USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry
Inflation Reduction Act
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Federal Awarding Agency Name: U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service (FS) Urban and Community Forestry Program.

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title: Inflation Reduction Act – Urban and Community Forestry

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-FS-2023-UCF-IRA-01 Grants.gov https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html

Assistance Listing: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings on Sam.gov under 10.727 Inflation Reduction Act – Urban & Community Forestry

SAM.gov Registration: All applicants must have an active registration at sam.gov and maintain active registration throughout the life of the award. This is the government-wide web-based system that supports all contracts, grants, and the electronic payment system. This requirement for registration may be found at 2 CFR 25.200.

Notice of Funding Opportunity Summary

Inflation Reduction Action of 2022, Public Law No: 117-169. Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (a). State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs, (2) Urban and Community Forestry (2022-2031) to provide multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants for tree planting and related activities, with a priority for projects that benefit underserved populations and areas through the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance program established under section 9(c) of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act Of 1978 (16U.S.C.2105(c))

Key Dates

Applicant materials can be found by searching for this funding opportunity through Grants.gov. Search for grant Opportunity Number USDA-FS-2023-UCF-IRA 01. Applications will be submitted through the UCF Online Grant Portal All application materials must be received by **11:59 pm Eastern Time** on **June 1, 2023.**

For inquiries specific to the content of the NOFO requirements, contact the following shared inbox: **SM.FS.UCF_IRA@usda.gov**). Please limit questions to those regarding specific information contained in

this NOFO (such as dates, page numbers, clarification of discrepancies, etc.). Questions related to eligibility, or the merits of a specific proposal will not be addressed.

Information on available pre-award webinars and other supporting information for this funding opportunity will be posted at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf

Contents

SUMMARY

INFORMATION.....1 PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION.....2

Legislative Authority and Funding Priorities.....2

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

.....3 Available

Funding.....3 Eligibility

Information.....3

Pass-Through Funding (Sub-Awards).....7

APPLICATION, SUBMISSION, AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.....8

Electronic Application Package.....8

Content and Form of Application Submission 8

PROPOSAL EVALUATION 11

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

.....12 APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

.....12 CONTACT FOR FURTHER

INFORMATION 12

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Legislative Authority and Funding Priorities

Subtitle D, Sec. 23003 (a). State and Private Forestry Conservation Programs - Appropriations: $1,500,000,000 to provide multiyear, programmatic, competitive grants to a State agency, a local governmental entity, an agency or governmental entity of the District of Columbia, an agency or governmental entity of an insular area (as defined in section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103)), an Indian Tribe, or a nonprofit organization.

Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) is a covered program under the Agency's Justice40 Initiative

established through Executive Order 13985. To advance the mission of Justice40, proposals that deliver 40% of the benefits of IRA investments through established partnerships with local organizations working to support disadvantaged communities experiencing low tree canopy and environmental justice will receive priority consideration.

USDA is a partner on the Interagency **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Promoting Equitable Access to Nature in Nature-Deprived Communities**, which seeks to reduce the number of people without access to parks and nature in their communities. The **America the Beautiful Initiative** supports the prioritization of locally led conservation and park projects in communities that disproportionately lack access to nature and its benefits.

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Available Funding

A. Estimated Funding

The USDA Forest Service may provide up to $1 Billion for Urban and Community Forestry investments through this opportunity (based on availability of funding, the quality of applications received, agency priorities, and other applicable considerations).

B. Performance Period

All funding agreements will be for a period of 5 years. All activities and expenses must be completed within 5 years of award. Funding agreements will not be extended beyond 5years.

Note: Recipients will be expected to implement and demonstrate measurable progress within 12 months of award.

C. Amount of Awards

The USDA Forest Service welcomes proposals spanning a broad range of costs from eligible entities working at a community, regional and national scale. The *minimum* Federal funding amount for projects is $100,000. The *maximum* Federal funding limit is $50,000,000.

D. Additional Funding

FS may at its discretion, increase the total level of funding available in this funding round or in any category in this funding round from any available source provided the awards meet the requirements of the statute which made the funding available to the agency.

