

# Urban and Community Forestry Grant for Government Entities

## Request for Proposals

Funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service through the Inflation Reduction Act under the direction of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Urban & Community Forestry Program

Grant funding administered by The Morton Arboretum, an equal opportunity provider.

**Proposals Due: March 1, 2024**

The Morton Arboretum  
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Illinois  
Department of  
**Natural  
Resources**



The  
Morton  
Arboretum

THE  
CHAMPION  
of TREES

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**For more information, please visit:**

**<https://chicagorti.org/grants>**

**Or please contact [Grants.CRTI@Mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@Mortonarb.org)**

## Introduction & Allowable Projects

These grant funds are provided by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry allocation of the Inflation Reduction Act, and are to be made available through competitive sub-awards to nature-deprived populations and disadvantaged communities for a variety of urban and community forestry based activities including: tree inventories, urban forest management plans, tree planting, urban wood utilization, urban food forests, extreme heat mitigation, and workforce development. This request for proposals provides funding assistance to disadvantaged communities (defined as government entities including municipalities, park districts, counties, Tribal governments, townships, forest preserves, and other units of local government) in Illinois to improve the urban forest.

A total of \$1,250,000 in funding is available. The total maximum allowable funding amount for any one community is \$150,000. The minimum allowable funding amount is \$25,000.

One hundred percent of work must take place in, or benefit, disadvantaged communities and, therefore, match is waived. This match waiver must be passed on to any sub-awardees as described in the [General Criteria](#) section.

**All funded projects and final reporting must be completed by March 1, 2028.**

**Assistance is available for any Applicant needing assistance to complete a proposal. Assistance can be provided by contacting [Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org). All requests for assistance must be received by February 1, 2024.**

## Applicant Eligibility

Communities are eligible for program funding in one or more of the following situations. A flow chart describing this eligibility requirement is available in [Appendix D](#).

1. **Municipalities** listed as eligible in [Illinois's Municipal Inflation Reduction Act Eligibility Screening Tool \(MIRA-Tool\)](#) are able to apply for program funding. This tool combines data from the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), [EPA Environmental Justice Screening Tool \(EJScreen\)](#)\* and HUD Opportunity Zones.

Allowable projects are listed in this RFP in the section [Eligible Program Areas](#) and fall into two types: site-specific (e.g. tree planting, tree maintenance and hazardous removals, etc.) and community-wide projects (e.g. tree inventories, management plans, staff training/hiring etc.).

- a. **Site specific projects:** Municipalities must complete 100% of a site specific project in census tracts considered to be disadvantaged by CEJST, EJScreen, or HUD Opportunity Zones. These projects must submit a list of census tracts in which their project will take place as part of their application. A map that combines all applicable census tracts is available [here](#).
- b. **Community Wide Projects:** Municipalities with disadvantaged areas may complete projects that benefit the entirety of their community. While these projects may benefit the whole community, they must focus on engagement, outcomes, and action in disadvantaged areas. Municipalities may use the CEJST, EJScreen, and/or HUD Opportunity Zones to determine areas that are considered disadvantaged. A map that combines all applicable census tracts is available [here](#).

All community-wide projects must be accompanied by request for funding for on-the-ground implementation work solely in disadvantaged areas and engage those residents in a meaningful way. See the [Improving Community Forestry Programs](#) section for details.

2. **All other non-municipal units of local government**, such as counties, townships, park districts and forest preserve districts, must perform all grant funded work exclusively in census tracts which are considered disadvantaged by CEJST, EJScreen, or HUD Opportunity Zones. A map that combines all applicable census tracts is available [here](#).

All proposals with project components listed in the [Improving Community Forestry Programs](#) section must be accompanied by a request for funding for on-the-ground implementation work solely in disadvantaged areas.

\*Census tracts that are in the environmental justice index percentile range of 80-100 on the EJScreen are considered disadvantaged.

**All communities must specify the disadvantaged census tracts in which work will be performed in their application.**

## Grant Program Goals

The Morton Arboretum, through the Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) will assist communities in Illinois to plant and care for trees to mitigate and improve resilience to climate change, improve community health, and address environmental inequities in disadvantaged diverse communities.

**All of the funding from this program will be used to help communities enhance a resilient and equitable urban forest in disadvantaged communities in Illinois.**

This project will address goals of the Justice40, Congressional, State Forest Action Plan and Ten-Year National Urban and Community Forestry Plan by increasing equitable access to urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental and economic (workforce) benefits in disadvantaged communities, broadening community engagement in local urban forest planning, and improving resilience to climate change, pests, storm/extreme heat events through best management and maintenance practices.

As needed, The Morton Arboretum will work with elected officials, staff, and community members to increase awareness of the importance of a healthy urban forest tree canopy, learn community concerns and values, help develop a project and project plan, apply for funding, and help carry out their projects to successful completion.

## Allowable Project Overview

Program areas funded through this proposal must benefit communities in disadvantaged areas and include one or more of the following program goals:

1. **Increasing tree canopy in disadvantaged areas of communities** through diverse tree planting on public property and care post planting;
2. **Improving forest health in disadvantaged areas of communities** through pruning, dead tree removals, ash treatment, pest treatment, tree mulching, watering;

3. ***Creating or improving community forestry programs*** that will benefit disadvantaged areas of the community through completion of a tree inventory paired with an urban forest management plan, development or update to a tree preservation/protection ordinance, staff training, contracting with a certified arborist for program development, development of programs for wood utilization, and the creation of paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry. All projects must directly benefit disadvantaged areas of the community.

Applicant communities may complete the projects listed above by using a qualified contractor, in-house staff, and/or volunteers (lead by qualified staff). Each program is explained in detail in the [Eligible Program Areas](#) section of this RFP.

