

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA

Solicitation for Grant Applications

Healthy Tree Canopy Grants for Cities

Application due date: March 26, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.



1 Introduction

1.1 Project overview

The County of Hennepin, State of Minnesota ("County") is soliciting applications for the Healthy Tree Canopy Grant (the "Grant"). As used herein, the entity/individual submitting a response to this solicitation may be referred to as the "Applicant" and the Applicant's response to this solicitation (the "Solicitation") may be referred to as the "Application".

Healthy Tree Canopy Grants were established to help communities make positive changes in the tree canopy and engage residents in taking action to protect trees.

Goals

- Increase capacity of current city forestry efforts and programs related to trees. This includes helping communities plan, prepare for, and manage destructive invasive insects and diseases such as emerald ash borer or Asian long-horned beetle. This also includes establishing new forestry programs, establishing annual forestry activities such as planting and pruning events, and strengthening current forestry programs.
- Educate the public about the importance of trees and engage them in taking actions to protect trees.
- Increase the diversity and resiliency of the tree canopy, accommodate new species that are well-adapted to our changing climate, and recognize that trees are assets that require regular maintenance and provide significant benefits.
- Support the local nursery and tree care industry and the use of local, ISA-certified arborists and professional tree workers.
- Align with Hennepin County efforts to reduce persistent disparities in health, income, and employment among its residents. Countywide data analysis has identified a correlation between tree canopy deficient areas and concentrated areas of disparities. Tree canopy improvements play a role in disparity reduction because trees improve air quality by intercepting particulates and other pollutants, reduce stormwater runoff, provide shade that mitigates excessive heat events and reduces energy consumption, and increases property values.

1.2 The Grant

To be eligible for the Grant, the Applicant must be a city government and located in Hennepin County.

Grant funds are eligible for the following uses:

The grant is separated into two levels. Step 1 is for cities that do not have a tree inventory of public trees, and Step 2 is for cities who have completed a tree inventory of public trees.

Step 1

Eligible applicant criteria	Cities that are need of a community tree inventory or have an incomplete inventory.
Eligible projects	Completing a tree inventory of public trees
Eligible expenses	Expenses associated with completing a tree inventory, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing pre-approved software, such as ArcGIS or asset management software, for tree inventory purposes • Purchasing pre-approved technology needed for inventory • Hiring consultant to complete inventory
Ineligible expenses	Unapproved technology or software
Amount of funding available	Minimum amount of \$1,000 up to a maximum amount of \$5,000
Matching funds	25% match of the total project costs is required. For example, a \$5,000 grant would need a \$1,250 match. Staff time can be used as a match.
Project timeline	12 months
Reporting requirements	<p>Submit a work plan with key tasks, timeline, site plan, responsibility and budget for completing the project.</p> <p>Submit inventory data once completed.</p> <p>Submit a final report with project outcomes and documentation of expenses, such as receipts, invoices, time sheets, etc.</p>
Contract and payments	Cities would enter into a formal agreement with the county (see attachment 4 for a sample of the agreement). All costs will be incurred up front by the grantee and will be reimbursed no more frequently than monthly by the county upon submitting documentation regarding expenses.
Returning applicants	Eligible cities can receive a maximum of two step 1 level grants. The second grant will only be awarded if the city needs additional funding to finish a partial inventory or update previous data collected.

Step 2

Step two funding is intended for cities with a community tree inventory and an interest in expanding the capacity of their community tree efforts.