Eligibility Information

Projects must conform to laws and authorities in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (Section 9. [16 U.S.C. 2105] Urban and Community Forestry Assistance.

Costs must conform to 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

A. Who Can Apply

Entities eligible to apply for funding under this NOFO include:

- State government entity
- Local government entity
- Agency or governmental entity of the District of Columbia

- Agency or governmental entity of an insular area (as defined in section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103)
- Federally Recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations/villages, and Tribal organizations as defined in 25 USC 5304 (l) and operating within the United States, or its territories
- Non-profit organizations
- Public and State-controlled institutions of high er education
- Community Based Organization

Applicants that include contributing partners must clearly describe the relationship between the applicant and the "partner(s)." Partner organizations from disadvantaged communities must be full partners in the project. A letter of commitment is required to be submitted by each contributing partner.

B. Eligible Lands

Eligible applicants may apply for funding for a project to be conducted on non-Federal lands such as:

- State and local government,
- Homeowner associations,
- Private lands, and
- Tribal/Alaska native corporation (includes Trust lands).

Lands owned or administered by the federal government are not eligible for this funding opportunity except for lands held in trust for Native American Tribes and individuals (hereinafter Trust lands).

C. Eligible Uses of Funding

1. Examples of eligible activities include projects that:

   a. Foster individuals, groups, and organizations in the communities served to become engaged participants in urban forest planning, planting, and management, especially those in disadvantaged communities that do not have adequate resources to install or maintain green infrastructure or are underrepresented.

   b. Protect, enhance, and expand equitable urban tree canopy cover to maximize community access to human health, social, ecological, and economic benefits particularly in disadvantaged and nature-deprived communities experiencing low tree

canopy cover, extreme heat and frequent flooding. Improve and increase access to parks and nature in communities.

c. Encourage long-term urban forest planning, assessment, and management.

d. Encourage proactive and systematic maintenance and monitoring of urban trees and forested natural areas to improve forest health; assess risk to forests from pests, disease, and adverse climate impacts; and formulate adaptive management strategies to improve forest resilience.

e. Advance the use of tree and forest inventories, monitoring, and assessment tools in priority areas, including monitoring and measurement of extreme heat.

f. Improve preparation for severe storms and the recovery of damaged or deteriorated landscapes to more healthy and resilient conditions.

g. Protect, enhance and increase access to watersheds in urban and developing areas with a focus on conserving and managing forest patches, and green stormwater infrastructure.

h. Provide paid training experiences for urban forestry crews to establish and maintain urban forests into the future. Support youth employment opportunities, including workforce development and training for the creation and maintenance of green jobs and economic opportunities for planning, planting, and sustainably maintaining trees and forests, including training and retaining urban arborists, and producing and using urban forest products.

i. Develop paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry.

j. Address exotic invasive pest species that adversely impact urban forests.

k. Work across jurisdictional boundaries, leveraging ideas and resources to increase capacity to provide equitable access to benefits across the larger landscape and at a greater geographic scale.

l. Aid in planning, goal setting, and skill sharing with other professions such as urban planners, engineers, educators, recreational and public health officials.

2. Examples of project activities that are NOT eligible for funding under Urban and Community Forestry Authorities include:

a. Research: Basic research as defined in 2CFR 422.1, “Systematic study directed toward fuller knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and of observable facts without specific applications towards processes or products in mind.” Note: Technical transfer, education, and outreach activities associated with applying research can be included in the application.).

b. Construction and capital improvements. Examples of construction include facilities, infrastructure, roads, new buildings, culverts, and boardwalks.

c. Land acquisition (conservation easement and fee simple) projects.

d. Cost-share, reimbursement, and other types of payment provided directly to private landowners. However, Urban and Community Forestry funding (and match) may be used to perform work on private lands; for example, an eligible entity could pay for trees to be planted on private lands with permission of the landowner.

e. Small business start-up funding.

f. Equipment purchases are rarely approved and will be reviewed prior to grant award. Equipment rental should be considered as an alternative. Equipment is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit.

