



Leafing Out Grants (LOGs) for Overburdened Communities (OBCs) Management Grant

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Announcement Date: January 26, 2024

Application Due by April 5, 2024 by 5:00 p.m.

Submit your application via the
Provided Fillable PDF

Send to communityforestry@dep.nj.gov

NJ Urban and Community Forestry Program
Mail Code 501-04, PO Box 420, Trenton, NJ 08625 609.292.2532 |
www.communityforestry.nj.gov
<https://www.facebook.com/NJurbanandcommunityforestry>

This grant opportunity is funded through the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

What is the NJ Urban & Community Forestry Program?

The New Jersey Urban & Community Forestry Program (NJUCF) is authorized by the [New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act \(N.J.S.A. 13: 1L-17.1 to -17.9\)](#). Through this program we work with municipalities such as yours to encourage, promote, and support the stewardship and effective management of trees and forest ecosystems in New Jersey's communities. We do this through both technical and financial assistance to help you establish, grow, and maintain a healthy urban and community forest. You can find out more here about the [NJUCF program](#).

Where is the grant funding coming from and how big a grant can we seek?

This funding is made possible by the U.S. Forest Service through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). You can learn more about the IRA and its urban forestry component on the [USDA website](#). The IRA provides funding for urban and community forestry investments that:

- Increase access in disadvantaged urban communities to trees and the associated benefits they provide to human health, the environment, and the economy;
- Broaden community engagement in local urban forest planning, tree planting, and management activities; and
- Improve community and urban forest resilience to climate change, extreme heat, forest pests and diseases, and storm events through best management and maintenance practices.

The NJUCF applied for and received an \$11.25 million grant through the IRA, 80% of which is being passed through to municipalities to support investments like those noted above. This Leafing Out Grant (LOG) is part of the \$11.25 million federal award. It will provide a maximum of \$850,000 per funded municipality. Applicants for these four-year grants are expected to seek the full funding amount. See further in this RFP for a breakdown of activities and funding within each of the four years.

Who is eligible to apply?

If you received this solicitation, then your municipality is eligible to apply.

Specifically, this grant is for Overburdened Communities (OBCs), which are determined using the federal [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST mapping tool) and the percentage of land area that is considered an [overburdened community according to the NJDEP Office of Environmental Justice](#). This grant is for communities whose census blocks all are considered to be OBCs by one or both of these tools.

What does the IRA management grant cover and when?

This grant provides funding for a broad range of activities over a four-year period, including, but not necessarily limited to, tree inventories, tree planting, community forest management plans (CFMPs), implementation of priority tree maintenance, urban wood utilization, urban food forests, extreme heat mitigation, and hazard tree removal. The actual mix of activities will be tailored to the specific needs of

your community. The expectation is that communities will be accredited with the NJUCF Program throughout this process. Details on program accreditation can be found [here](#).

We expect each \$850,000 award to be spent roughly as follows:

- \$50,000 for inventory and CFMP development;
- \$400,000 for tree-related maintenance activities; and
- \$400,000 for tree planting activities.

Money can be moved between the above categories, with NJUCF's prior approval, to suit your municipality's actual needs. Any money not spent will be reallocated.

If your municipality is chosen to receive a grant, funding will be provided each year of the grant for different areas of urban and community forestry work. This will ensure you are properly planning the use of the resources and are growing your capacity in a meaningful way.

Additionally, each municipality awarded a grant will have access to an outreach coordinator **at no cost** as a resource to guide them through the process of gaining accreditation with the NJUCF program, navigating grant implementation, and overall development of their urban and community program. These outreach coordinators can help you build relationships between your community, our program, and others.

- Year 1: Fund Forest Inventory Work

For your municipality to understand the structure of your urban forest, an inventory must be completed if your town does not already have one. Having an inventory is an important first step that will help to inform forest management for your municipality going forward. The inventory must be completed by a qualified consultant, hired by your municipality, who will work with your designated outreach coordinator and you to determine the appropriate inventory parameters. Not all public trees in your municipality may need to be inventoried. However, the inventory must be done in areas your Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP) intends to focus on. If you do not currently have a plan, the areas to be inventoried should be discussed with your consultant and the NJUCF program. Additional inventory requirements of this grant can be found in Appendix A.

- Year 1-2: Fund CFMP Work

The next step will be forest management planning, in the form of a CFMP written with input from the public according to our guidelines for plan development by a qualified forestry consultant. Planning should be an interactive process that includes interested members of the municipality with diverse viewpoints and backgrounds. Through the CFMP, goals and objectives specific to the needs of your municipality will be identified and funded through maintenance and planting grants, as appropriate. Once your municipality's CFMP is in place, you'll want to pursue UCF accreditation with our program. Accredited municipalities have access to additional grants

for development and implementation of their CFMPs and a basis for liability protection associated with their urban forestry programs. Complete information about our accreditation program can be found on the [UCF program website](#).

