



## COMMUNITY FORESTRY INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

### Funding Available for Tree Planting, Care, and Removals

PlantNebraska (formerly The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum) was awarded \$10 million in 2024 by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program to distribute through competitive grant processes to improve Nebraska's community forestry infrastructure through tree care, removal, planting and forestry workforce development.

The goal for this program is to improve Nebraska's community forestry infrastructure by:

- Removing, caring for, and planting trees to preserve the tree canopy cover.
- Protecting, enhancing, and increasing access to watersheds in urban and developing areas with a focus on conserving and managing forest patches and green stormwater infrastructure.
- Improve workforce development in the tree care industry by providing pathways for high school students, creating job training programs, and connecting newly trained professionals with local tree care companies.

### ABOUT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY:

Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) encompasses the trees and forest resources of any defined community. For instance, trees on both public and private land throughout a town or city are considered a community forest. This grant program is not limited by the population size of the community and all who are eligible are encouraged to apply.

### HOW FUNDING WORKS:

Throughout the life of the program, we will distribute \$8 million to communities in Nebraska. We will open applications on a rolling 90-day basis as long as funding remains available.

### MAIN RESOURCE AND HOW TO APPLY:

[plantnebraska.org/ucf-grants](https://plantnebraska.org/ucf-grants)

**We will keep the website updated with the latest information we have available. Please check the website first to find an answer to your questions.** Here you will find the upcoming funding cycle dates, upcoming webinars and grant manager office hours to help you prepare your application, a link to the application, and any new information about the program.

For additional questions reach out to Hanna Pinneo at 402-472-2945, [hpinneo2@unl.edu](mailto:hpinneo2@unl.edu).

### WHO'S ELIGIBLE:

Nebraska cities, villages, towns, counties, tribal governments, Natural Resource Districts, school districts, public schools, 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations performing projects in Nebraska. **NOT** individuals or businesses.

**All awardees must be eligible to receive federal funds.**

#### What Land/Work Qualifies?

Project locations must be within an **eligible community as found on the Nebraska forest Service eligibility map AND meet the following:**

Public tree projects on

- Streets, trails (ROW)
- City parks
- Schools, colleges
- Libraries, courthouses
- Cemeteries, fairgrounds
- Other public places

**NOT** gated properties

**NOT** private businesses

**NOT** projects outside Nebraska

**NOT** on federal lands

Private residential tree removal or tree planting may be done as part of an overall community strategy to improve tree canopy. However, **funds will not be awarded to and cannot be used to directly pay private landowners.**

Workforce development elements of any project **must benefit an eligible community and/or train residents of an eligible community.**

# PROGRAM INFORMATION

## 1. PROJECT AWARDS

Three levels of funding are available through this program:

Level 1: Grant requests between \$10,000 - \$29,999.

Level 2: Grant requests between \$30,000-\$99,999

Level 3: Grant requests between \$100,000-\$300,000

Applications will be grouped and reviewed by level with awards made at each level to qualifying, high-scoring applications.

## 2. TIMELINE

During the application process you will select a time period for this grant, 1-year, 2-years, or 3-years. **No extensions will be provided in the event the project is not complete by the timeline identified in the award agreement**, so please take that into consideration as you determine your timeline. **All final paperwork must be submitted within 30 days of the completion of the project, no exceptions.** All projects and reporting for this program must be complete by December 31, 2028.

## 3. FEDERAL FUNDS

This grant pool is from federal funds. Project Sponsors to this award are subject to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance in subparts A through F of [2 CFR Part 200](#) as adopted and supplemented by the USDA in [2 CFR Part 400](#). Adoption by the USDA of the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 200 gives regulatory effect to the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 200 where the full text is found. Electronic copies of the CFRs can be obtained at the following internet site: [www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov).

Project Sponsor shall have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) number. Information on how to obtain a UEI is found here: <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>.

The project sponsor should not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM). The Project Sponsor or its principals cannot be presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any federal department or agency.