Eligible applicant criteria	Cities must meet both of the following conditions:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a tree inventory with at least all ash trees included, and • Have a Minnesota DNR certified tree inspector or an ISA-certified arborist under contract for the proposed grant project.
Eligible projects	<p>Eligible projects include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree inventory updates • Tree management plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hiring professional consultants for plan development ◦ Developing an emerald ash borer management plan ◦ Developing a tree preservation and maintenance plan • Tree plantings on public property. Plantings must be a minimum of 30 trees. Eligible projects include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Establishing community orchards ◦ Replacing ash trees (minimum 1:1 replacement for any ash tree removed). Ideally, trees should be replaced within 0.25 mi² to replace local tree canopy cover. ◦ Filling in canopy deficient areas • First year of tree maintenance (e.g., watering, mulching, staking) for trees planted using grant funds • Tree ordinance development or updates • Staff or volunteer trainings held in Minnesota • Establishing a community gravel-bed nursery • Community outreach and education
Ineligible projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantings on private property, including tree sales
Eligible expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs of contractor labor, services, supplies, and equipment • Tree species from the county's approved planting list (see attachment 3) • Planting supplies, such as water bags, grow tubes, bark protection, stakes, shovels, rakes, mulch, compost, top-soil, and rentals • Capital purchases of equipment up to \$5,000 in total that are necessary to complete the project (must be pre-approved by county staff) • Software purchases, such as ArcGIS or asset management software for tree inventory updates (must be pre-approved by county staff) • Technology needed for inventory updates (must be pre-approved by county staff) • Site preparation expenses including equipment rental • Gravel-bed construction materials, such as pea gravel, barriers, and bare root trees • Education and outreach materials • Cost of local training or certification, such as Forest Pest First Detector, Tree Inspector, Pesticide Applicator, etc. (must be pre-approved by county staff) • Systemic insecticide treatments (up to 20% of total grant request)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ash tree removals (up to 50% of total grant request) – all trees removed must be replaced at a 1:1 rate • Consultant time for plan development and design assistance
Ineligible expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects on private property • Tree planting projects where long-term land use is unknown, and trees may be removed after a short timeframe • Removals without replacement on public properties • Invasive plant removal (e.g., buckthorn, garlic mustard) • Projects that plant unapproved tree species/species not on the county's approved tree list (e.g., green ash, Amur maple) • Land clearing • Stump removal not for the purpose of creating planting space • Land or boundary surveys • Title search • Appraisal, sale, or exchange of property • Food items (e.g., for volunteers at tree-related events) • Capital purchases not approved by Hennepin County or necessary to complete the project • Purchase of non-tree plant material (e.g., perennials, shrubs, or annual plants) • Tree work performed by a non-ISA certified contractor • Purchase and planting of ball and burlap tree stock • Tree stock over 2" diameter at breast height
Amount of funding available	Minimum amount of \$10,000 up to a maximum amount of \$50,000
Matching funds	<p>A 25% match of the grant amount is required. For example, a \$50,000 grant would need a \$12,500 match.</p> <p>Examples of eligible match costs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional tree and stump removals when paired with new tree replacement • Additional systemic insecticide treatments for emerald ash borer • Staff time
Project timeline	12 months
Reporting requirements	Submit a work plan with key tasks, timeline, responsibility, and budget for completing
Contract and payments	Cities would enter into a formal agreement with the county (see attachment 4 for a sample of the agreement). All costs will be incurred up front by the grantee and will be reimbursed by the county no more frequently than monthly upon receipt of documentation of expenses.

1.3 Grant Application

When submitting an Application, Applicants must follow the specific format and content requirements below and in Attachment 1. Failure to do so will likely prolong the evaluation process and/or may be grounds for rejection of the Application.

Applicant shall describe, in detail, the proposed uses of the Grant funds for the project. Any other use of Grant funds is strictly prohibited. Applicant shall be solely responsible for securing all additional funds necessary for completion of the project.

Applicant agrees to only use the Grant funds for the uses indicated above. Use of Grant funds for any other purpose is strictly prohibited. If Applicant uses Grant funds for any other purpose, Applicant shall, upon County's written demand, repay all Grant funds awarded.

2 Evaluation and selection

2.1 Applicant evaluation and recommendation for selection

County will consider the Application to determine whether it meets County's requirements and is otherwise eligible for a Grant award. Submission of an Application shall neither obligate nor entitle an Applicant to enter into a contract with the County or to receive a Grant.

2.2 Evaluation of responsiveness

The County will consider all the material submitted by the Applicant to determine whether the Applicant's offer is in compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in this Solicitation. Applications that do not comply with the provisions in this Solicitation may be considered nonresponsive and may be rejected. Notwithstanding the foregoing, County expressly reserves the right to reject any or all Applications with or without cause.

Evaluation criteria shall include the following:

Project description and details

- Projects are well defined with clearly stated goals and objectives.
- Project locations are identified with detail and explain the local impact
- Detailed timeline of events with specific actions defined
- Long-term impacts and overall sustainability of the project/maintenance plan
- Current community tree canopy cover and need based, in part, on a comparison of the project location with tree planting priority areas as identified by Hennepin County
- Project location must be in Hennepin County

Project participants

- Demonstrate ability to manage projects and follow through with outlined objectives
- Partners meaningfully engaged to enhance overall project goals
- Engage volunteers or educate community on the benefits that trees provide

Budget

- Demonstrate match commitment

- Funds adequate to complete project
- Budget items are described, and details are provided on how they will be used

Evaluation

- Specific details on metrics that will be collected during the project
- Determine who will be collecting this information

See the application for how the criteria is weighted. A combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria is used in the project selection process.

The County reserves the right to determine whether any aspect of the Application satisfactorily meets the criteria, the right to seek clarification or additional information from any Applicant(s), and the right to waive any irregularities or informalities that the County deems is in its best interest.

