

A note about federal funding:

This grant is funded through a federal grant from the US Department of Agriculture, US Forest Service. We have a signed grant agreement through UNL to complete our objectives of tree planting, removal, care, and workforce development over the next five years for a total of \$10 million (\$8 million going directly to on-the-ground projects). At this time, we have not received a stop work order from our federal partners. If we do receive a stop work order, we will update the information on plantnebraska.org.

Tips for a Successful Application

- Ensure you meet all requirements for eligibility. Things commonly missed that have caused applications to be deemed ineligible:
 - You **MUST** replant at least as many trees as are removed in the same or nearby area. If you remove 20 trees, you must plant 20 trees.
 - The grant will not pay for trees larger than 1.5” caliper.
 - If the project area does not meet the geographically eligible areas as shown on the eligibility map you must explain how that area serves residents of an eligible area with tangible evidence. Simply being a city park that is open to all will not qualify a space.
- Ensure the deliverables of your project match across the entire project, or that you explain discrepancies. If you say you will plant 20 trees, be sure that they are listed in the outcomes and that 20 trees are listed as an expense in the budget, etc.
- If something is more expensive than is typical, please explain why that is the case. It’s ok if a tree removal is particularly tricky and that makes it expensive, but please explain that.
- Please do not answer any questions with “see the budget” or similar. If we are asking the question, we want you to fully answer it.
- Review the sample project agreement on the resources webpage to understand all of the required specifications for the grant. If you are aligned with these requirements from the beginning, it will require less changes to be made to your project if the funds are awarded.

Resource Page: <https://plantnebraska.org/what-we-do/project-funding/urban-community-forestry-grants-resources.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

Application Process

Q: Does our application receive bonus points or get funded before the award alert date if we turn it in earlier?

A: No. Take your time to write well-crafted answers. The applications are not scored on a “first come, first served” basis. Turning your application in early during the submission period will not result in extra points or an early award.

Q: Do I need a UEI? Can I use my Tax ID number as a UEI? Isn't it the same thing?

A: The project sponsor MUST have a UEI to receive an award. UEIs are made up of a combination of 12 letters and numbers. Submissions from applicants without a UEI will be rejected. You can receive a UEI for free at Sam.gov. Be aware, scammers use confusion with the UEI and SAM system to try to get money from organizations. UEIs are free. Do not pay anyone to provide you with a UEI.

Get your UEI here: <https://sam.gov/>

Info about UEIs from the National League of Cities here:

<https://www.nlc.org/article/2022/09/23/transitioning-from-duns-to-unique-entity-ids-uei/>

Q: Our organization has never managed a federal grant or applied for something like this. Do you know of organizations who could help us?

A: Our goal is to make this grant as accessible as possible so that organizations that have never received a grant before could still apply and manage their award. We strive to help all of our awardees fully understand the requirements and how to have a successful project. However, we recognize that your organization may not feel comfortable wading into these uncertain waters. In that case we recommend you reach out to possible partners who could include your project in their application or act as a fiscal sponsor for your project. MANY nonprofit organizations and city governments are working on applications for this opportunity; reach out to those you have good relationships with and ask if they are interested in partnering. This is common practice for large grants; PlantNebraska has been on both sides of this relationship for grant applications.

Q: I have a lot of project partners, should I provide letters of support in my application?

A: No. We are not asking for letters of support at this time. However, it is important that your partners are aware of their involvement in the project prior to submitting your application. Do not submit a grant that includes deliverables from a partner unless you have an agreement from them to provide those deliverables.

Q: How do I find an arborist to be involved in my project? Can Nebraska Forest Service or PlantNebraska serve in this role?

A: We recommend using the Nebraska Arborist Association and/or the International Society of Arboriculture websites to find an arborist, the link is below. Our staff cannot serve in this role for this grant.

ISA: <https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/arboristsearch>

NAA Website: <https://www.nearborists.org/find-an-arborist-1>

Budget Development

Q: I have no idea what it could cost to remove a tree or grind stumps. How do I figure out what a reasonable estimate is for my project?

A: A good approach to determining reasonable estimates for project costs is to make some inquiries to local businesses who offer those goods or services—they should be able to give you at least a ballpark idea of costs. We understand that some costs can be highly variable (i.e. tree removal costs vary dramatically depending on size, access, etc.), so we don't expect your estimates to be exact. If you need to make budget adjustments after you receive an award, your grant manager will be able to help you do that.

Q: If we need to pay legal counsel to develop necessary documents for this project, such as a Release of Liability or updating the city code for hazard tree management, is that a qualifying expense we could include in the project budget?

A: Yes. Please include this in the appropriate category. If you are using city/town resources (internal counsel) then it should be in the salary category. If you will be contracting legal counsel, please include it under the appropriate project activity's contractor line item.