## 4. DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES\*

100% of the work must be completed within the geographical footprint of disadvantaged communities as identified by the US Forest Service. [You can find designated tracts in the Nebraska Forest Service eligibility tool](#). **Directions for using the tool are found in Appendix B.**

\*This document refers to Disadvantaged Communities because this is the terminology used by the federal government. However, it could be considered deficit-based language, when many of these areas are some of our most culturally diverse, vibrant communities in Nebraska. It's important to recognize the strength, resilience, and assets all communities contribute to Nebraska's culture, economic systems, landscape, and vitality.

## 5. MATCH

**A match waiver is in place for the program, and no match is required.** This authority requires a 1:1 match; however, the match requirement has been waived under the provision of Public Law 117-169 and based on assurance from the project sponsor that 100% of the work and funding will be directed to eligible communities. Project Sponsors must pass on this match waiver to all project participants.

## 6. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- A. **Tree planting on public property**, planting large-maturing trees along streets and within parks and other public spaces. To build heat-resilient communities, we particularly encourage planting in areas of low-tree canopy to shade sidewalks, streets, and gathering areas.
  - a. Site preparation—prepare sites for tree planting, such as soil decompaction, soil amendments, concrete removal, or stump grinding.
- B. **At-risk tree removal AND replacement on public property**. A minimum 1:1 tree removal to replacement ratio is required. Trees must be replaced as part of the project in the same or nearby area to ensure benefits are retained in the neighborhood.
  - a. At-risk trees must be designated by a certified arborist.
- C. **At-risk tree removal AND replacement programs** on PRIVATE properties within eligible communities. A minimum 1:1 tree replacement is required. Federal funds may not be used to make direct payments to private property owners.
  - a. At-risk trees must be designated by a certified arborist.
- D. **Training**- send staff and/or other project participants to training (e.g. arborist certification)
  - a. **Workforce development**, through training and/or certification programs, apprenticeships, or the development of conservation corps.
- E. **Young Tree management** (watering, mulching, structural pruning)
- F. **Pruning**, conducted by a Nebraska Arborist Association or an International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist, for trees in street ROW, parks, and other public areas. Private property is excluded.
- G. **Other UCF activities** such as food forests, urban wood utilization, and small green infrastructure projects that improve long-term tree survival may be considered (ex: removing concrete to expand a planting space).
- H. **Staff and contracting costs** to implement the above activities.

## 7. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- A. Cost of trees, mulch, supplies such as pruners, saws, stakes, tree guards, water bags, drip irrigation, and water tanks.
- B. Contract costs of qualified vendors to perform project activities such as tree planting, removal, pruning, and establishment care.
- C. Reasonable concrete removal and other activities to create or expand areas for tree planting.
- D. Equipment rental for implementing, establishing, and maintaining the urban forestry project.
- E. Costs related to education and outreach as part of the project implementation, including printing, ads, translation, arborist certification, etc.
- F. Salaries and fringe benefit costs of personnel engaged in the project. Direct costs shall be supported by time sheets, vouchers, or similar documentation reflecting specific project assignments.

## 8. INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- A. Construction (Such as trails, permanent fences, shelters, buildings, site grading unrelated to planting, major irrigation plumbing, etc.)
- B. Land purchase or real property purchase
- C. In-ground irrigation which acts as a lawn-sprinkler system.
- D. Stump removals as a stand-alone project. However, this is eligible as part of a tree planting or removal project.
- E. Non-organic mulches/weed barrier
- F. No equipment. Equipment is defined as having a fair market value of \$5,000 or greater per unit and a useful life of over one year. Supplies are those items that are not equipment (less than \$5,000 value per unit).
- G. Alcoholic beverages; Bad debts; Contingencies; Contributions and donations; Entertainment; Fines and penalties; Compensation for property destroyed or damaged; Fundraising; Interest and other financing costs; Loan for promised work not yet completed.

- H. Undocumented or improperly documented project costs.
- I. Reimbursement of donated labor, equipment, supplies, facilities, or services.

