

USDA FOREST SERVICE - Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program

Summary of Authorized Activities and Allowable Costs

Introduction

Forest Service authority to provide funds and educational and technical assistance is derived from Section 9 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 as amended 16 U.S.C. 2105 (P.L. 95-313) through the Urban and Community Forestry Program.

I. ACTIVITIES

A. Planning Urban Forestry Programs

In general, this section covers planning, designing and conducting urban and community forestry and related green open space programs.

Inventory trees in urban areas and communities. The scope of this work includes existing street trees and related urban forest resources, available planting spaces, and inventorying the total tree cover in a town, city or metropolitan area.

Analyze data on the urban forest resource including historic data within a city or community to identify opportunities and status of related resources including trees and forest cover. This may also include analyzing existing soil, hydrology, wildlife, fish, and air data as it relates to the project. Data collection is to be used in community management and/or master plan development as it relates to urban forests and related natural resources in cities and towns and urban interface areas.

Neighborhood planning activities and community organizing activities for urban forests and related natural resources is permitted. Planning activities that describe products or measurable urban forest and related natural resource outcomes are encouraged. Products and/or measurable urban forest and related natural resource outcomes are to be identified in the grant narrative.

Organizing, hosting and/or co-hosting a community forum or planning/visioning process is authorized. The process must increase public understanding of the energy conservation, economic, social, environmental and psychological values of trees and open space in urban and community environments. It should also expand the knowledge of the ecological relationships and benefits and proper management of trees, forests and related natural resources in these environments. Products and/or measurable outcomes are to be identified in the grant narrative. Actions should be identified and tasks assigned with a budget and timeline to assure that plans are implemented over time.

B. Planting and Care of Trees, Shrubs and Complementary Ground Cover

Funds are authorized for tree planting on public property for public benefit. Public property, for the purposes of urban and community forestry is land in the public domain that is open and accessible to the public.

Planting on private land is permitted as part of a demonstration project where a clear public benefit exists, or to replace trees removed by public agencies for forest health purposes. Property owners must be informed of their rights and responsibilities to the public while they are participating in the project.

Tree planting, maintenance and protection, in open spaces, greenbelts, roadside, screens, parks, woodlands, curb areas and residential developments within urban areas. Maintenance may be used as a match for tree planting protection and other authorized activities within the grant period.

Planting should develop or complement an existing urban tree maintenance and open space program.

Plant materials must meet or exceed the American Standards for Nursery Stock (available from the American Nursery and Landscape Association). Planting projects must include a maintenance plan.

Tree plantings should follow the new American Institute of Architects tree planting graphic standards as amended, which has been developed in conjunction with the International Society of Arboriculture.

Invasive exotic tree species are not permitted. It is recommended that planting project applicants contact their state natural resources department to review their state's exotic invasive species, recommended tree and plant lists.

Plant material other than trees should not exceed 5% of the overall project budget.

High-risk trees (that pose a threat to public safety or forest health) may be pruned or removed as part of a tree improvement or replacement program. The removal of exotic invasive plant species is permitted to maintain the health of urban forest ecosystem.

Establish demonstration projects including trees, shrubs, perennials, native annuals, and ground covers in communities, as it relates to the Urban and Community Forestry Program, for the purpose of improving public understanding of the benefits and importance of establishing and maintaining trees, open space and green infrastructure in urban areas. Demonstration projects should be a one-time event for a particular subject area that educates and

trains the rest of the community. Projects should incorporate a marketing or communication strategy that builds community capacity.

Planting of complementary ground cover for soil stabilization and erosion control. Ground covers may include noninvasive native grasses or spreading low native vegetation as part of an urban forestry activity. Establishment, re-establishment and restoration of natural and "constructed" wetland vegetation, as it relates to a forest setting, threatened and endangered native plant species, and natural grasslands/meadows as it relates to an overall forestry project.

Analysis or enhancement of soils necessary to enable trees and associated vegetation to thrive including removal and replacement of soil and the use of soil amendments, such as compost, mulching, top dressing and limited use of fertilizers as approved by EPA, Fish and Wildlife Service, Cooperative Extension Service, NRCS or appropriate State agency to prevent non-point source pollution.

C. Environmental Education and Technical Assistance

Environmental education is broadly defined to include youth and adult training programs, demonstrations, seminars, and associated educational training materials and supplies, videos and publications.

