



Tree Resource Enhancement and Engagement (TREE) Grants

2025

REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

(Notice of Funding Opportunity)

Applications must be submitted electronically
through DFFM's application portal.

Visit our website for more information:

<https://dffm.az.gov/grants/community/TREE-Grants>

Application Deadline:

No Later than November 7th, 2025

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Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management Urban and Community Forestry Community Challenge Grant Program Grant Guidelines

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Project Timeframe: | Quarter 1, 2026 – End of Quarter 3, 2026* |
| Projects Closed: | October 31, 2026 (Final Reports and Reimbursement Requests Due) |
| Est. Total Program Funding: | \$20,000 |
| Award Maximum: | \$8,000 |
| Award Minimum: | \$2,000 |
| Typical Granting Range: | \$2,000 - 6,000 |
| Cost Share/Match Required: | 50% (1:1) cost-share from non-federal source |
| Application Submittal: | https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/8rd5s4h7ekqt |
| Application Deadline: | 11:59 PM Arizona Time Friday November 7th, 2025 |
| Award Notification: | After November 7th, 2025 |
| Questions: | Madeline Burton UCF Program Manager mburton@dffm.az.gov 480-769-4184 |

Major funding for this program is provided by the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management's Urban and Community Forestry Program and USDA Forest Service. These institutions are equal opportunity providers.

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DFFM reserves the right not to accept the following:

- Hand-written applications (except for signature)
- Applications that do not meet the grant criteria
- Incomplete applications

Introduction

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM) – Urban and Community Forestry in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry, is pleased to offer the Tree Resource Enhancement and Engagement (TREE) Grant program.

The TREE Grant program is a competitive cost-share program provided and administered by the Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM) – Urban and Community Forestry in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry program. These grants are offered only to currently recognized Tree City USA communities and Tree Campus USA and Tree Campus K-12 campuses, or community organizations directly serving program participants, that plan for, maintain, and manage landscape trees with a goal to increase canopy cover over time. The purpose of the program is to provide financial assistance to recognized Tree Cities and Tree Campuses for the management, improvement, or conservation of community forests.

Program Objectives

The TREE Grants are to be used to promote and enhance the quality of Arizona’s urban and community forests, and may also be used for engaging decision makers through urban forest management initiatives. The goals of this funding program are:

- To assist recognized Arizona Tree Cities and Tree Campuses in initiating or significantly improving their efforts to care for the community forest, including assistance for achieving canopy cover goals.
- To encourage recognized Tree Cities and Tree Campuses to develop and maintain a sustainable, balanced, and comprehensive community forestry program that is based on a current tree inventory and managed with the guidance of a community forestry professional.
- To promote community forestry benefits through the proper management and care of trees in Arizona’s recognized Tree City and Tree Campus communities. “Care” does include harvesting programs.

Eligible Applicants

Communities or public educational institutions with current “recognized” status in the Tree City USA and/or Tree Campus USA programs in Arizona are eligible for grant funding. Grants may be awarded to units of local governments (counties, municipalities, cities, towns, and townships), tribal governments, public educational institutions, and community organizations that directly serve Tree City USA program participants.

Organizations that have previously received any grant from DFFM must be current on their quarterly reporting requirements per their signed grant agreement(s) before receiving a new award.

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AZ DFFM does not discriminate against any person or organization because of race, color, religion, disability, sex, age or national origin.

Eligible Activities

Activities are listed in order of priority.