## 9. FOLLOW SPECIFICATIONS

Tree removal, pruning, and planting must follow the *Specifications for Partnership Projects* (provided by PlantNebraska with the award documentation). Trees must be high quality, meet defined standards, be purchased from a nursery/arborist licensed to do business in Nebraska, and be planted correctly, all according to our *Specifications for Partnership Projects*. A qualified arborist must do or supervise tree removal and pruning work.

## 10. CORRECT ANY DEFICIENCIES.

All projects will be inspected after completion. Any deficiencies need to be corrected as directed before reimbursement is issued.

## 12. REIMBURSEMENT

- A. Awarded funds are paid as a reimbursement for completed projects. Project sponsors are expected to cover all costs until reimbursements are made. However, PlantNebraska can make multiple reimbursements to the project sponsor during the project to help ease the financial burden.
- B. Certification: PlantNebraska staff will inspect your project before a reimbursement is issued. Thus, to avoid delays in reimbursement, projects shall contact their grant manager immediately after their project (or phase) is complete, even if the project is still gathering documentation for reimbursement.
- C. If deficiencies are found, the project is expected to correct them before reimbursement.
- D. Reimbursements must be requested by preparing and submitting the request as outlined in the award contract via email. Sponsors will receive payment in 10-12 weeks post submission.
- E. Only eligible costs verified by receipt or invoice will be considered for reimbursement. Note: Each receipt/invoice must contain the name and address of the vendor, an itemized list of services or goods, and the delivery dates. Plant material receipts must itemize all plants used in the project, detailing species, size, and quantity.
- F. Reimbursement checks will be made payable only to the project sponsor, governmental unit, or organization suitable to act as an agent for the project. The reimbursement will not be made payable to any individual or business.

## 13. REPORTING

This program is part of a highly visible federal program. Grantees will have bi-annual reporting requirements to report on the progress of grant deliverables. Grantees should document their project in photos and/or videos that can be used as stories on your community's accomplishments. Grantees will be asked to report on metrics such as number of trees planted/pruned/removed, number of volunteers, etc. Grantees may be asked to report using an online mapping tool provided by PlantNebraska.

## 14. HOW TO SUBMIT A BETTER PROPOSAL:

### COST ESTIMATES:

- Since grant awards are based on the applicant's cost estimate, careful cost estimating will ensure you have enough funds to complete the project.
- Round up to the nearest dollar in the individual components sections.
- Double-check your math.

#### IMPROVING YOUR APPLICATION:

- Contact your community forester for advice and assistance. While they can't write the application for you, community foresters can provide technical assistance for project development and review your project with you. You can also attend the webinars and office hours hosted throughout each application period by our grant administrators. Don't wait until the last minute!
- Ensure that the person who completes the application is familiar with the proposed project and can articulate it well.
- Answer each question clearly, succinctly, and completely. Your response should address all parts of each question asked. Avoid simply saying yes or no within the narrative section.
- Avoid irrelevant information. Answers should be specific to the proposed project and the information requested.
- Have another person read the proposal. Does it make sense to them? Are all the questions fully answered?

#### SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION BY THE DEADLINE

- Appendix A provides application instructions.
- Application deadlines are posted at: [plantnebraska.org/ucf-grants](http://plantnebraska.org/ucf-grants)

#### 15. SCORING

Applications will be scored by a group of PlantNebraska staff according to a rubric (Appendix C).

## APPENDIX A

### APPLICATION DIRECTIONS

#### Complete Section 1, Profile.

- A. Enter the name of the project- Be descriptive and concise
- B. Funding request amount—Utilize whole numbers
- C. Select project length (1 year, 2 years, or 3 years)
- D. Project sponsor (entity responsible for the project and who will be listed on the award agreement and will receive reimbursements)
- E. Contact information of sponsor: Please provide the contact information of the project sponsor
- F. Please provide the contact information of the project contact, the person responsible for implementing and coordinating the project.
- G. A UEI number will be needed to issue an award agreement.
- H. Have you identified a qualified arborist who can assist with your project if required by the grant contract? This can include an arborist on your staff or a contractor.
- I. Select the types of work in your project (all that apply): Tree planting, tree removal, tree care, workforce development