3. **Match Waiver**

Any Non-Federal cost-share requirement otherwise applicable to projects carried out under this section may be waived at the discretion of the Secretary. **Match may be waived for proposals that deliver 100 percent of the funding/program benefits to disadvantaged communities.**

Applications seeking match waiver must clearly describe the scope of work to be performed in applicable disadvantaged communities, and identify online vulnerability and environmental justice equity data tools referenced to support a disadvantaged community designation, (e.g., White House Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen), EPA EnviroAtlas Interactive Map, Opportunity Zones), or other government sponsored vulnerability tools which inform metrics applicable to the scope of work. Multiple tools may be used. **All work must be tracked at the level that designates disadvantaged communities**. Applicants receiving match waiver approval that pass-through funding (sub-award) for work in disadvantaged communities must pass the match waiver to sub awardees performing the work.

While the pace of federal expenditures and cost sharing/matching may vary throughout the award period, the agency will actively monitor expenditure rates and cost sharing/matching levels as it receives payment requests to ensure the total cost sharing/matching requirement is met by the award period of performance end date. Additional details about cost sharing or matching funds/contributions are located at 2 CFR 200.306.

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirements

All federal grant funds are to be matched at least equally **(dollar for dollar**) with non-federal match which may include allowable and allocable in-kind contributions (i.e., personnel salary, fringe, and indirect costs; services, materials, supplies, equipment donations; and volunteer assistance), and private and public (non- federal) monetary contributions.

Cash match is from the applicant's budget, such as personnel salary, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies, or cash provided by another party. The source of the cash match cannot be derived from another Federal award or grant.

In-kind match is a non-cash contribution of value. A non-Federal entity's in-kind match must meet the following criteria:

- Verifiable from the non-Federal entity's records
- Not included as contributions for any other Federal award.
- Necessary and reasonable for accomplishment of project or program objectives. • Allowable under subpart E of 2 CFR 200.

- Not paid by the Federal Government under another Federal award, except where the Federal statute authorizing a program specifically provides that Federal funds made available for such program can be applied to matching or cost sharing requirements of other Federal programs.
- Provided for in the approved budget when required by the Federal awarding agency; and
- Conform to other provisions of 2 CFR 200, as applicable.

Matching funds must be derived entirely from non-Federal sources (unless expressly authorized in law by the other federal program.

Pass-Through Funding (Sub-Awards)

In response to stakeholder feedback and to alleviate the administrative burden on small, capacity strained applicants, to expedite funding to communities in greatest need, and to increase opportunities to award high volumes of grants in condensed timeframes, applications from eligible entities with demonstrated ability to competitively pass-through (subaward) funding to community-based organizations and other partners serving disadvantaged communities are encouraged. **A minimum of 80% of all funding to a pass-through entity must be competitively sub-awarded to community-based organizations, or other partners serving disadvantaged communities.** Funding to Pass-Through Entities will be executed through a grant or cooperative agreement with substantial Forest Service involvement, at the discretion of the Forest Service.

For this funding opportunity, a "**Community Based Organization**" is defined as a public or nonprofit organization that supports and/or represents a community and/or certain populations within a community through engagement, education, and other related services provided to individual community residents and community stakeholders. A "community" can be characterized by a particular geographic area and/or by the relationships among members with similar interests and can be characterized as part of a broader national or regional community where organizations can be focused on the needs of urban, rural and/or tribal areas, and other similar groups.

Responsibilities of each pass-through entity include the following:

1. Design an equal opportunity competitive project application submission and evaluation process

that alleviates burden, including but not limited to technical and administrative burden, on small, capacity-constrained applicants.

2. Develop outreach efforts and plans to reach all underserved or disadvantaged communities, especially urban communities, tribal governments and indigenous communities, youth, and public minority land grant institutions, for awareness of the availability of sub-award funding.

3. Develop a sub-award process that ensures efficient and effective fund dispersal and completion of sub-awardee projects within a 1year period. All sub-awardee projects must be completed within the five-year, Pass-Through Entity grant performance period.