2.3 Execution of Grant agreement

County may condition the Grant award upon Applicant's execution of a Grant agreement provided by County. As applicable, the Grant agreement shall define the legal relationship between County and Applicant.

3 General rules

3.1 Solicitation for Grant Applications and Grant overview

This Solicitation for Grant Applications is an invitation for Applicants to submit a Grant Application to the County. It is a means by which the County may facilitate the acquisition of information related to awarding the Grant and is **NOT A COMMITMENT OR OBLIGATION TO AWARD ANY AMOUNT.**

Nothing in this Application shall obligate County to (i) award any amount; (ii) award any subsequent grants; or (iii) pay or otherwise make any additional distributions.

3.2 Estimated timeline and extension of time

Applications due: Tuesday, March 24, 2024 by 3 p.m.

Anticipated Hennepin County board approval: July 2024

Project completion: within 12 months of contract execution

These dates are subject to revision or cancellation by the County in its sole and absolute discretion.

3.3 Application submission

Applications will be received in the [Hennepin County Supplier Portal](#). In order to submit an Application, you must first register with the Supplier Portal. For more information on how to register, please go to the [Supplier Portal Information Page](#). Applicants are strongly encouraged to make their submissions well in advance of the Application due date as the process may take some time to complete.

Failure to submit an Application on time may be grounds for rejection of the Application; however, the County reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to accept Applications after the Application due date.

3.4 Questions and Pre-application Assistance

Applicants are invited to contact the county for feedback on project ideas before applying. For more information visit www.hennepin.us/trees or trees@hennepin.us.

3.5 Addenda

The County reserves the right to modify this Solicitation at any time prior to the Application due date. An addendum will be posted in the Supplier Portal if the Solicitation is modified. Addenda may be viewed by clicking on the 'View Event Package' on the Event Details page. It is the responsibility of each prospective Applicant to assure receipt of all addenda.

The County will modify the Solicitation only by formal written addenda. Applications should be based on this Solicitation document and any formal written addenda. Applicants should not rely on oral statements, or site visits.

3.6 County's right to withdraw, cancel, suspend and/or modify the Solicitation

The County reserves the right to withdraw, cancel, suspend, and/or modify this Solicitation for any reason and at any time with no liability to any prospective Applicant for any costs or expenses incurred in connection with the Solicitation or otherwise.

3.7 Applicant's right to edit or cancel an Application

An Application may be edited or cancelled in the Supplier Portal prior to the Application due date. For instructions, view the Edit or Cancel a Response section of the [How to Respond to an Event Guide](#).

3.8 Applications will not be returned

Upon submission, Applications will not be returned.

3.9 Public disclosure of Application documents

This Solicitation and any data or information submitted to County in response are subject to applicable law, including but not limited to the provisions of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act Minnesota Statutes, chapter 13 ("MGDPA").

If the Applicant believes private/non-public data is included in its Application, Applicant shall clearly identify the data and provide the specific rationale in support of the asserted classification. Applicant must type in bold red letters the term "CONFIDENTIAL" on that specific part or page of the Application which

Applicant believes to be confidential. Classification of data as trade secret data will be determined pursuant to applicable law, and, accordingly, merely labeling data as “trade secret”, “confidential” or the like does not necessarily make the data protected under any applicable law.

The Applicant agrees, as a condition of submitting its Application, that the County will not be liable or accountable for any loss or damage which may result from a breach of confidentiality related to the Application.

3.10 Applicant’s costs

The County shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by Applicant in relation to this Solicitation. Applicant shall bear all costs of Application preparation, submission, and attendance at interviews, or any other activity associated with this Solicitation or otherwise.

3.11 Conflict of interest

The Applicant affirms that to the best of its knowledge the submission of its Application, or any resulting Grant award, does not present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Strictly for illustration purposes, a personal relationship with a County employee directly or indirectly involved in the Grant process may be a conflict of interest.

The Applicant agrees that should any actual or perceived conflict of interest become known, it will immediately notify the County and will advise whether it will or will not avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the conflict of interest.

The County may make reasonable efforts to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize a conflict of interest by an Applicant. To avoid a conflict of interest by an Applicant, the County may utilize methods including disqualifying an Applicant from eligibility for the Grant or cancelling the Grant if the conflict is discovered after the Grant has been issued. The County may, at its sole and absolute discretion, waive any conflict of interest.

4 Attachments

- 4.1** Attachment 1 – Application
- 4.2** Attachment 2 – Budget form
- 4.3** Attachment 3 – Hennepin County recommended tree species list
- 4.4** Attachment 4 – Sample contract agreement