- Years 2-4: Fund Existing Tree Maintenance and Hazard Tree Removals

The next step in building urban forestry capacity within your community is tree maintenance and removal, as identified through the inventory and planning process. You will need to have an approved NJUCF maintenance plan for this grant activity. Specific requirements will be made available at a later date but ultimately will include locations, species, justification, etc.

- Years 2-3.5: Fund Tree Establishment Projects

The final step is to fund the planting and establishment of public trees only. Newly planted trees should be: species identified as appropriate for the site; targeted within the municipality to reduce heat island effects; and in areas of greatest canopy need, as identified through your municipality's inventory and management plan. Local community engagement will be required as a component of your tree planting and establishment projects. An approved tree planting and establishment plan will also be required; an example can be found [here](#).

Why should my municipality apply?

Through these LOGs, your municipality can improve its resilience to climate change, combat urban heat island effects, increase resiliency to pests and storm events through best management and maintenance practices, and more. These grants are all about giving you the tools you need to break down the barriers that prevent you from participating in NJUCF's accreditation program, and work with us to start, plan, and advance a strong, self-sustainable local urban and community forestry program that will enhance the quality of life for your citizens and all New Jerseyans.

Activities to be funded through this grant include, but are not necessarily limited to, tree inventories, CFMPs, implementation of priority tree maintenance, hazard tree removal and more. The actual mix of activities is mostly up to you and will be specific to the needs of your community. Tree maintenance and planting activities should occur once the inventory and CFMP are complete but may take place simultaneously.

Am I competing with other municipalities for this grant?

Yes. You are competing with the other 55 New Jersey municipalities that meet the New Jersey or federal OBC criteria for all census blocks. The U.S. Forest Service requires us to distribute these grant funds through a competitive process.

Is this a reimbursement grant?

Yes. Because these are reimbursement grants, advance payments will not be made. Unlike other NJUCF grants, you may be reimbursed for expenses as they occur. However, if your municipality receives a grant, you will only be reimbursed for expenses which are part of the approved grant project; invoices relating to the project must be paid in full by your municipality to be considered for reimbursement. Details regarding when and how reimbursements are issued will be detailed in your grant agreement.

Is there a match requirement?

No. You are not required to match grant funds.

How many total grants do you expect to award?

We expect to award ten (10), four-year grants through this RFP. Should additional funding become available, we may award more applications received in this round.

How will my grant application be scored?

NJ Forest Service, Urban and Community forestry program staff will review, evaluate, and score project proposals based on your ability to demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment to see the project through to the end. Your municipality's unique strengths and ability to create/expand its urban forestry program will be considered. It is our intent to award grants to municipalities with the greatest need, as well as potential, for programmatic growth; priority will be given to those municipalities that have never participated in NJUCF's accreditation program or are not currently participating.

We will review your commitment to your tree resources, as well as your past and present engagement with our program. We will consider your municipality's population size, land area, and lack of canopy cover. Urban heat data or impervious surface cover data will also be considered in scoring these grant applications, along with your past participation with our program. Additionally, projects that show a plan for citizen engagement, which ensures that the investment of public funds reflects the community's needs and priorities, will be scored higher.

Tree canopy cover can be found through the NJ Fores Adapt website here:

<https://njforestadapt.rutgers.edu/#/map> select "County Forest Statistics, then at the top – "Please Select a Location", select your county and municipality. Then select Municipal Forestry Snapshot, and scroll down to use the Total Canopy Cover value in the graph titled *Average Percentages of NLCD Data*. This same graph will provide impervious surface cover percentage as well.

What do I need to do to apply?

Each municipality may only submit one grant application.

The application will be a fillable PDF, and you must supply any necessary supporting documentation, including a copy of the Certificate of Insurance (ACORD) form for your municipality for the current year. The State of New Jersey should be listed as the certificate holder. Coverage should include commercial general liability, automobile liability, employers' liability, and workers' compensation.

Once grants are awarded, the grant agreements will be done through [NJDEP SAGE](#).

What if my municipality isn't chosen for a four-year grant? Is there other IRA associated NJUCF grant funding for which my municipality can apply?

Yes. All 55 municipalities that were notified of this grant opportunity may apply for both the four-year management grant and a four-year educational/training grant, via a separate RFP, as part of the IRA funding. The educational/training grant provides funding for qualifying training/educational opportunities of up to \$12,500 (approximately \$3,125 per year). Each of the 55 municipalities that applies for the educational/training grant will be funded, provided their application is complete and received on time. Please see separate RFP for this information.