4. Create an efficient progress and financial tracking and accomplishment reporting system for Urban and Community Forestry IRA sub-award projects.

5. Manage the application in-take processes, evaluations, subawards process, project risk through ongoing monitoring, and project tracking and reporting for communities. Subawards to communities will not be individually approved by the Forest Service. Submit timely financial and progress reports and success stories (brief project description and outcomes, with project photographs and recipient testimonials where feasible) with the USDA Forest Service.

6. Assist sub-awardee with development and distribution of communications and promotional materials that support the funded program of work and reflect IRA as the source of funding.

APPLICATION, SUBMISSION, AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Electronic Application Package

Applicant materials can be found on the Urban and Community Forestry UCF Grant Portal or by searching for this funding opportunity through Grants.gov. In grants.gov, search for grant Opportunity Number USDA-FS-2023-UCF-IRA-01. Applications are to be submitted through the UCF Online Grant Portal . All application materials must be received by **11:59 pm Eastern Time** on **June 1, 2023.**

For technical issues while viewing Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov. Forest Service staff cannot support applicants regarding Grants.gov accounts.

USDA Forest Service will provide two (2) Application Assistance Webinars in late April to assist with specific questions and inquiries. If you would like to receive a direct invitation for these sessions, please send an email to the Urban & Community Forestry Program Inbox: SM.FS.UCF_IRA@USDA.GOV

Content and Form of Application Submission

The Forest Service may choose not to consider applications that fail to comply with the required content, format, and page limits, or those that are incomplete.

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, an application must contain the following

documents:

A. Project Narrative

Each page must be numbered and have one-inch margins. The text of the project narrative must be single spaced and typed in a standard typeface (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri) with no smaller than 12-point font. The project narrative must not exceed 7 pages. This page limit applies to the project narrative only. Other application materials, such as budget details/narratives, maps, and letters of commitment from contributing partners are not counted in this 7-page limit.

Project Narratives must include all the following information:

1. **Project Title:** Provide a uniquely descriptive title for this project. Use this full title consistently on all submission communications and supplemental documents, including letters of support, until an official application number is assigned by the Forest Service.

2. **Project Applicant:** Provide the name of the organization applying for Federal funding.
3. **Contact Information:** Provide the name, title, address, phone number, and email address for the person leading the project or program.
4. **Project Summary:** In less than 100 words, provide a summary of the project that includes the scope, location, key partners, and expected accomplishments.
5. **Project Scope Alignment:** Describe the issues this project is seeking to address and how the project will contribute to the goals in this funding opportunity, including congressional, Justice40, State Forest Action Plans, and Ten-Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan (2016-2026) priorities.
6. **Implementation Strategy/Methodology/Timeline:** Provide a detailed explanation of the proposed approach, methodology, operations strategies, project schedule/timeline with goals/milestones, expected accomplishments or measurable outcomes, and project assessment/evaluation methods.
7. **Capability and Capacity:** Describe how each contributing organization is suited for (mission) and qualified to deliver the project. Provide the names, titles, and organization affiliation and specific roles of key personnel for the project. Include qualifications and experience of key personnel to implement, monitor, and assess/report project outcome.
8. **Project Partners:** Provide the names of partner organizations, describe their involvement and contributions to the project, and qualifications of the organization and personnel as they relate to their roles in project implementation.
9. **Communications Plan:** Share your plans for communication on the project, including plans for 1) signage acknowledging the source of funding at project locations 2) inclusion of funding information in press and promotional materials.
10. **Evidence of Disadvantaged Community Status for projects requesting Match Waiver (if applicable):** Clearly describe the scope of work to be performed in disadvantaged communities,

and identify online vulnerability and environmental justice equity data and/or tools referenced to support a disadvantaged community designation, (e.g., White House Council on Environmental Quality Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), EPA Environmental Justice and Screening Mapping Tool (EJScreen), EPA EnviroAtlas Interactive Map, Opportunity Zones, or other vulnerability data/tools applicable to the scope of work). Multiple tools may be used. **All work must be tracked at the level that designates disadvantaged communities**.