**No work shall start on the project until the Applicant is awarded funding. All work shall be completed within the specified grant time period.**

### General Criteria

1. The maximum allowable funding amount per eligible organization is \$150,000. The minimum grant request is \$25,000.
2. Only proposals focused on and/or directly benefiting disadvantaged areas of a community will be considered. **For all eligible communities in this grant, no match is required.**
3. Projects with the largest positive impact on disadvantaged communities will be prioritized for funding.
4. **Technical Assistance is available to help you write the grant application and/or develop a proposal. Please contact [Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org) no later than February 1, 2024.**
5. You can access the grant application form at <https://chicagorti.org/grants>. Additional resources for this grant will be posted to this site as well.
6. The deadline for completed applications is March 1, 2024, 5:00 p.m.
7. The deadline for completed grant funded projects is March 1, 2028.
8. 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 Chapter 2 [CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).
9. Organizations eligible for funding shall be units of government other than Federal or State. These include:
  - a. Municipalities, townships, county and, Tribal governments
  - b. Forest preserves and/or conservation districts
  - c. Park districtsNon-eligible entities include not-for-profits, schools, HOA's, libraries, and other groups.
10. 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.
11. Applicants that pass-through funding (sub-award) for work in disadvantaged communities must pass the match waiver to subawardees performing the work.
12. **Ordinance requirement:**
  - a. **Prior to reimbursement of funding, all awarded municipal, township, and county**

**governments must have a codified, council/board approved tree protection/preservation ordinance that meets or exceeds the criteria listed on page 8. An existing tree protection/preservation ordinance/policy is not required to apply.**

- b. Awarded park districts and forest preserve districts shall submit board-approved policies that stipulate natural resource protection with specific urban and community forest management guidance similar to the criteria listed in the [Tree Protection Ordinance Requirements](#) section of this RFP. Please contact Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org for details on this requirement.
13. All applications shall be submitted electronically by email to Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org by March 1, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.
14. The funding period is approximately 4 years. All work related to this grant, except for the final report, must be completed by **February 1, 2028**. Final reporting and reimbursement must be submitted by **March 1, 2028**. Recipients will be required to implement and demonstrate measurable progress within 12 months of award.
15. All aspects of all categories of this proposal shall meet or exceed the most current American National Standards Institute (ANSI), or Best Management Practices from the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).
16. Funding will be awarded based on score, need, and alignment with the grant's program goals.
17. Incomplete applications will not be scored.
18. **Awarded Applicants shall publish in an organization announcement, publication, newsletter or website, recognizing the source of the funding for this project (U.S. Forest Service and Inflation Reduction Act through the direction of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources).**

## Financial Information

1. The minimum award for this grant is \$25,000 and the maximum is \$150,000.
2. To encourage a diverse group of high quality proposals, funding will be awarded using the following approximate guidelines. These guidelines may be adjusted as needed based on merit of applications and number of proposals submitted.
  - a. Bin 1: \$450,000 total is available for proposals between \$100,000-\$150,000.
  - b. Bin 2: \$300,000 total is available for proposals between \$50,000-\$100,000.
  - c. Bin 3: \$500,000 total is available for proposals between \$25,000-\$50,000.
3. Only proposals focused on disadvantaged communities will be considered. **An organization that is unsure of eligibility can reach out to Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org to clarify if your community is eligible.**
4. The Applicant's labor cost, using its qualified employees to implement grant activities, can be reimbursed. Supporting documentation must be included for reimbursement. Approved documentation includes timecards, person-power records or other documentation.
  - a. An hourly proration for the share of fringe benefit costs paid by the Applicant may be included in the labor cost.
  - b. The skills and/or qualifications of individuals completing the work, including contractors, shall meet nationally recognized standards and certifications.
  - c. The Applicant will submit records for employee hours, and shall include the base rate of pay for the employee(s).
5. All contractors and suppliers completing grant projects must meet nationally recognized training and certification requirements, and evidence is required for reimbursement.

6. If using a qualified contractor, the Applicant must collect at least three quotes to determine the best-qualified contractor for any contract over \$10,000 and follow any applicable State and Federal laws, and the government entity's purchasing regulations and policies.
7. No part of the grant funding can be used to pay for land or to purchase equipment (Equipment is any item that costs \$5,000 or more. Equipment is considered more permanent and longer lasting than supplies, which are used up quickly).

## Tree Protection Ordinance Requirements

Prior to final reimbursement of funding, a tree protection ordinance related to your community's public trees shall be approved by a municipality's, county's, or township's governing body (e.g. city council) that shall meet all the requirements detailed below. Awarded park districts and forest preserve districts shall submit board-approved policies that stipulate natural resource protection with specific urban and community forest management guidance similar to these criteria. **A pre-existing ordinance is not required to apply.**

The Morton Arboretum will provide free assistance with this requirement to awarded participants.

To receive final reimbursement, your tree ordinance shall include regulations for trees located on public property and include the following:

1. **Be in effect 24/7 365 days a year.**

In other words, the policies for tree planting, care, and removal of trees codified in the ordinance must be continuous, not triggered by an event like landscaping requirements or the land development process.

2. **Assign authority over your public trees**

A key section of a qualifying ordinance is one that **assigns authority over public trees**. Authority must be assigned in your ordinance to an individual or a specific department. This could be through the establishment of a tree board or forestry department, or both, and gives one of them the responsibility for public tree care.

