

**URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GRANT PROGRAM
FY24 APPLICATION FORM**

Massachusetts DCR Urban and Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant Application Packet

What is the Massachusetts Urban and Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant?

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Urban & Community Forestry is soliciting grant applications for the purpose of supporting tree planting efforts on public and private property in disadvantaged communities across the Commonwealth.

The Urban & Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant Program is designed to bring the measurable positive environmental, public health, and energy efficiency benefits of an expanded tree canopy cover to the lives of residents living and working in environmental justice communities. One hundred percent of the work must focus on benefiting disadvantaged communities. The DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program ***assists communities and nonprofit groups in their efforts to protect and manage community trees and forest ecosystems, with the ultimate aim of improving the environment and enhancing livability of all of Massachusetts' communities.***

The funding for this Environmental Justice Grant Program is part of a \$1.5 billion investment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The IRA grant funding is available to increase tree cover in urban spaces and boost equitable access to nature while bolstering resilience to extreme heat, storm-induced flooding, and other climate impacts and can be used to address such activities as tree planting and aftercare, tree and stump removal, community engagement, urban wood utilization, urban food forests, and workforce development.

There is no match requirement.

What is Urban and Community Forestry?

For the purpose of these grants, Urban and Community Forestry refers to professional management (planting, protection, and maintenance) of a municipality's public tree resources in partnership with residents and community institutions.

On a broader scale, Urban and Community Forestry involves the community in the management of all a municipality's or a region's "green infrastructure" in order to maximize social, economic, and environmental quality. For a more detailed description, see: www.mass.gov/dcr/ucf

Who can apply?

Municipalities and non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations, and federally recognized Tribes are eligible to apply. Non-profit applicants will be required to submit a letter of endorsement from the municipality and its Tree Warden where they have proposed project work.

Eligible groups include all units of local government, nonprofit 501(c) (3) organizations, and federally recognized Tribes that are working in environmental justice communities in Massachusetts.

Only those projects taking place entirely within environmental justice neighborhoods will be eligible for this grant opportunity and all projects must result in tree planting. The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool will be one of the tools used to geographically identify disadvantaged communities.

In Massachusetts, an environmental justice population is a neighborhood where one or more of the following criteria are true:

- the annual median household income is 65 percent or less of the statewide annual median household income;
- minorities make up 40 percent or more of the population;
- 25 percent or more of households identify as speaking English less than "very well";
- minorities make up 25 percent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 percent of the statewide annual median household income.

As a result of EOEEA's 2021 Environmental Justice Policy, MassGIS has identified and mapped EJ populations. To review the most recent EJ populations map, based on the 2020 census, go to: <https://mass-eoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=535e4419dc0545be980545a0eeaf9b53>

All grant recipients will be required to participate in a tree planting workshop.

Applicants may elect to sub-contract planting or other work with private contractors. All sub- contractors responsible for tree planting or tree care must have a Massachusetts Certified Arborist (MCA) or International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist on site to provide oversight and direction for tree planting and tree care.

How much money can we apply for under an Urban and Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant?

Grant awards range from \$20,000 to \$100,000. Applicants should apply for the amount of funds that their projects require. Larger communities are likely to be more competitive for larger grant amounts. Remember, the Urban and Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant Program is a reimbursement program and no match is required. Applicants selected to receive grant funding must be prepared to incur costs detailed in the scope of their applications and then seek reimbursement.

What can we apply for under this grant?

The Urban & Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant Program is designed to bring the measurable positive environmental, public health, and energy efficiency benefits of an expanded tree canopy cover to the lives of residents living and working in environmental justice communities. One hundred percent of the work must focus on benefiting disadvantaged communities.

All projects must result in tree planting.

Project applications will be required to include a planting plan and to identify measurable goals and/or deliverables (e.g., number of trees planted, community events that will be hosted, type and number of informational materials for distribution, etc.).

All planting projects must incorporate the principles of planting the **right trees in the right places**. Only approved low-growing species may be planted in proximity to utility infrastructure. Applications must include a list and map of specific locations, species, and sizes of trees to be planted, along with a maintenance plan. A DCR tree planting coordinator will oversee planting plans to ensure that the "right tree, right place" principle is followed, will monitor tree planting operations to ensure that tree planting adheres to United States Forest

Service (USFS) and DCR guidelines, and will work in partnership with applicants to ensure that tree stewardship is ongoing.