#### Complete Section 2, Eligible Community

- A. Does the project take place in an eligible community? Include a screenshot of the project area from the Nebraska eligibility map. Visit the Nebraska eligibility tool, find your project area, and utilize your computer's snipping tool to save an image of the project area.
- B. If the project work is not located in a defined area but benefits residents of geographically defined disadvantaged communities, describe the connection and define the population of interest. (1,800 characters)
  - a. For example, the neighborhood park serves the disadvantaged community; however, it lies just outside the defined disadvantaged tract because it is on the other side of a neighborhood road.
  - b. For example, the project is at a public school in a geographical area not delineated as eligible by the tool. However, the public school serves students and families living within eligible tracts.

#### Complete Section 3, Narrative

- A. Background: Please provide an overview of your proposed project, what you plan to accomplish, and why the project is needed. Do not provide a history of your community or organization. Only provide information about past tree projects if they directly relate to the proposed project. (1,800 characters)
- B. Outcomes: (7,000 characters)
  - a. Clearly describe your anticipated outcomes. These are the measurable results of your actions (how many, how much). Not every project will have a measurable outcome for each of the measures listed below.
  - b. If trees will be removed, how many?
  - c. If trees will be trimmed/pruned, how many?
  - d. If trees will be planted along the street, how many?
  - e. If trees will be planted in areas besides along the street, how many?
  - f. If people will be trained or certified, how many?
  - g. Other
- C. Scope of Work: (7,000 characters)
  - a. Which of the eligible activities will you use to accomplish your outcomes? Include sufficient detail about your project activities.
  - b. How will you make sure your project is on track?

- c. Who is responsible for each activity and who will be involved in other ways? Describe the other ways participants will be involved.
- d. How will your project support or improve workforce development or local opportunities in the tree care and nursery industry? Supporting local opportunities can include providing arborist training opportunities, purchasing trees from a local/regional nursery, working with a local/regional tree care company on the project activities, etc.
- D. Sustainability and Resiliency: (2,000 characters)
  - a. Please share how the location of your project activities will support or enhance three community forest benefits? Choose the top three most applicable benefits to cover.
    - i. Community forestry benefits include but are not limited to: Providing shade to people or infrastructure, reducing heat, preventing erosion, stormwater management, enhancing tree canopy in community spaces, enhancing community education efforts, improving human health, etc.
  - b. How will the project be maintained in the future?
- E. Project Timeline: (2,000 characters)
  - a. Provide a specific timeline with beginning and end dates that show the project is achievable.
  - b. Describe anticipated quarterly milestones. Ensure the timeline is reasonable and specific.
- F. Partners & Engagement: (3,000 characters)
  - a. Describe the collaborative partners and contributions to the project's planning, implementation, and management phases.
  - b. How will you engage community-based tree groups through this project? (Tree boards, volunteer groups focused on trees, Tree City USA representatives, etc.).
  - c. How will you ensure people living, working, or otherwise being served by the greenspaces in your project area are included and engaged in this project? (ex: planning, implementation, leadership, etc.)
- G. Partner Involvement
  - a. Have all partners been involved in the planning of this project and are they fully aware of their role and obligations to the project? Select yes or no.

Complete the Budget Template and upload

Complete the Budget Narrative (Required for tier 2 and 3 applications)

Upload Disadvantaged Community Eligibility Map (s), utilize a snip from the Nebraska eligibility map, and ensure the map shows your project areas.

Complete the 3-Year Tree Maintenance Plan Template for Newly Planted Trees and upload (only if your project includes tree planting)

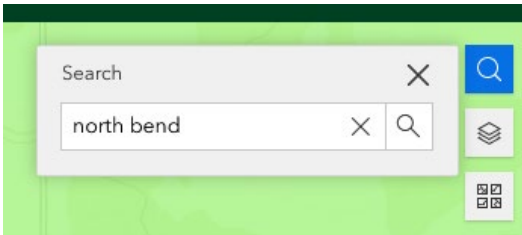
## APPENDIX B

### UTILIZING THE NEBRASKA ELIGIBILITY ONLINE TOOL

The Nebraska Eligibility Compliance Online Tool combines guidance from USFS as to what qualifies into one easy-to-utilize tool.