3. **Provide clear guidance for planting, maintaining, and/or removing trees from streets, parks, and other public spaces.**

Your ordinance must provide clear specifications and standards for tree management, referencing *the most current* American National Safety Institute, International Society of Arboriculture, National Association of Nurserymen and/or a reference to such in an accepted urban forest management plan for the following:

- a. nursery source production standards (e.g. ANSI Z.60.1)
- b. tree planting (e.g. ANSI A300)
- c. tree care (e.g. ANSI A300)
- d. tree pruning (e.g. ANSI A300)

**These requirements are designed to be achievable for any community. The Morton Arboretum provides ordinance revision assistance free of charge to participating communities. Please contact [Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org) for more information..**

## Eligible Program Areas

There are three eligible program areas that grant funding can be spent on. They are detailed below. Projects that protect, enhance, and expand equitable urban tree canopy cover to maximize community access to human health, social, ecological, and economic benefits in disadvantaged and nature-deprived areas of communities experiencing low tree canopy cover, extreme heat and frequent flooding will be prioritized.

Proposals consisting of multiple program areas are allowable, for example a city may propose to hire a contractor to conduct an inventory and develop a management plan, and also plant trees based on the recommendations in the new plan.

### Increasing Tree Canopy in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities

**Including: diverse tree planting and commitment to care for the trees post planting.**

Tree Planting, on properties located within disadvantaged areas determined by the approved tools within the Applicant's boundaries, may be completed as a project. **These are site-specific projects.** See [Introduction & Allowable Costs](#) for information on eligibility. Trees planted must meet minimum quality metrics, and be planted as described below. A Tree Planting List and Maintenance Agreement (located in the grant application) is required for all tree planting projects. These projects must include specific consideration for increasing tree species diversity. A commitment to care for newly planted trees is required as described below. Projects that foster individuals, groups, and organizations in the communities served to become engaged participants in planting are encouraged.

### Tree Planting Requirements

1. Trees must be planted on public property.
2. Trees planted shall be between 1" and 2.5" caliper measured at 6" above the root flare.
3. Tree planting projects must be planned and executed to promote the long-term survival of the trees.
4. Tree species selected must be a diverse selection appropriate to your community. A statement of diversity explaining how the selected species will improve tree diversity in your community is required as part of the tree planting plan.
5. Shrubs (species that do not grow beyond 10 feet in height) are not eligible for reimbursement.
6. Tree species to be planted should be specified in the grant application. Species selected and site conditions must be identified. Grant participants are encouraged to plant native species. The planting tree list and plan may be subject to change based on new information you receive during the grant period (e.g. an updated inventory indicates a need for different species, etc.). Any changes from the original proposal must be approved by the Morton Arboretum prior to implementation.
7. Tree species that have invasive qualities shall not be planted under this program. Prohibited species includes the following, and any other invasive species:
  - Callery pear (Bradford pear) or other exotic pear species- *Pyrus spp.*
  - Tree-of-heaven - *Ailanthus altissima*
  - Autumn olive - *Elaeagnus umbellata*
  - Mimosa - *Albizia julibrissin*
  - Norway maple - *Acer platanoides*



8. An International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist must approve the accompanying tree planting plan for all trees planted on public property that are funded through this proposal or with match. (See below.) If you do not have a certified arborist on staff or know of one a list can be found on the [Illinois Arborist Association](#) website.
9. The Applicant must attest to properly caring for trees purchased through this program by including a maintenance plan. The plan must identify who will water and frequency for watering and mulching trees over the **required three years post-planting period**. (A copy of the proposed maintenance plan must accompany the application. A Tree Maintenance Agreement and Partner Commitment Agreement is required and is attached to the Application packet.) Trees must be planted according to the ANSI, ISA, and/or other nationally recognized planting specifications.
10. All trees purchased through this proposal shall be from nurseries that are licensed by the [Illinois Nursery Inspection Program](#). Trees must be purchased from entities which are compliant with all applicable State and Federal regulations including spongy (gypsy) moth compliance agreements, pesticide licensure, etc.
11. All trees must have any packaging such as **burlap, rope, and wire baskets removed (or be a low-profile basket) at time of planting and must be planted in accordance with the ANSI A300 Standard**. (also see Appendix C for a planting standard example).
12. Immediately after planting, all trees shall receive a 2 to 3-inch layer of hardwood mulch over the root ball. Mulch shall not touch the bark of the tree.
13. Tree planting shall take place in the spring or fall.
14. Newly planted trees must be digitally inventoried, or recorded, at planting. Communities may use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, or their own inventory software of choice. Information that must be collected includes: a photo of each planted tree, GPS coordinates, tree species, tree size (DBH), and tree condition  
**The Arboretum may periodically conduct site visits to ensure the accuracy of this digital inventory.**

### Improving Forest Health in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities

***Including: pruning, dead tree removals, ash treatment, tree mulching, watering, and recovery of damaged or deteriorated landscapes to more healthy and resilient conditions.***

Applicants may propose a project located within disadvantaged areas determined by the approved tools within the Applicant's boundaries, that improves the health of individual trees, public safety, canopy cover etc. **These are site-specific projects**. See [Introduction & Allowable Projects](#) for information on eligibility. This includes maintenance, such as pruning, removal of standing dead trees and high risk/hazard trees, removal of invasive tree/shrub species, treatment of ash trees not already infested with Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), mulching of trees, and watering of trees planted within the last 2 years. These projects encourage proactive and systematic maintenance and monitoring of urban trees and forested natural areas to improve forest health through pruning, mulching, watering, and caring for trees.

1. All tree care/maintenance work must be completed in accordance with the ANSI A300 and Z133 standards.
2. A plan for proposed maintenance activities and the census tract number of the census tract where work is to be performed and must be submitted with the grant application, including number of trees to be pruned/removed, and cost estimates.