The Program shall be designed to:

Expand knowledge of the benefits of trees, forests and green space in urban areas and communities. Encourage green linkages within and between communities and public open space. Encourage owners of private residents and commercial properties to maintain trees and expand forest cover on their properties.

Improve the understanding of energy conservation, economic, social, human health, environmental and psychological value of trees, forests and related natural resources and open space in urban and community environments. Expand the knowledge of the ecological relationships and benefits of trees and related resources in these environments.

Improve the understanding of forest riparian buffers and their role to protect, and improve water quality, quantity, habitat, reduction of sediments and pollutants. Set up demonstration projects that monitor water quality before, during and after the project. Increase public awareness and participation in the process incorporating activities they can do to protect their urban forest and related natural resources that impact water issues as mentioned above.

Suggested Considerations:

Grant recipients are encouraged to review and use existing curricula rather than developing and implementing new curricula, unless it does not substantially address the problem then a new curricula may be proposed.

Environmental education should focus on replicable and sustainable programs.

Projects that train teachers or neighborhood leaders (community based education) to increase their understanding of urban forestry and related natural resources on a one time basis for that school or community and/or teach students life skills with natural resources are preferred.

Training that focuses on the planting, care and maintenance of trees. Those receiving training should give back their time to maintain their community's tree resources (may be used as an in-kind match within the grant period).

Training that focuses on young adults that are ready to enter the urban forest work place. Such training is to be based on an approved urban forestry and related natural resource curriculum by a state, city or professional organization (e.g. International Society of Arboriculture, ISA). All training is to include safety and performance measures.

Recipients are to utilize or expand existing web sites pertaining to urban forestry and related natural resources rather than creating new ones.

Educational field trips that are part of an existing curriculum that focuses on urban forests and related natural resources. Due to the limited number of youth that can participate, such trips are not encouraged, unless they form the basis of a train-the-trainers type program or complement comprehensive program outcomes.

D. Construction, Site Improvements and Resources

Fencing that is necessary for the protection of the natural resources installed or improved with Federal resources.

On-site water and irrigation systems to the extent that the costs are reasonable within the scope of the project and are necessary to sustain installed trees and other related vegetation.

Temporary shade/grow structures when reasonable and necessary to sustain trees and associated plant materials and within scope of project.

Cleaning up debris in preparation for a larger project to develop or protect trees, forests and related natural resources.

Composting as part of an overall program of urban wood utilization.

Establish, restore and protect urban forests, and related natural resource interpretive trails that are accessible to the public. Projects need to adhere to ADA standards where and when ever possible and include those compliance costs in to their proposed budgets. Urban forest and related natural resources master plans for parks, greenways and open space.

The purchase of hand tools and supplies are limited to 5% of the total budget. Recipients are required to re-utilize tools purchased with Federal funds. Large equipment may be rented for the implementation, establishment and maintenance of a project.

Restore, enhance, and maintain of forested riparian buffers to improve and protect water quality and habitat in existing rivers and watersheds, through the establishment of trees and related plant material. Establish monitoring of water quality.

II. CRITERIA

A. Administrative Costs

General: It is highly recommended that all fiscal managers take a Federal grants and agreement course. A good training source is Management Concepts Incorporated, (MCI). MCI offers a class in "Monitoring Grants and Cooperative Agreements for Federal Personnel." Their address is 8230 Leesburg Pike, Suite 800, Vienna, VA 22182, Phone (703) 790-9595. Web Site: www.MgmtConcepts.com. The OMB circulars referenced below can be found at www.whiteHouse.gov/OMB/grants/index. Click on circulars to bring up the list.

1. General Grants Administration

General Uniform Administrative Regulations for Grants and Agreements with:

- States, Local Governments will follow 7 CFR 3016 (OMB Circular, A-102).
- Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Nonprofit Organizations will follow 7 CFR 3019 (OMB Circular, A-110).

Administrative Cost Principles

OMB administrative cost principles shall be used to determine allowable costs. Recipients are responsible for knowing the requirements of OMB Circulars.

A-87 State, local, and Indian Tribes Governments

A-21 Educational Institutions

A-122 Nonprofit Organizations

The appropriate OMB circular shall be listed in the grant award document.