Allowable Expenditures

Grant proposals may include expenses for the following:

- Purchase of trees and associated materials, including clean loam and/or mulch, watering bags, stakes etc. for purposes of planting new trees.
- Tree pit excavation, or restoration.
- Concrete, asphalt, or other impervious material removal to facilitate tree planting and/or improve the health of trees.
- Stump removal if necessitated by planting site preparation.
- Tree removal if necessitated by planting site preparation.
- Maintenance during establishment period including watering, structural pruning, weeding, replenishing mulch, etc.
- Vacant lot restoration conducted with tree planting on municipally owned vacant lots, such as debris removal, removal of impervious surfaces, and planting costs.

Public education initiatives including:

- Community outreach events that promote tree planting or raise awareness of the benefits of an expanded urban canopy.
- Costs incurred for distributing tree planting information to residents, including mailers, or utility bill inserts.
- Training and/or educational programs hosted in coordination with tree planting to ensure neighborhood residents are empowered to properly provide ongoing care for trees planted.

Administrative costs (must not exceed more than 20 percent of the total grant project).

Material Requirements

Applicants must plant trees with a mature height of over 25 feet. Trees for purchase must be >1.5" dbh to be eligible for reimbursement.

Design Requirements

Project applications will be required to include a planting plan and to identify measurable goals and/or deliverables (e.g., number of trees planted, community events that will be hosted, type and number of informational materials for distribution, etc.).

Vacant lot restoration projects must be approved in advance by DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program staff and must include a site plan establishing the number of trees and locations proposed on the lot(s). The site plan must identify a buffer area to protect trees from potential impacts of site development, such as the perimeter of the lot. The site plan must be agreed to and recorded, in writing, by the municipality to ensure new trees are permanently protected from potential impacts of site development.

Maintenance Requirements

Applications must articulate how the applicant will ensure watering and all other post tree planting care. (e.g., mulching, pruning, etc.).

Other Requirements

- Tree planting should focus on areas with limited tree canopy cover and in residential areas.

- Trees planted on private property must be planted in front yards or side yards only, to maximize public benefit.
- Applications must articulate how the applicant will secure landowner permission to access their property for tree planting and how the state government will be released from any liability associated with work completed on private property.
- Applicant may be required to provide signage to acknowledge the U.S. Forest Service and Inflation Reduction Act as a funding source for work performed under this grant.
- Tree pits must conform to ADA requirements for sidewalk clearance. Preferred tree pit dimensions are a minimum of 5 feet by 10 feet. Where possible, existing tree pits should be connected to form a continuous planting strip.

Applications are due on or before May 1, 2024.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

What should we do first if we are interested in applying for an Urban Forestry Environmental Justice Grant?

Read over this entire application packet very carefully! Talk to others in your community, including your Tree Warden.

What activities can be funded under an Urban Forestry Environmental Justice Grant?

These grant funds can be used for any activity related to your project **except** food and beverages, pass-through grant programs, childcare, excessive administrative overhead, stipends for board members, regular tree maintenance, construction costs or capital improvements (other than tree planting), expenses incurred *before or after* the grant period, and costs associated with *preparing* the grant application.

If a grant is awarded, how will the funds become available?

Once the grants are awarded, typically in the fall following the grant deadline, recipients are reimbursed for satisfactory work completed within the contract period. (Projects **cannot** begin until the contract is signed by the Commissioner of the DCR.) **Funds are not provided up front.** Receipts for reimbursement should be submitted monthly and must be submitted along with verification of payment. All reimbursement receipts must be submitted to the DCR within 30 days of contract completion. Grantees can expect reimbursement within 45 days of receipt submittal.

Should we include letters of support?

Projects that include a broad range of partners and participants will be favored. Letters of support from key cooperators will strengthen the application and should include specific commitments and not just a general statement of support. **All applications must also include a letter from the Tree Warden** indicating the Tree Warden's involvement in the project.

What is the timeline for grant programs?

Grant recipients will be given up to 12 months to complete their project. Approved projects may begin only after contract forms are signed and submitted by the grantee and a fully executed contract is returned to the grantee by the DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program. It may take 4-6 months for grants to be approved by DCR. If you need a no-cost extension, please contact [Julie Coop](#) 30-60 days prior to the grant end date.

What are the reporting requirements for the grant recipient?

At the completion of the grant, contact the DCR Urban and Community Forestry program to schedule a visit to the community to assess the grant work.

How will my community or organization be reimbursed?

Documentation of all expenses and proof of payment must be maintained. At the conclusion of the project, contact [Julie Coop](#) to arrange a grant inspection. Upon approval, the reimbursement shall be issued through DCR.