Primary applicants receiving cost-match waiver approval that pass-through funding (sub-award) for work in disadvantaged communities must pass through the cost match waiver to sub awardees performing the work.

D. Budget Narrative

In a separate document titled "Budget Narrative," explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. List in detail how the totals on the budget were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities.

For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the agency's approval and estimate its cost.

The pages included as the budget narrative do not count toward the page limit. Cost sharing/matching must be committed at the time of application submission. The budget narrative must show the amounts and sources of match or cost share (including both cash and in-kind contributions.

E. Budget

A budget should be submitted as an attachment and does not count toward the 7-page narrative limit (see sample budget template and instructions). Categories include the following:

- Personnel (salary costs)
- Fringe benefits
- Travel
- Equipment (cost of purchase, not rental. NOTE: The definition of equipment is tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost of at least $5000. Equipment purchase is heavily discouraged. Consider equipment rental instead.)
- Supplies (tangible personal property other than equipment--includes tree purchase not completed under a contract for service)
- Contractual (e.g., contract for service, equipment rental)
- Other (sub-grants only)
- Indirect costs (NICRA, de minimus, or none—see below)

De minimis rate: Any Non-Federal entity (except State and local governments that receive more than $35 million per year in Federal funding) that does not have a current negotiated (including provisional) indirect rate (NICRA) may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10 percent de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in 2 CFR 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time.

Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs,

tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) may be used, if

established. **PROPOSAL EVALUATION**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following Evaluation Criteria (100

points): 1. Alignment with Priorities (0-30 points)

Scope of work addresses Justice40, Congressional, State Forest Action Plan and Ten-Year National Urban and Community Forestry Plan priorities.

- Increase equitable access to urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental and economic (workforce) benefits in disadvantaged communities.
- Broaden community engagement in local urban forest planning.
- Improve resilience to climate change, pests, storm/extreme heat events through best management and maintenance practices.

2. Technical Merit (0-20 points)

• Strategy and methodology are logical and appropriate to attain stated results. • Methodology demonstrates high likelihood of success and long-term outcomes. • If applicable, methodology for identifying disadvantaged communities is appropriate to meet priorities.

3. Capability and Capacity (0-20 points)

- Organization(s) (including partners) have ability to carry out the proposed work within the grant period and meet federal grant requirements.
- Key personnel (including partners/contractors) have the training opportunities, skills, expertise, and relationships required to complete the work and achieve stated results; hired personnel include union labor, living wage paying jobs.

4. Measurable Results/Outcomes (0-20 points)

- Conditions are significantly improved for communities (people or places) as prioritized in Justice40, Congressional, State Forest Action Plan and Ten-Year National Urban and Community Forestry Plan.
  - Increased equitable access to urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental and economic (workforce) benefits in disadvantaged communities. • Broadened community engagement in local urban forest planning.

- Improved resilience to climate change, pests, storm/extreme heat events through best management and maintenance practices.
- Recipients will be expected to implement and demonstrate measurable progress within 12 months of award.

5. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (0-10 points)

- Budget and budget narrative adequately describes proposed costs.
- Administrative costs are reasonable compared to other expenditures.
- Costs are in proportion to project input needs and results/outcomes.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Semi-annual financial and progress reports are required for IRA grants: Financial and Progress reports will be submitted for the periods ending June 30 and December 31. Reports are due 30 days from the period end. Timely submittal of financial and progress reports for each grant as indicated in your award agreement will be required. Payments will be withheld until missing reports are received and approved.

Progress reports should highlight direct quantitative and qualitative investment activities and outcomes and include stories and photographs that illustrate these.

APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

Applications are to be submitted through the UCF Online Grant Portal. The on-line application workflow process is self-explanatory with help links to guide you through the application process. Applicant materials can be found on the grant application portal under the forms template and resources section, or by searching grant opportunity number USDA-FS-2023-UCF-IRA-01 in Grants.gov.

All applications must be completed and submitted by **June 1, 2023, 11:59 PM Eastern**. Once submitted, the applicant will receive an email notice confirming their application was successfully submitted.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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