- Development and adoption of a written community tree management plan or community readiness plan.
- Tree planting projects as part of a comprehensive management program to meet state, county or community canopy coverage goals.
- Community tree inventory support (hazardous tree survey and maintenance needs survey). The format for all inventory projects must be compatible with i-Tree software (for more information, go to itreetools.org).
- Removal of hazard trees.
- Pruning according to ANSI A300 specifications – no topping. See American National Standards Institute A300 Standard Practices for Woody Plant Maintenance (ANSI A300). Copies available from: International Society of Arboriculture, PO Box 3129, Champaign, IL 61826, phone 217.355.9411, isa-arbor.com
- Municipal tree ordinance development by a certified forestry professional (certified arborist, forester, or similarly qualified person using ISA standards).
- Training of city employees and volunteers to improve community forestry practices.
- Initial costs of certification for in-house employees by the International Society of Arboriculture.
 - The Arizona Forest Action Plan (also known as Arizona’s Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy) sets the priorities for tree management in Arizona. This document can be found on the Forestry and Community Forestry website (<https://dffm.az.gov/forestry-community-forestry>). Other activities not specifically listed here but that meet needs identified in the Plan are desired.

Grant Limitations and Projects that DO NOT Qualify

1. *All trees and all projects must be located within, or directly benefit, recognized Tree City or Tree Campus management jurisdictions.*
2. No more than 20% of the total project dollars may be used for **non-tree** plant materials.
3. Funds used to purchase trees as part of the project may not be used to substitute for existing tree planting and care expenditures. Any tree planting project* must include a five-year (5-year) maintenance plan. This maintenance must be funded separately by the applicant. All trees purchased must meet the American Standard for Nursery Stock and Arizona Nursery Association Standards.
4. Planted trees must be guaranteed for one year after planting. Such guarantee must be provided by the nursery or contractor and clearly indicated on their estimates.
5. All hazardous trees must be identified by a certified arborist, forester, or similarly qualified person using ISA standards.
6. Indirect costs associated with the proposed activities may not exceed 15% of the reimbursable project costs.

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7. All project work must be **completed by September 30, 2026**, unless otherwise authorized by the grant administrator or specified in the grant agreement. Priority may be given to projects that are able to be completed before this date.
8. This is a reimbursable grant program. At least 10% of the total cost (match) of the project must be contributed by the applicant from sources **other than the federal government**. This amount may be in cash, services, volunteer time, equipment usage, and/or in-kind contributions. Grant funds will be distributed on a 50% reimbursement basis, and at no time can they be used to cover more than 50% of the project cost. No grant funds will be distributed until project expenditures and appropriate match are accrued. Fifty percent (50%) of the funds may be withheld from the final payment until the project is completed and approved by the Urban and Community Forestry representative.
9. All project costs approved for reimbursement must be documented, whether the costs are charged or used as match to the grant funds.
10. The funding source for these grants is the USDA Forest Service and payments are contingent upon the availability of funds and reimbursement by them.
11. Funds may be used for specified projects only and may not be used to meet ordinary operational expenses or to purchase food or beverages.
12. Grant funds cannot be used to purchase capital equipment (i.e., costing >\$5,000). However, they may be used to rent such equipment.
13. Projects involving infrastructure and construction are not allowable. Construction is the building of foundations and permanent surfaces and includes structure remodeling, bridge building, road maintenance or infrastructure, water development, etc.
14. Research and development projects are not allowable.

***Note: Organizations that receive a grant related to planting must have a Certified Arborist or Certified Landscape Professional (CLP) on hand when the plants are delivered and when planting occurs. If the applicant already has either on staff, they may perform this function and credit their time as a match toward their awarded grant.**

Cost-Share/Matching Requirements

All awards have a cost-share/matching requirement of 50% of total project cost. Good practice includes finding 100% of the project cost then calculating the grant request based on the amount of match the applicant can provide.

Example

| Amount Requested in Grant Share (50%) | Minimum Match Requirement (50%) | Total Project Cost (100%) |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| \$4,000 | \$4,000 | \$8,000 |

If funding is awarded, each submitted reimbursement request must satisfy the total amount of the required match to be reimbursed for the grant share.

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Federal and State Regulations

Grantees must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, policies, and procedures, including obtaining all permits and approvals necessary to proceed with proposed grant activities. Successful applicants must also comply with all regulations pertaining to Federal Grants. It will be the applicant's responsibility to develop, document, administer, and manage the grant in accordance with all applicable Federal and State laws, including the Federal Government Single Audit Act and all relevant Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars. Awardees will be subject to the OMB requirements and guidance in subparts A through F of 2 CFR 200 as adopted and supplemented by USDA in 2 CFR part 400.

CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) – <http://www.ecfr.gov>. If grantees need assistance obtaining any of these documents in electronic or printed form, please contact DFFM for assistance.

All records for awarded grants must be maintained for five (5) years following final payment or longer if required by law. These grants include an audit requirement and instructions are provided in the Code of Federal Regulations: 2 CFR 200.

SAM Registration

Recipients are required to register with the federal government System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov> before receiving an award. You will need a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), Taxpayer ID number (TIN), and financial information to set up an Electronic Funds Transfer. Please allow at least two (2) weeks to apply or renew this registration. Please note DUNS numbers are no longer used. All information is now in the SAM System.

Recipients must also register with the Arizona Department of Administration's Vendor Portal (<https://app.az.gov/>) to receive reimbursements.

Payment of Funds

Payment of Funds Payments are made on a reimbursement basis, and only approved eligible costs with proper documentation can be reimbursed. Reimbursements may take 60-90 days to process after approval from DFFM. Payments may be held until all reporting and paperwork requirements have been met by the recipient.

No funds will be reimbursed for expenses incurred prior to execution of the formal written agreement between the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management and the applicant organization.

Award Selection and Notification

Award Selection and Notification Applications are competitively scored by staff from DFFM and partner organizations. Funding is expected by December 2025. Applicants will be notified of the status of their proposal via email, and those selected for funding will be provided with further instructions.

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Application Submission

Applicants will complete an online application via eCivis with multiple parts. After creating an individual user login, the applicant will complete three required online forms:

1. **Required Organization Profile Form** – This includes information about the applicant's organization and points of contact.
2. **Required Application Form** – This includes questions about your proposed project. Several questions are common to most state grant applications. Some questions are specific to this grant program. All questions and required responses are outlined below.
3. **Required Budget Form** – The budget form details how the requested grant funds and contributed match will support the project.
4. **Other Attachments** – Tree maintenance plans are required for those projects involving tree installation. **If specific partners have been identified, then *Letters of Partnership or Collaboration* are required—a maximum of 5 pages (8 ½ x 11) in one electronic file.** Letters of support (no more than five pages in one file) may be included but are not required.

Required Organization Profile Form

1. This form includes information about your organization, your management contacts, and who will be responsible for implementing the grant if it is awarded.
2. Employer Identification Number (EIN)
3. A Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov is required before an award can be made. (See page 6 above for more information)
4. The form also allows the identification of a separate point of contact for a business/finance representative and an authorized representative other than the online applicant.

Required Application Form

Applications meeting the minimum requirements listed above will then be evaluated and scored based on how the proposed project meets the following criteria:

1. **Project Need and Justification (2500 characters)**

Provide an overview of the project and the need for work

2. **Project Goals and Objectives (2000 characters)**

What are the goals and objectives of the project? Does this project support the overall mission of the Urban and Community Forestry Program?

3. **Anticipated Project Benefits (2000 characters)**

How do you anticipate your project will benefit the community?

4. **Project Methods (2500 characters)**

Provide specific details about how you will accomplish your proposed project.

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5. Budget Narrative (2000 characters)

Discuss how each of the identified financial needs will be met

Required Budget Form

1. **Budget Form** (Required) - 1 form per project (maximum of 2 pages). Applicants **must use the budget form provided by DFFM on the eCivis platform**. Reach out to the UCF Program Contact if you cannot locate this form. This form asks for financial details about how the recipient will use the requested grant funds. A 50% match is required. Budget categories include:
 - a. **Administrative Labor** – What personnel will contribute to administrative labor? What is their approximate rate per hour? Administrative labor is reserved for grant administration and general supervision of the project. You may include **Fringe Benefits** in this category.
 - b. **Project Labor (including Fringe Benefits)** – What personnel will contribute project labor? What is their approximate rate per hour? The Project Labor category should be reserved for **staff working for the grantee organization or agency and not contractors**. **Fringe Benefits** (approximate costs) should be included in the Project Labor category and broken out in the description as separate line items. **Note:** Reimbursement requests must be accompanied by payroll documentation and timesheets.
 - c. **Travel** – Include travel costs necessary for project completion.
 - d. **Equipment** – What equipment is planned for purchase, rental, etc.? Equipment budgets may include operational costs or equipment rental to implement the project, but they may not include purchasing any capital equipment (valued over \$5,000 per unit).
 - e. **Supplies** – What supplies are needed for the project?
 - f. **Contractual** – What work will be completed by a contractor?
 - g. **Other** – Describe other expected project costs as needed. This could include volunteer labor, Indirect Costs, etc.