Q: Can I include an administrative fee for managing the grant?

A: Please include appropriate expenses for managing the grant in the correct category, not a flat fee. That could be salary/benefits of a grant administrator, a portion of a fee for an accounting service (listed under other), or similar expenses. Be sure you can justify the expense in the budget.

Q: On the budget template, under the column, 'Number Hours/items', should this be the annual count or the total count over the course of the project?

A: This should be the total count over the course of the project. If you plan to remove ten trees each year for three years, this column should be 30, not 10. The 'Total Funds Requested' column should equal the 'Hourly Rate/Cost per item' multiplied by the 'Number Hours/items' column. The sum of the annual columns should also match the 'Total Funds Requested'. Alternatively, you can also list "10 trees/year, 30 trees total" in that column.

Q: How do I know if the equipment total will be over the \$5,000 limit?

A: The \$5,000 limit applies to the complete cost of the equipment. You cannot purchase pieces of equipment under the \$5,000 limit and assemble them for a complete item if the compiled pieces of the completed equipment assembly will be total over \$5,000. Safety equipment is not included in this total, but any pieces/attachments for equipment is included in this total.

Q: Should we specify any expenses the grantee intends to cover as an overage of the total grant amount requested?

A: No, the budget total should only reflect the total amount requested for allowable expenses. Additional expenses covered by the city should not be mentioned in the budget template.

Project Specifications

Q: Do the hazard trees have to be identified by a Certified Arborist?

A: Yes, an arborist certified by the Nebraska Arborist Association or the International Society of Arboriculture must be the one to determine which trees qualify for removal. However, the arborist performing the removal work does not need to be certified, only licensed by the city per their code/ordinance.

Q: What are the bidding requirements for these projects?

A: Bids must follow the local ordinances, or precedent if no ordinances are in place for the community. Bids must also follow all state and federal procurement laws and requirements.

Q: Are there rules about the types of trees I can plant?

A: Yes! A few things to note:

- Our grant contracts will not allow you to plant ash species (*Fraxinus*), Callery pear, Scotch pines, Siberian elm, Amur maple, Russian olive, tamarack, or Freeman maple including 'Autumn Blaze' maple.
- The grant is focused on planting large, shade-providing trees. Ornamental and columnar species will rarely be approved.
- We are focused on ensuring the community forest has good biodiversity. We will not approve of mass plantings of one species.

Finally, it is important to know that all the specs of trees being planted (species, cultivars, size, etc.) will be reviewed by grant managers and approved prior to ordering and planting or they will not be reimbursed by the grant.

Q: Can I include pavement, street, concrete, and/or curb repair and replacement in this grant?

A: No. While the grant can pay for removal of pavement and curbs to create a planting space for a tree or trees, the grant will not pay for repair or replacement of these items even if the damage or removal was due to the tree work being performed.

Q: Can I include perennials, companion plants, and other ground covers as part of the planting project?

A: Yes, but these expenses cannot consist of more than 5% of the total project budget. Companion planting will be highly scrutinized, and we recommend you find other funding sources if possible. If included in the grant these plants should serve multiple purposes such as social stabilization and erosion control.

Q: What is green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and how do I know if my project qualifies for funding under that definition?

A: GSI are activities associated with planting and maintaining trees in urban landscapes. Examples of authorized non-construction GSI activities include (but are not limited to) tree planting, curb cuts to direct water into planted beds with trees and shrubs, installation of pervious pavers or grates to allow water and oxygen to infiltrate into tree planting sites, removal of small sections of pavement when creating or expanding tree planting sites.

Q: Can trees be planted anywhere on private property, whether part of a new planting project or a replacement tree planting?

A: Plantings can happen anywhere on private property.

After Submitting the Application

Q: When will I know if I've received funding?

A: Please use the table on the [website](#) to determine when you will hear about funding. For example: If you submit your application between July 1st and September 30th, you will receive an email during the month of November. Typically, the grant awards are made at the end of the alert month. Please do not reach out asking when we will make the announcements. You will be contacted about your application regardless of whether you are awarded funds. Every applicant will receive an update about the status of their grant.

Q: Once I am awarded, when can I start the project?

A: It could take 2-3 months after the award announcement for the project to be authorized to start. During this time we complete the necessary paperwork and run any federally required checks on the organizations. This process is administered by the University of Nebraska and it can take a significant amount of time to complete it. Take that into account when proposing your timeline.

Q: When and how will I receive the funds?

A: This is a reimbursement-based grant. You will first spend the money and submit all necessary documentation (paid invoices, payroll reports, credit card receipts, etc.) for reimbursement. You will NOT receive any funding up-front. You will be able to submit reimbursements on a quarterly basis, you do not have to wait until the end of the grant to receive reimbursement.