3. Only trees on public property and in disadvantaged areas are eligible.
4. Any tree removed with grant funding or as a match activity must:
  - a. Present a significant harm or hazard to the communities, as documented by an ISA Certified Arborist\*, or
  - b. Be an invasive exotic tree or shrub species included in the following list:
    - i. European buckthorn (common buckthorn) - *Rhamnus cathartica*
    - ii. Amur honeysuckle - *Lonicera maackii*
    - iii. Morrow's honeysuckle - *Lonicera morrowii*
    - iv. Callery pear (Bradford pear) - *Pyrus calleryana*
    - v. Tree-of-heaven - *Ailanthus altissima*
    - vi. Autumn olive - *Elaeagnus umbellata*
    - vii. Mimosa - *Albizia julibrissin*
    - viii. Norway maple - *Acer platanoides*
5. Work may be completed by qualified in-house staff or by a qualified contractor. Proof of qualifications to complete tree work, such as arborist certification, is required upon selecting a contractor.

\*Documentation shall be submitted by an ISA Certified Arborist and approved by The Morton Arboretum prior to removal.

### Improving Community Forestry Programs

***Including: community engagement strategies in disadvantaged areas and focus on improving service to disadvantaged areas, completion of a tree inventory paired with an urban forest management plan, development or update to a tree preservation/protection ordinance, staff training, contracting with a certified arborist for program development, development of programs for wood utilization, and the creation of paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry.***

**Community-wide projects** such as planning and policy development are allowable if the focus is on disadvantaged communities and includes community engagement that collects input to influence decisions. See [Introduction & Allowable Projects](#) for information on eligibility. **While these projects may benefit the entire community, the projects shall directly benefit disadvantaged areas. Applicants completing projects in this category must also request funding for on-the-ground implementation work in disadvantaged areas of the community.** For example, communities requesting funding for a tree inventory and management plan must also request funds for tree planting, maintenance, or other action in a disadvantaged area of the community that addresses recommendations of the management plan.

Community-wide projects must include meaningful community engagement during the term of the grant, in which the community may provide input and influence.

- Conducting tree inventories and writing accompanying urban or community forest management plans. Urban forest management plans shall include community engagement that collects input to identify strategies for increasing service to disadvantaged areas and one or more components specific to increasing and or improving canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community.

- Writing of urban or community forestry management plans based on an existing current, digital inventory. Urban forest management plans shall include one or more components specific to increasing and or improving canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community.
- Urban Tree Canopy Assessment to identify low-canopied portions of the community.
- Assessing risk to forests from pests, disease, and adverse climate impacts; and formulate adaptive management strategies to improve forest resilience.
- Increasing staff professionalism through education or credentialing. Staff supported through this grant must work to enhance and/or increase canopy in disadvantaged areas.
- Enhancing volunteer efforts such as formation of a tree board that includes representation from disadvantaged communities.
- Developing paid on-the-job training opportunities, including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, to expand workforce development pathways for green careers in urban and community forestry for members of disadvantaged communities.
- Establishment of wood utilization programs.
- Aiding in planning, goal setting, and skill sharing with other professions such as urban planners, engineers, educators, recreational and public health officials that focus on improving service to disadvantaged areas.
- Improving preparation for severe storms that improve response and recovery in disadvantaged areas.
- Ordinance Development or Revision including significant and thoroughly explained and documented community engagement (seeking input to influence decisions) that does not result in overburdening disadvantaged communities.

Additional requirements are described in the following sections. All projects must include community engagement strategies in disadvantaged areas and focus on improving service to disadvantaged areas. Projects in this program areas must include on-the-ground work that occurs solely in disadvantaged areas of your community.

### Tree Inventory Requirements

A tree inventory is a database containing specific, standardized information recorded for individual trees in an identified area of the community. Inventory projects must cover between 15%-100% of the community's public tree population. **An urban or community forest management plan that addresses some part of the inventory results must accompany any inventory funded by this grant. An accompanying implementation action is required for applicants completing inventory and management planning. Applicants must include implementation work in disadvantaged census tracts, such as implementing one or more of the Management Plan's recommended action items for disadvantaged areas of the community as part of the proposed grant project.** See [Improving Forest Health in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) and [Increasing Tree Canopy in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) section for examples of implementation projects. Inventories and community forest management plans shall include one or more components specific to increasing and or improving canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community.

The inventory must inform management decisions and be regularly updated. The inventory may contain information about the immediate area surrounding a tree, as necessary for tree management and

planning. Sample size must be statistically appropriate to provide accurate conclusions for management recommendations.

**Eligibility: Only applicants whose inventory has not been updated in the last 3 years are eligible for funding for an inventory.**

A contractor and/or qualified staff and/or volunteers may be used to complete a new or expand an existing inventory. Staff, contractors, or volunteers shall have the requisite professional experience to complete the work. Verification of this training and skills is required. All work completed through this grant shall meet the nationally recognized requirements and standards. Additional inventory features including software subscriptions that run concurrent to the grant term are eligible for funding. All costs for subscriptions must be paid by the end of the work period. Grant funds cannot be retained past the grant period for future subscription payments.

### **Tree Inventory Deliverables**

1. Required Individual Tree Data Fields
  - a. GPS coordinates
  - b. Street address and relative location
  - c. Land use (i.e., residential, business zone, natural area, park, etc.)
  - d. Growing space (i.e., parkway, park, etc.)
  - e. Species
  - f. Diameter at breast (standard) height (DBH)
  - g. Single or multi-stem designation
  - h. Condition rating including defects (roots, wounds, rot, deadwood, etc.)
  - i. Risk assessment
  - j. Maintenance recommendation
  - k. General comments or notes
2. Optional Deliverables
  - a. Plantable spaces
3. At a minimum, the inventory shall be delivered as a digital spreadsheet, such as Excel.
4. Training and education
  - a. If a contractor is used, before the project starts, the contractor shall meet with the community to outline project goals and plans specific to the community.
  - b. Immediately after the inventory is complete, the contractor should provide a minimum of 3 hours of technical assistance to ensure that the community understands how to use the inventory effectively.
  - c. Following the initial 3 hours, the contractor should provide an additional minimum of 3 hours of assistance, as needed.
5. The Applicant shall provide a dated copy of inventory summary and Urban Forest Management Plan to The Morton Arboretum before reimbursement of grant expenditures. The Morton Arboretum requests a copy of the completed inventory to facilitate its development of outreach materials that assist communities in managing their trees. (Please contact [Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org) for more information about how inventory data is used by the Arboretum or to waive Morton Arboretum's request.)
6. A Tree Inventory Maintenance Agreement must be signed (see application for details)