Find information on the IRA leaf out education grant opportunity and annual, non-IRA NJUCF grant opportunities here: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/forest/urbanandcommunity/grants.html>

What is the deadline for applying?

You must submit your grant application to communityforestry@dep.nj.gov by 5:00 p.m. on April 5, 2024.

When would I be notified that my municipality is getting a grant?

We expect to complete the scoring of the management grant applications by May 1, 2024 and will notify successful applicants shortly thereafter.

What happens after I'm notified that my municipality is being awarded a grant?

You will need to sign a grant agreement with us, provided through NJDEP SAGE. The agreement will provide the general terms and conditions you must comply with such as progress and annual reports, delineation of work and the work period, what activities are reimbursable and how, etc.

Will there be a webinar to provide additional information?

A webinar on how to use the NJDEP SAGE online grant system is already available on the NJDEP SAGE website. If you are a new user to the system, you will need to create an account first. The webinar is found under "My Training Materials-" on your home page.

Additional Information:

NJUCF reserves the right to:

- Award the next highest scoring application in the event an awardee fails to enter a grant agreement with us within six (6) months of a grant award.

- Monitor the progress of all grant awards and withdraw grant funding if a grantee fails to make significant and timely progress on its project or fails to receive the necessary permissions and permits for the project.
- Disqualify any applicant whose conduct and/or proposal fails to conform to the requirements of this RFP.
- Seek clarification from an applicant to effectively evaluate a project proposal.
- Disqualify any applicant that has demonstrated poor past conduct or performance with NJUCF, including but not limited to incomplete grants, lack of required progress reports, or failure to implement all promised deliverables.

Who can I contact if I have additional questions?

Should you have any questions, you can reach out to Brian McDonald, NJUCF program coordinator, at communityforestry@dep.nj.gov or brian.mcdonald@dep.nj.gov

Appendix 1

Tree Inventories: Introduction & Available Software

An urban forest inventory locates, documents, and characterizes individual trees or groups of trees in a given community, typically noting attributes such as species, size, condition, and location. Some communities conduct an inventory for safety and maintenance planning purposes, for example, by identifying individual trees that require pruning, watering, or removal. Sites for potential tree plantings can also be identified. Inventories can also note characteristics of local infrastructure, such as sidewalk condition or overhead utility line presence.

An important objective of any community should be to maximize the benefits of their trees. Urban forest inventories enable communities to engage in proactive management of their urban forest by providing the information necessary to do so and identifying patterns that may not have been noticed otherwise.

Items to consider when preparing to conduct an inventory include the following:

- What information needs to be collected?
- Who will collect the data?
- How will the data be collected?
- What materials will be needed for the inventory?
- How will the data from the inventory be used?

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 in-depth survey determining the health and risk associated with the trees.

NJUCF-funded tree inventories must be conducted by professionals, including but not limited to certified arborists and New Jersey Licensed Tree Experts. Volunteer-based data collection will not be funded under these grants.

As the amount of information desired from the tree inventory increases, the level of expertise required for the professionals conducting the inventory will also increase. It is recommended that risk assessments be conducted by a New Jersey Licensed Tree Expert with International Society of Arboriculture Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (ISA TRAQ) training. Verify that your professional is adequately qualified to collect the data you need in your tree inventory.

Software programs should be used to manage inventory data. The price of urban tree inventory software varies. The initial purchase of a software program can be funded by this grant, which includes a single or multi-year bundle software package from a vendor. NJUCF does not fund the renewal of any inventory software programs.

Grant-funded inventories must be submitted electronically as a final deliverable to NJUCF in Excel (.xls) format.

Required Data Collection Fields:

**At a minimum, the following data must be collected in an NJUCF-funded inventory:

- Species – Common and Scientific name
- DBH – 2-inch increments
- Current Height – Small (less than 25 feet), Medium (25-50 feet), and Large (greater than 50 feet)
- Potential Height (expected at maturity) – Small (less than 25 feet), Medium (25-50 feet), and Large (greater than 50 feet)
- Condition (5-1) – The rating scale: 5 = Good, 4 = Fair, 3 = Poor, 2 = Very Poor, and 1 = Dying/Dead.
 - Good condition constitutes: <10% dieback, missing crown, visible structural damage, and injury from diseases and pests
 - Fair: 10% -25%
 - Poor: 25-50%
 - Very poor: 50-75%
 - Dying/dead: >75%
- Location – GPS Coordinates and/or closest street address

Additional data fields that can be collected include:

- Risk Assessment
- Maintenance Recommendation
- Canopy Width
- Photo
- Insect or Disease