1. To use the tool launch the map by clicking this [link](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c8b2cc1eb34e4a67a343cf3f214fae97/?data_id=data_Source_14-d51c693b027f4fa982d7b11bad6f5b71%3A778). Or copy/paste this into your browser:  
[https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c8b2cc1eb34e4a67a343cf3f214fae97/?data\\_id=data\\_Source\\_14-d51c693b027f4fa982d7b11bad6f5b71%3A778](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c8b2cc1eb34e4a67a343cf3f214fae97/?data_id=data_Source_14-d51c693b027f4fa982d7b11bad6f5b71%3A778)
2. **Search for a community** by clicking the search icon in the upper right corner and entering the community name. Hit enter on your keyboard. The map will zoom in to the area of interest.

3. **Multiple layers are available** on the tool that

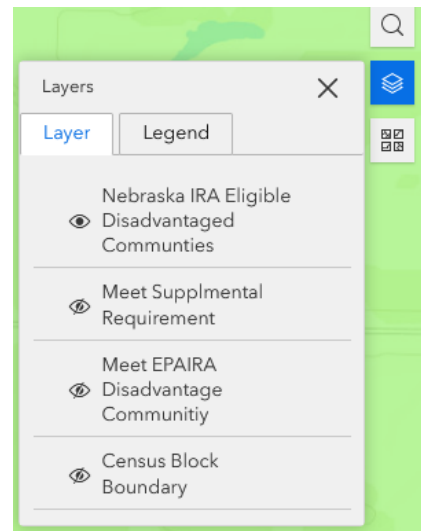


can be toggled on or off.

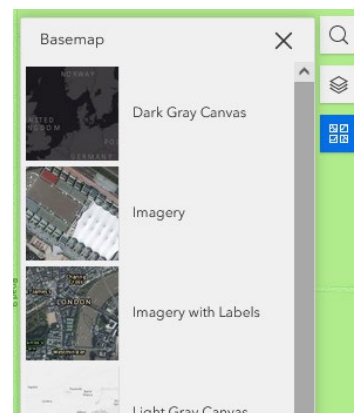
- a. Nebraska IRA Eligible Disadvantaged Communities shows all compliant tracks under IRA.
- b. [EJ Screen Supplemental Index](#) at or above 80<sup>th</sup> percentile when compared to the state and nation. To know the qualifying index, right-click on the selected census block.
- c. [EPA IRA disadvantaged track](#) shows all tracts within Nebraska considered disadvantaged using the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool](#), tribal lands, and [EJ Screen Supplemental Index](#) at or above 90% when compared to state and nation.

- d. To find the layers utilize the layer icon in the upper right corner. Utilize the eye icon to the left of the layer title to toggle the layer on or off.

4. **Multiple Basemaps, including aerial imagery and street maps, are available depending on your**



**preference.** Click the map icon in the upper right corner to select your preferred base map. Scroll to the preferred imagery and click the map.