## Urban Forest Management Plan Requirements

Completion of a new or updated management plan is allowed as a project for this grant. It may accompany a tree inventory or be a proposal on its own – as long as it is based on an inventory that was updated no more than four years ago. **Community-wide management plans must include significant and thoroughly explained and documented community engagement (seeking input to influence decisions). The plan must include strategies for improving service to disadvantaged communities. Applications must include funding requests for implementation of one or more management strategies on-the-ground, solely in disadvantaged communities/census tracts.** See [Improving Forest Health in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) and [Increasing Tree Canopy in Disadvantaged Areas of Communities](#) sections for examples.

A management plan's scope shall have established priority goals to improve canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community. The plan may cover the entire community and have appropriate subsections of a community, such as a specific plan for disadvantaged neighborhoods, an Ash Tree Preservation/replacement plan, risk abatement plan, cyclical pruning plan, community tree planting plan, etc. Urban Forest Management Plans are further described in [Appendix A](#) of this document.

**Eligibility: only applicants whose existing management plans are older than 5 years and/or not based on an inventory are eligible to receive funding for a management plan.**

Qualified staff and/or a contractor shall complete a management plan that is based on an up-to-date inventory and shall include the following services.

### Management Plan Deliverables:

1. Plan goals and format
  - a. This plan shall be developed to outline the future standards, specifications, and goals for management of the community's trees and forests over the next 5 to 7 years.
  - b. This plan shall include prioritized action items for a 5 to 7 year period to ensure the Applicant can effectively and efficiently manage their trees.
  - c. This plan shall be delivered in a document format that can be easily edited and updated, e.g. Microsoft Word or another similar program.
2. Plan components shall include establishing one or more priority goals to improve canopy in disadvantaged areas of the community and may include some of the following, as needed and appropriate, for each community. **At least one component from item (a) is REQUIRED.** It is recommended that plans contain all of the following:
  - a. Recommended and prioritized urban forest management action items, based on an inventory. One component from this list is required.
    - i. A description of the organization's urban forest canopy cover and composition. *(Canopy cover data can be provided to organizations in Will, Lake, Kane, Kendall, Cook, DuPage, and McHenry by the Chicago Region Trees Initiative).*
    - ii. Prioritized planting locations, including replacements and new plantings.
    - iii. A cyclical pruning schedule and map.
    - iv. Prioritized hazard abatement informed by inventory data.
    - v. A list of preferred species, prohibited species, and species to be planted in limited quantities.
    - vi. How the urban forest inventory will be used to inform decisions and how it will be updated.
    - vii. A strategy for improving forest age and species structure.

- b. Short and long-term urban forest goals 2023 – 2030.
    - i. Long-term goals such as:
      - 1. Urban forest management goals and risk mitigation.
      - 2. Canopy cover goals.
      - 3. Climate change response.
    - ii. Short-term goals (e.g. annual goals) such as:
      - 1. Tree pruning schedules.
      - 2. A plan for replacement and removals.
      - 3. A plan for hazard abatement.
      - 4. Mitigation of pests and diseases.
      - 5. Benchmarks to ensure progress towards long-term goals.
  - c. Specifications for planting, pruning, removals, and protection
    - i. Specifications from ANSI, ISA, and/or other nationally recognized standards for tree care (pruning, planting, etc.).
    - ii. Establishing a pruning and maintenance cycle so that care is regularly scheduled.
    - iii. Protection and standards for trees in construction zones.
  - d. Required and recommended certifications, qualifications, and training for staff, contracted labor, and consulting.
    - i. Formulating these requirements to mitigate and manage risk, including climate impacts.
  - e. Material equipment, and budget considerations
    - i. Short- and long-term budget projections and needs.
    - ii. A plan for acquisition and replacement of equipment and resources.
  - f. A program for education and outreach of residents
    - i. Engaging private landowners and managers within the organization’s boundaries.
    - ii. Developing a marketing strategy for engaging residents so they are familiar with urban forestry in their community.
3. Training and education
- a. If a contractor is used, before the project starts, the contractor shall meet with the community to outline project goals and plans specific to the community.
  - b. The contractor should provide a minimum of 3 hours, as needed, of outreach and education (that is separate from inventory outreach) to ensure that the community is able to use the management plan effectively.

**The Community shall provide proof that the management plan was completed and submit a copy of the document to The Morton Arboretum.**

### Staff Improvement and Volunteer Development

- 1. Staff may be hired, or existing staff may be trained to undertake urban forestry enhancement activities focused on disadvantaged areas of the community. Allowable expenses include:
  - a. Personnel and fringe funding for community Arborist position(s) if one does not already exist.
  - b. ISA Credentialing – courses and exam fees for ISA Certified Arborist, Municipal Specialist, Tree Risk Assessment Qualification, or Certified Tree Worker.

- c. Staff Education – Tree Keepers courses, SMA Municipal Forestry Institute, iTree Academy, contractor training for staff, Continuing Education costs, etc.
- d. Staff time and course expenses to complete and pass relevant trainings
- 2. A contractor may be hired to serve in the role of community forester to undertake urban forestry enhancement activities that are focused on disadvantaged areas of the community.
- 3. Volunteer development
  - a. Development of volunteer protocols and activities (e.g. volunteer pruning, volunteer tree inventory training) that targets disadvantaged areas of the community.
  - b. Development of a Tree Board or other advisory group (see [Appendix B](#)), that includes residents of disadvantaged areas of the community.