How will grants be evaluated and selected?

An Evaluation Committee will score and rank the applications based on their relative strengths. The Committee will make recommendations on applications to the DCR Commissioner and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, who will make final determinations.

The criteria for rating proposals include:

1. Application is complete, detailed, and clearly presented.
2. Proposal will result in measurable positive environmental, public health, and energy efficiency benefits of an expanded tree canopy cover to the lives of residents living and working in environmental justice communities.
3. Project involves diverse members of the community in planning and implementation.
4. Budget and timeline are reasonable, accurate, and clearly presented.
5. Community is a Tree City USA community.
6. Applicant has not recently been funded through the DCR Urban & Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant program.

Who can we call with questions or to discuss a project?

All potential applicants are encouraged to contact the DCR Office of Urban and Community Forestry to discuss potential projects. Applicants are more likely to be successful if they do so.

Please contact:

Julie Coop, Urban and Community Forester
DCR Urban and Community Forestry State Coordinator
Email: julie.coop@mass.gov

Mathew Cahill, Community Action Forester
Email: mathew.cahill@mass.gov

Massachusetts DCR Urban and Community Forestry Environmental Justice Grant Application

Environmental Justice Grant Application Instructions and Checklist

Please read carefully and submit all the following items with your final grant application. Your application will be rated competitively against other applicants. It is critical that you review the rating criteria on the previous page and include everything requested in this checklist in a clear and legible format.

If you do not submit all the items, it may reflect poorly on your application.

FACE SHEET

- ☐ Completed **Grant Application Face Sheet** (next page). Project summary must be completed on this form; do not write “see attached.”)
- ☐ The face sheet must be signed with an original signature by an authorized person.

NARRATIVE (3-5 pages)

- ☐ **Background:** Provide a brief background of your community program, nonprofit organization, or federally recognized Tribe including mission and goals for the next several years (1 page maximum).
- ☐ **Project Description:** Include what you expect to be developed, produced, performed, and/or implemented; how you will achieve your results; and a clear and measurable work plan for the project (2-3 pages).
- ☐ **Who:** Who will lead the project? Who will be involved? For tree planting and tree care projects a certified arborist and/or qualified tree warden should be involved. Please specifically describe how your project proposal incorporates diverse members of the community in its planning and implementation.
- ☐ **Sustainability:** These grants are not intended to provide ongoing funding. Describe how your project and its results will be maintained and sustained into the future. How will trees be maintained?
- ☐ **Evaluation and Accomplishments:** Describe how you will evaluate the success of your project. Provide a list of measurable accomplishments and/or final products that will result from completion of the project.

DETAILED BUDGET

- ☐ A **detailed budget** showing the estimated costs and specific use of funds.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- ☐ A **project timeline** showing anticipated dates of accomplishment of specific project tasks.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

- ☐ **Letters of commitment** from key cooperators and supporters that indicate *specific contributions* to the proposed project.
- ☐ **Letter of support from the tree warden** indicating the tree warden's involvement in the project.

GRANT SUBMITTAL:

- ☐ Mail **one original** and **email a copy** to:
Julie Coop
DCR Urban and Community Forestry State Coordinator
66 Mill Street
Belmont, MA 02478
Julie.Coop@mass.gov
- ☐ Postmarked and emailed on or before May 1, 2024.

Grant Application Face Sheet

Your application will be rated competitively against other applicants. It is critical that you review the rating criteria and include everything requested in a clear and legible format.

Has this project received previous assistance from DCR Urban & Community Forestry?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Municipality, non-profit or federally recognized Tribe name: _____

Project name (7 words or less): _____

Contact Person: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

Zip _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Grant Request: \$ _____

Project Summary: **In the following space**, briefly describe the project, including what you expect to be developed, produced, performed, and/or implemented.

Please list any project partners:

This application has the support of the entity that is applying.

Signature of Authorized Agent

Date

Printed Name and Title

Mail original to: Julie Coop, DCR Urban Forestry State Coordinator, 66 Mill, Belmont, MA 02478 and email a copy to: Julie.Coop@mass.gov on or before May 1, 2024.

If selected, the respondent will be required to execute the following forms in order to complete a contract:

- Commonwealth Standard Contract
- Commonwealth Standard Terms & Conditions
- Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing
- Commonwealth Project Agreement

Applicants are encouraged to review these forms prior to submission of an application.

With the exception of the Project Agreement, all other forms are available at:

www.mass.gov/osd.