FOOD OR BEVERAGES ARE NOT ALLOWABLE BUDGET ITEMS FOR REIMBURSEMENT OR MATCH

Use the Budget Narrative boxes to provide a **mathematical** explanation (not only a verbal narrative about what you are doing) of how the dollar figures in your request were calculated. Provide as much mathematical detail as possible (amount per item times the number of items, rate per hour, etc.). Reviewers will evaluate whether the costs are reasonable and necessary to complete the proposed work.

Grant Review and Ranking

The grant review policy promotes a process whereby each grant application submitted is independently evaluated on its own strengths and merits. Applications will be reviewed by a committee composed of AZ DFFM Staff.

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All grant reviewers must complete a [Tree Resource Enhancement and Engagement Grant Application Evaluation Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form](#), which will be kept on file at the State Forester's Office.

The grants awarded are discretionary funds. The review committee's recommendations will be presented to the State Forester for consideration and the final funding decision.

Application Evaluation

To be eligible, applications must meet the following *minimum requirements*:

1. The applications must be submitted online by the deadline.
2. Funding requested should fall within the granting range (\$2,000 - \$8,000).
3. The proposal must be consistent with all stated grant limitations.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How do I submit my application?

Applications must be submitted online through the eCivis portal.

https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/8rd5s4h7ekqt

Do I need letters of support from my Board of Directors or contributors who provide a cash and/or in-kind match with my application?

Letters of intent and signatures from volunteers providing cash or in-kind match are not required. However, letters of support from sponsors, partnering organizations, and community leaders may help your application.

What is the allowable Overhead/ Administration rate?

It is intended that most grant funding is required for specific project implementation and not general organizational support or administrative costs. The expectation is that less than 15% of grant funding will be utilized for general overhead expenses such as administrative labor, accounting, office expenses, etc. These expenses must be allocated to the project and documented as any other direct project expenses. If "Indirect Costs" are proposed, an indirect cost rate plan must already be established by the organization or be permitted under 2 CFR 200 and approved by DFFM before allowance of these expenses. Reimbursement of Indirect Costs greater than 15% will not be allowed.

Can I get funding for a project that has already been funded or started? Can money spent on another previous component be used as a match?

No, previously funded projects and ongoing projects are not eligible. If the proposed project is a second phase or component of a previously funded project, you may apply for Community Challenge Grant funds. Matching funds for another grant project cannot be used.

Will the grant funds be given out at the beginning of the grant cycle?

No, funds are only given out as the project is worked on and monies are spent (reimbursement-based grant). No money will be given out without a fully documented report and supporting paperwork. Match greater than or equal to the costs incurred must be shown before a reimbursement is made.

What is the value of volunteer labor?

Volunteer time may be valued at the local market rate for equivalent work (children aged ≤ 14 years at minimum wage). Hourly rates exceeding \$30.00/hour will require specific support documentation for justification and approval. If you use consultants, forestry professionals, planners, etc., who donate their professional services, appropriate hourly rates may be documented in a letter from the individual or their organization.

When will I know if my grant was accepted? What is the next step?

Applicants will receive a confirmation email that their application was submitted. After grant proposals are reviewed, applicants will be notified if their grant requests have been funded. The contract will be emailed to the grant recipients for approval/execution. Billable, funded work on your project cannot begin until you receive a copy of the final executed grant agreement.