Before grant reimbursement, a summary report must be submitted detailing how any funded position contributed to benefiting disadvantaged areas of the community. Proof of successful training completion must be submitted with your reimbursement packet as applicable. Training that is started but not completed will not be reimbursed.

**Staff Improvement and Volunteer Development projects must be coupled with grant funding for on-the-ground action in disadvantaged portions of your community.**

## Proposal Scoring

Your proposal will be evaluated and ranked by a scoring committee. The criteria listed below will be used to score each proposal. In the event of a tie, the following additional factors will be used to score proposals: Applicant need and leveraged benefits; Orderliness of the overall application.

Criteria:	Highest Possible Score
<b>Required-</b> Proposal shall clearly state how the proposed work will benefit the disadvantaged areas of the community	Met/Not Met
<b>Project Overview-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Applicant indicates a clear scope of the project that includes key numeric deliverables (e.g., number of trees planted, number of management plan sections, etc.)</li> <li>● The Applicant identifies who will be involved in the project and where it will take place.</li> <li>● The Applicant describes key outcomes that will arise from this project and show how these outcomes will result in higher canopy and/or urban forest in disadvantaged areas.</li> </ul>	10
<b>Purpose and Need-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Applicant demonstrates either the current staff capacity to carry out the project, or commitment to increase capacity.</li> </ul>	20

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The project will help fulfill priorities in other relevant strategic goals or plans including Justice 40 Initiative, Illinois Forest Action Plan, etc.</li> <li>● The application demonstrates attention to equity and environmental justice, supported by information such as the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, EJScreen, or HUD Opportunity Zones. Projects that are in disadvantaged and nature-deprived areas of communities experiencing low tree canopy cover, extreme heat and frequent flooding will be prioritized.</li> <li>● The application clearly describes the community’s unique challenges (e.g. canopy loss, staff capacity and training, etc.) and identifies reasons why this grant is needed to address these specific challenges.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Scope of Work-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The applicant shows capability and clear plans for carrying out the project and maintaining long-term project benefits.</li> <li>● The applicant and/or partners show adequate expertise to address technical elements of the project or will seek out contractors with adequate expertise. If applicable, the Applicant describes the role, training, and qualifications of any partners and/or potential volunteers.</li> <li>● The project is designed to be resilient to the effects of climate change and other ecosystem stressors.</li> <li>● Support letters are required from any partner entity completing a portion of the project and should describe that entity’s commitment to, and role in, this project.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Leveraged Benefits-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Established goals of the proposal describe how the community will use this project to provide ongoing support to benefit the community’s disadvantaged populations.</li> <li>● The application shows clear intention that the project will benefit your forestry program or community for the long term.</li> <li>● Projects that can describe how this grant would expand your urban forestry efforts (not just supplement) will receive higher scores.</li> <li>● For staff credentials and hiring projects, the application has a plan for employee retention during and after the grant period.</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Tree Protection Ordinance Creation or Update -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The current status of your ordinance, and whether you think it fulfills the requirements of the grant (Note: a pre-existing ordinance is NOT required to apply).</li> <li>● Who will be responsible for communicating with The Morton Arboretum regarding the ordinance update.</li> <li>● Who will be responsible for coordinating with your board/commission/council to ensure the tree protection ordinance requirement is met during the grant period.</li> <li>● Proposals that commit to going above the requirements will receive higher scores.</li> </ul>	10



<p><b>Budget Details-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The budget indicated in this table is balanced and realistic.</li> <li>• The Applicant provides a clear explanation on how they arrived at project cost (e.g., quotes, previous projects).</li> <li>• The Applicant describes all expenditures including contracted services, personnel salary and fringe, material purchases, volunteer efforts, community organization support and/or community contributions.</li> <li>• The Applicant details any “other” expenses listed in the budget matrix.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Community Engagement and Sharing Knowledge and Outcomes-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant clearly identifies strategies for engaging the community to collect input that influences how the project is implemented.</li> <li>• The project includes outreach to and engagement with the community before, during, and after project implementation.</li> <li>• The project includes efforts to share knowledge, tools, or innovations that have practical application beyond the grant period.</li> <li>• The project includes intentional efforts to reduce barriers to engagement in disadvantaged areas</li> </ul>	10
<p><b>Timeline-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Applicant’s timeline is clear, realistic, and achievable</li> <li>• Major milestones and required approvals are detailed</li> </ul>	10
<b>Total Possible Points</b>	110

<b>Bonus Points</b>	<b>Highest Possible Score</b>
<p><b>Bonus:</b> if an Applicant commits to becoming a 2024 and 2025 <a href="#">Tree City USA</a> community if not presently recognized or commits to receiving a 2023 and 2024 <a href="#">Tree City USA Growth Award</a> if presently a Tree City USA community (requires a signed letter from the Mayor or equivalent be submitted with the application), or if a community has been recognized as a Tree City USA Growth recipient for 10+ years.</p>	2
<p><b>Bonus:</b> if Applicant adds a commitment to form a tree board or other advisory group as part of this grants required deliverables. See Appendix B for a description of applicable options to fulfill this requirement (requires a signed letter from the Mayor or chief executive to be submitted with the application).</p>	2
<b>Total Possible Bonus Points</b>	4

