and pay the contractor.
- Meetings with the contractor and all employee time spent assisting the contractor on the project.
- Employee time spent watering or mulching the trees planted under the grant agreement.
- Employee time spent reviewing drafts and approving the final report for the grant project.

Expenditures

- Cash payments made to the contractor that were over and above the grant award amount.

NJUCF STEWARDSHIP GRANT VOLUNTEER MATCH LOG					
DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)	ACTIVITY	VOLUNTEER NAME	HOURS WORKED	INDEPENDENT SECTOR VOLUNTEER RATE	VALUE OF VOLUNTEER TIME (=HOURS WORKED x RATE)
TOTAL					

Example log to track volunteer hours to match a NJUCF Stewardship Grant.