## APPENDIX C

### APPLICATION SCORING RUBRIC

#### Section 1, Profile.

- Not Scored

#### Section 2, Community Eligibility

- Scored as eligible or not eligible

#### Section 3, Narrative

- Background: 10 Points
  - 0-2 Points: Little to no information is given about the need for the work or the benefits of the project. Little to no information is given about how the community forest canopy will be positively and directly impacted.
  - 3-5 Points: Some information is given about the need and benefits of the work, but they aren't clearly stated. Some benefits to the forest canopy are explained, but not completely.
  - 6-8 Points: Need for the work and the benefits of the project are stated and the case is made for how the work will positively impact the community forest canopy, but clarity is needed.
  - 9-10 Points: Need for the work and the benefits of the project are clearly stated. The case for how the work will positively and directly impact the community forest canopy is clearly made.
- Outcomes: 15 points
  - 0-3 Points: The anticipated outcomes are not listed, or are not measurable, attainable, or reasonable within the defined timeline of the project.
  - 4-7 Points: The anticipated outcomes are listed, but aren't measurable, attainable, or reasonable within the defined timeline of the project.
  - 8-12 Points: The anticipated outcomes are listed and are measurable, attainable and reasonable within the defined timeline of the project, but aren't clearly explained.
  - 13-15 Points: The anticipated outcomes are clearly listed and are measurable, attainable, and reasonable within the defined timeline of the project and are clearly connected to the sustainability outcomes of the project.
- Scope of Work: 15 Points
  - 0-3 Points: Eligible activities aren't clearly listed or the activities listed are ineligible. There are no details about how the activities will be completed. The accountable parties for completing the project and keeping it on track are not listed. Other project participants and their roles are not listed or explained. There is no explanation, or the explanation is unreasonable, of how the project will support or improve workforce development.
  - 4-7 Points: All activities listed are eligible, but the details about how they will be completed aren't fully explained. Some of the accountable parties are listed, but their responsibilities aren't clearly stated. Other project participants and their roles are listed, but not clearly explained. The explanation of how the project will support or improve workforce development is reasonable, but not clear.
  - 8-12 Points: The eligible activities are clearly listed, but the details are not comprehensive. Accountable parties are clearly listed and their responsibilities are stated. Other project participants and their roles are listed with their responsibilities but aren't clearly explained. How the project will support or improve workforce development and/or the local tree care industry is stated, but not clearly.
  - 13-15 Points: Eligible activities are clearly listed, and details are provided about how the activities will be completed. Accountability for keeping the project on track is clearly explained by each activity. Other

project participants and their roles in the project are clearly explained. How the project will support or improve workforce development and/or the local tree care industry is clearly stated.

- Sustainability and Resiliency: 10 Points
  - 0-2 Points: No community forestry benefits are listed, or they don't apply to the project described.
  - 3-5 Points: less than three community forestry benefits are listed, and it isn't clear how they will be realized as part of the project.
  - 6-8 Points: Three community forestry benefits are listed but it is not clear how they will be realized as part of the project.
  - 9-10 Points: Three community forestry benefits are listed, and it is clear how they will be realized as part of the project.
- Project Timeline: 5 Points
  - 0-1 Points: The timeline isn't achievable or specific and there are no quarterly milestones listed.
  - 2-3 Points: The timeline is mostly achievable and most of the dates and quarterly milestones are listed.
  - 4-5 Points: The timeline is achievable and specific, the project start and end dates are listed. The quarterly milestones are clearly listed.
- Partners & Engagement: 5 Points
  - 0-1 Points: There are no collaborative partners, or they are not listed, or their contributions and participation in the project is not described. There is no community engagement planned, or the plan is unreasonable.
  - 2-3 Points: Collaborative partners are listed, but their contributions and participation isn't well defined. There is a loose plan to engage the community through the project, but it isn't clearly thought out or explained.
  - 4-5 Points: The collaborative partners, their contributions, and how they will participate in each part of the project are clearly listed and described. A plan to broaden community engagement through the project is clearly stated and is reasonable.

#### Budget Template 10 Points

- 0-2 Points: The budget is incomplete, how the expenses are tied to the activities and will support the anticipated outcomes isn't clear, and/or the estimates are wholly unreasonable.
- 3-5 Points: The budget is complete, but it is unclear how the expenses are tied to the activities and will support the anticipated outcomes. The budget estimates are reasonable.
- 6-8 Points: The budget is complete, and the expenses are mostly tied to the activities and will support the anticipated outcomes. The budget estimates are reasonable.
- 9-10 Points: The budget is complete; it is clear how the expenses are tied to the activities and will support the anticipated outcomes. The budget estimates are reasonable.

#### Budget Narrative

- Not scored

#### Maintenance Plan

- Not scored