All costs cannot be considered allowable unless they are reasonable, allocable, consistently treated and not charged elsewhere for each project. Costs are directly attributable to the grant. Indirect costs shall be negotiated and have a costing plan. All of these proposed costs are to be present in the grant proposal and approved prior to the signing of the grant award document. If these costs appear after the contract is signed, then the request for reimbursement or match can be declined. (Note do not use the term contract!)

Detailed records must be maintained of costs and match associated with the grants:

1. Mileage costs or vehicle use costs
2. Time sheets for volunteers signed by the recipient- individual(s) name, date, hours worked, work accomplished.
3. Records/receipts for the value of purchased and donated items.
4. Expenses are only reimbursed for approved costs that are incurred during the grant period. Costs incurred prior to approval of the grant or following expiration of the grant (to include match costs) are not reimbursed.
5. Time sheets for paid staff must show the percent of time spent on the project.

Stipends to volunteers require prior approval of the Forest Service and must follow OMB Circulars that pertain to that organization: A-122, Attachment B # 34 Participant Support Costs, A-87 - # 11 Compensation (i) (2) (3), A-21- (F-9), (I-8), (see A-110 below). The nature of the work performed must be directly related to the grant, the person doing the work must be qualified. The non-profit organization that is utilizing volunteers must demonstrate the capability of doing the work prior to the signing of the contract. The grant cannot be the sole source of the organization's income. The service accomplished is accomplished more economically than through direct employment and the stipend is reasonable and customary for the type of work.

General Volunteer Match or Volunteer Value can be found in 7 CFR, OMB A-102 section 3016.24 (c) (1) and Volunteer services; and 7 CFR, OMB A-110 section 3019.23 (d) Volunteer Services.

B. GRANT COSTING GUIDELINES

In order to be recognized for payment, costs must meet certain conditions to be allowable under Federal grant programs. Following are examples of costs and how they might be treated in the Federal grant area. Reference the applicable OMB Cost Principle Circular for specific details. (A-102, A-110, which reference A-21, A-87, A-122)

Types of costs that are allowable without specific prior approval:*

- Accounting costs
- Advertising costs for recruitment of personnel required for the grant program, for solicitation of bids, for disposal of scrap and surplus materials, and for other purposes specifically provided in the grant agreement
- Bonding
- Budgeting
- Building lease maintenance
- Central stores management and operation
- Communications
- Compensation for personal services
- Depreciation and use allowances
- Employee fringe benefits
- Employee morale, health and welfare costs
- Exhibits relating specifically to the grant program
- Legal expense (except for prosecuting claims against the Federal Government)
- Maintenance and operation of buildings and facilities
- Maintenance and repair costs
- Materials and supplies
- Memberships, subscriptions and professional activities (except lobby groups)
- Motor pool costs
- Payroll preparation costs
- Personnel administrative costs
- Printing and reproduction costs
- Procurement services
- Rental costs of space in privately owned buildings
- State advisory council costs
- Taxes
- Training and education costs when provided in-house and related to grant purposes; extended out-of-service training only when provided in the grant document
- Transportation costs
- Travel costs, except for first class airfare if lesser fares are available

*The sub grantee does not determine the definition or interpretation for the above items. The applicant will be required to obtain clarification of these items

prior to the signing of the contract, if they wish to use the above for reimbursement or match.

Types of costs allowable only with approval of the grantor agency:

- Automatic data processing/computer software system acquisition
- Building space and related facilities alteration, (not allowed)
- Equipment purchases and other capital expenditures, (not allowed)
- Insurance
- Management studies
- Pre-arrangement costs
- Proposal costs

Types of costs that are unallowable

- Alcoholic beverages
- Bad debts
- Contingencies
- Contributions and donations
- Entertainment
- Fines and penalties
- Compensation for property destroyed or damaged
- Fund raising
- Interest and other financing costs

APPENDIX

Uniform Administrative Requirements: See www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/grants/index

1. 7 CFR 3016 (OMB Circular A-102), Uniform Administration for Grants & Agreements with State & Local Governments.
2. 7CFR 3019 (OMB Circular A-110), Uniform Administration for Grants & Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

OMB Circulars: See www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/grants/index

1. A-21, Educational Institutions
2. A-87, State, Local Governments and Indian Tribal Nations
3. A-122, Non-Profit Organizations