## Award and Execution of Agreement

1. All completed proposals shall be submitted electronically, including all attachments, to [Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org) by **March 1, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.**
2. **Any Applicant requiring assistance either to complete the application or to submit it electronically shall contact [Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@mortonarb.org) no later than February 1, 2024.**
3. Each proposal will be scored according to stated criteria by independent grant reviewers. The highest scoring proposals will be recommended for funding. Partial funding is possible. The Morton Arboretum maintains the authority to withhold funds for future allocations in the event that an insufficient quantity of high-quality projects, which adhere to the stipulated grant criteria and demonstrate meritorious attributes, are submitted.
4. The Applicant must notify any applicable contractor(s) to receive an estimate of cost. **THE AWARDED COMMUNITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYING ALL EXPENSES UPFRONT AND SUBMITTING FOR REIMBURSEMENT AT THE COMPLETION OF SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES FOR THE PROJECT.**
5. The Awarded Community may submit for reimbursement twice a year. Reimbursement is described in the [Payment](#) section of this RFP.
6. Awarded Applicants will be provided an Award Agreement via email. This agreement must be executed by the Applicant's Executive Authority and returned via email **no later than 15 business days from receipt. Failure to return a signed agreement by the due date may cause the funding award to be revoked.**
7. Once executed by The Morton Arboretum, the Agreement will be sent via email to the Applicant. Once received, the Applicant may begin work as outlined in the approved proposal. **NO WORK SHALL BE STARTED PRIOR TO THE APPROVAL AND EXECUTION OF THE AGREEMENT.**
8. Applicants shall submit a realistic timeline with major milestones listed which will be used to track progress throughout the grant term. Failure to complete deliverables and milestones that jeopardized on-time completion of the project may result in cancellation of the current grant.
9. Awardees are required to report quarterly on project progress. Emailed reminders with reporting templates will be supplied quarterly. Recipients will be required to implement and demonstrate measurable progress within 12 months of award and make continual progress throughout the grant period. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in cancellation of the current grant, loss of all funding, and potential for disqualification from future grants.
10. Applicants will be required to submit a final report with their final reimbursement request which will include a narrative and budget form.
11. All work related to this grant, except for the final report, must be completed by **February 1, 2028.**
12. **Final report and reimbursement materials must be received by March 1, 2028.**

## Payment

Reimbursement and payment procedures:

1. The Applicant is responsible for all expenses until submitting for reimbursements.

2. The Applicant can expect payment 45-60 days after The Morton Arboretum has received and approved the fully completed reimbursement report containing valid invoices and canceled checks.
3. The Applicant shall review the reimbursement materials and all reporting requirements to ensure that all materials are ready for reimbursement by the grant deadline – including all payments and proof of payment.
4. **Awarded Communities may submit for reimbursement twice a year (December 1st - December 15th and March 1st - March 15th) upon the completion of approved deliverable milestones. Exceptions will be determined on a case by case basis. Projects must show proof of adequate deliverable completion and proof of spending to be approved for reimbursement. Examples of approved milestones include:**
  - a. Trees have been planted and Morton Arboretum has inspected the planting.
  - b. Staff has been hired/trained, and can report on work completed in disadvantaged areas.
  - c. Tree maintenance has occurred and approved documentation has been submitted to the Morton Arboretum.
  - d. 25% of the inventory, 50% of the inventory, 75% of the inventory, 100% completion of the full inventory, and completion of the urban forest management plan. Final payment will only be allowable after completion of the urban forest management plan.
5. **No entity is eligible for reimbursement of more than 50% of the awarded amount until the ordinance requirement is fulfilled.**

The Morton Arboretum is dedicated to the success of these projects and the support of disadvantaged communities. If you have any questions about this RFP, the application process, or any part of the grant, please reach out to [Grants.CRTI@Mortonarb.org](mailto:Grants.CRTI@Mortonarb.org) for assistance.

## Appendix A: Urban Forest Management Plan Description

Intent: Developing, using, and periodically updating a management plan demonstrates a community's commitment to the comprehensive management of its community tree and forest resources.

Definition:

- a) A detailed document or set of documents that identify and prioritize action items based on professionally-based, relevant inventories and/or resource assessments, that outline the future management of the community's trees and forests. At a minimum, the plan must address public trees. The plan must be actively used by the community to guide management decisions and/or resource allocation and updated as needed to incorporate new information.
- b) A plan for trees in a portion of the community, as long as it includes a written explanation of why there is a focus on that area (i.e., the importance of that space to the community) and action items regarding the establishment, protection, conservation, and maintenance of public trees.
- c) Management plans for forested tracts may be counted if they meet the above and the forest meets all the following criteria:
  - i. located in or near a town/municipal/community population center, business district, or residential area,
  - ii. primarily managed for the benefit of the residents and to keep the land forested, and iii. owned by the local government (i.e., in public ownership).

Examples: (Examples include but are not limited to items on this list. Anything counted must meet the definition above.)

- An Urban Forest Master Plan, based on satellite imagery/GIS or other inventories and assessments, that sets goals for tree canopy cover, recommends areas for reforestation, recommends areas for preservation, promotes community education and outreach efforts, recommends tree maintenance policies for town/city/county properties and provides action items for the management of trees and forests (such as establishment, protection, and maintenance).
- A Public Tree Planting and Maintenance Plan based on an inventory of trees and open spaces in street rights-of-way and parklands. These plans include information such as a prioritized list of tree pruning and removals, a prioritized list of replacements and new tree plantings, a recommended yearly budget, and a recommended list of tree species for replanting.
- A community's comprehensive Land Use Plan that incorporates specific management recommendations for the community's trees and forest resources.
- A Tree Risk Reduction and Replanting Plan based on an inventory of community trees.
- A tree inventory with recommended action items for managing public trees and forests (i.e., establishment, conservation, protection, and maintenance) that is actively being used.
- Other plans, such as those below, as long as they address the required elements in the definition: Urban Canopy Master Plan; Open Space Plan; Long-Term Tree Planting Plan that addresses planting and care; Pest, Storm, or Disaster Preparedness Plan that addresses trees; Town Forest Management Plan; Urban Forest Management Plan for a downtown business district; Community Wildfire Protection Plan; Community Development Plan that has an urban forest management component

## Appendix B: Tree Board/Advisory Group Description

Intent: Many local UCF programs began through the efforts of local community groups, and these groups often serve as a catalyst to encourage active local urban forest resource management for the long term. This performance element aims to ensure that community residents and program stakeholders are informed, educated, and engaged in the development and implementation of a sound community forestry program at the local level.

Definition:

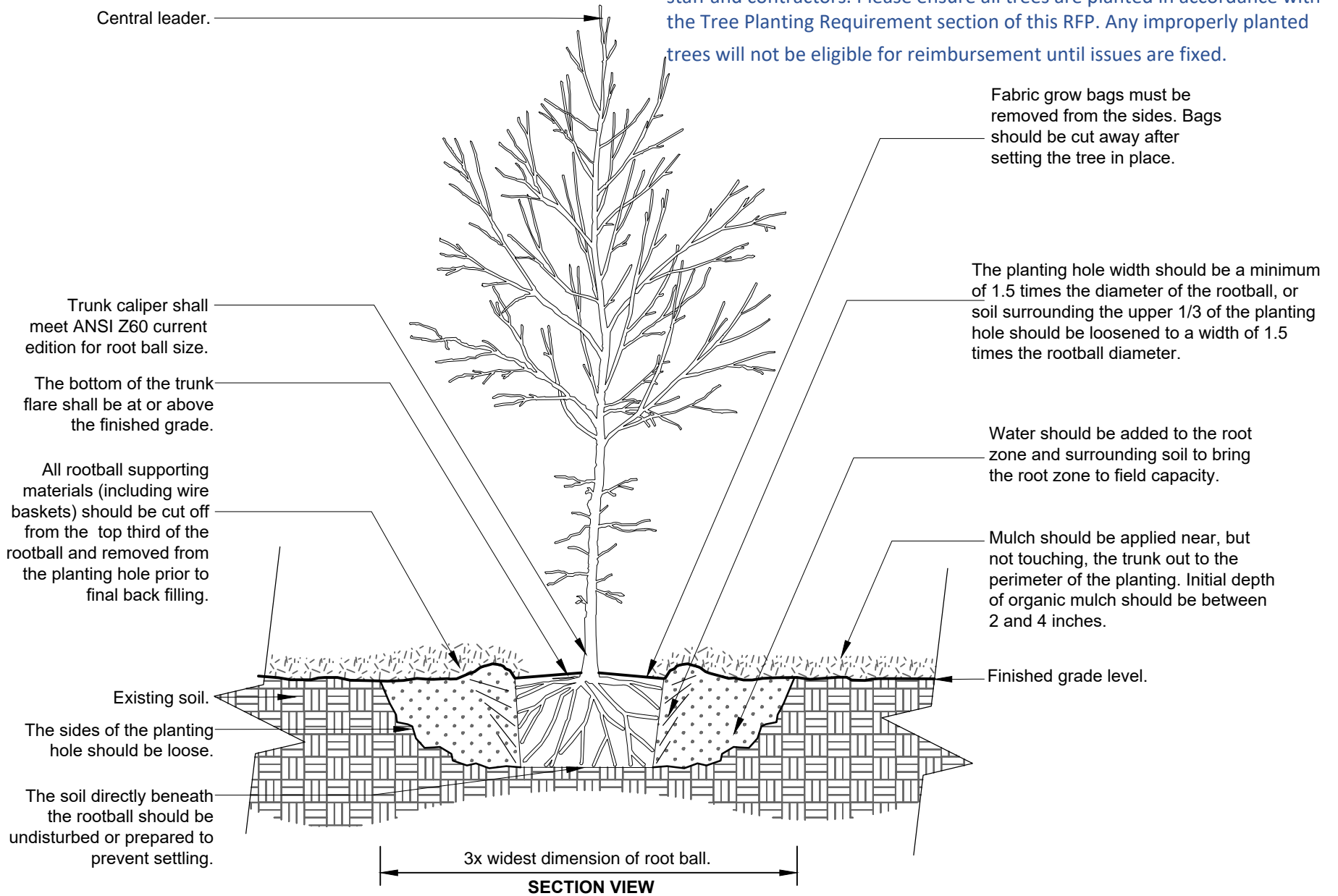
- a) **Advisory Groups:** Organizations that are formalized or chartered (i.e., organizations established by the local government) to advise (during the reporting year) on the establishment, conservation, protection, and maintenance of urban and community trees and forests.
- b) **Advocacy Groups:** Non-governmental organizations active in the community that advocate or act for the establishment, conservation, protection, and maintenance of urban and community trees and forests during the year.

Examples: (Examples include but are not limited to items on this list. Anything counted must meet the definition above.):

- A board of community members appointed by local elected officials to advise policymakers on tree ordinances, policies, and management.
- A volunteer group such as “City ReLeaf” that is active in advocating for tree planting, preservation, and management in communities.
- A local Conservation or Environmental Commission that has an urban forestry sub-group or has urban and community forestry included in the organization’s action plan or charter and organizes at least one tree- or urban forestry-related activity during the year.
- A non-profit organization that advocates for community trees in multiple communities, as long as citizens in each community are engaged in the organization’s urban and community forestry advocacy or activities during the reporting year.
- An advocacy group that focuses on a public park, greenway, or neighborhood if the group organized at least one tree- or urban forestry-related activity during the reporting year.

# Appendix C: Example Tree Planting Standard

This example tree planting standard may be used when you are working with staff and contractors. Please ensure all trees are planted in accordance with the Tree Planting Requirement section of this RFP. Any improperly planted trees will not be eligible for reimbursement until issues are fixed.



P-X

## TREE w/ BERM (EXISTING SOIL NOT MODIFIED)

URBAN TREE FOUNDATION © 2014  
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## Appendix D: Disadvantaged Community Project Eligibility Flowchart

