

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA

Solicitation for Grant Applications

Healthy Tree Canopy Grants For Affordable Housing Providers

Closing date for all questions: Tuesday, March 18, at 3:00 P.M. (CST)

Virtual Pre-Proposal Conference: Wednesday, March 5 at 10am. (CST)

Proposal due date: Tuesday, March 25, at 3:00 P.M. (CST)



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

- Assist eligible recipients in planning, preparing for, and managing destructive invasive insects and diseases such as emerald ash borer or Asian long-horned beetle, establishing tree care activities such as planting and pruning, and increasing current tree diversity.
- 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.
- 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 new or existing affordable housing property and located in Hennepin County. Eligible Applicants include owners and managers of existing affordable multifamily housing, developers of new affordable multifamily housing, and affordable housing land trusts.

For the purposes of this grant, affordable housing is defined as rental housing with at least 20 percent of unit's income- and rent-restricted at or below 60 percent of area median income. This also includes organizations who manage owner occupied homes restricted to buyers with incomes below 80% of the area median income and land trusts with homes affordable to residents at or below 80 percent of area median income. Owners of individual single-family residential properties are not eligible applicants for this program.

Guidelines

Eligible applicant criteria

1. Developers, owners, or managers (with owner's approval) of multifamily rental property with at least 20% of the units meeting either of the following criteria:
 - The units are subject to a project-based Section 8 housing assistance payments (HAP) contract, or
 - The units are subject to 60% or less of area median income rent and income restrictions under the terms of financing provided by a unit of federal, state, or local government (as evidenced by a document recorded against the property)
2. Organizations who manage owner occupied homes restricted to buyers with incomes below 80% of the area median income and single-family land trusts with homes affordable to residents at or below 80% of area median income (as evidenced by a Ground Lease recorded against the property)

Applicants must also meet at least one of the following conditions to be eligible:

- Have ash trees on their property, or
- Have enough space to plant at least 10 trees, or
- Have trees on the property that may pose a hazard

Eligible projects

Ash tree removal and tree plantings on affordable housing properties.

Eligible expenses

- Contracted ash tree removals using an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)-certified arborist (1:1 replacement required)
- Tree installation contractor costs that are supervised by an ISA-certified arborist
- Tree species from county's approved planting list (attachment 3)
- First year of tree maintenance (e.g., watering, mulching, staking) for trees planted using grant funds
- Planting supplies, such as water bags, grow tubes, bark protection, stakes, shovels, rakes, mulch, compost, top-soil, and rentals
- Site preparation, including grubbing existing volunteer trees to create space to plant new trees
- Initial pruning of mature trees to improve tree structure and longevity

Ineligible expenses

- Tree removals without replacement
- Invasive plant removal (e.g., buckthorn, garlic mustard)
- Projects that plant unapproved tree species/species that are 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

- Purchase of non-tree plant material (e.g., perennial or annual plants)
- Tree work performed by a non-ISA certified contractor
- Purchase and planting of ball and burlap tree stock
- Insecticide treatments
- Tree stock over 2" diameter at breast height
- Staff time

Amount of funding available

Minimum amount of \$5,000 up to a maximum amount of \$20,000.

Matching funds

A 25% match of the granted amount is required. For example, a \$20,000 grant would need a \$5,000 match.

Eligible in-kind costs include:

- Additional tree and stump removals when paired with new tree replacement
- Initial systemic insecticide treatments for emerald ash borer
- Staff time

Project timeline

12 months

Reporting requirements

Submit a work plan with key tasks, timeline, site plan, responsibility, and budget for completing the project.

Submit a final report with project outcomes and documentation of expenses, such as receipts, invoices, time sheets, etc.

Contract and payments

Organizations 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.

Insurance requirements: Each project recipient must formally enter into a contract agreement with the county. The agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation of the project and required reports. The agreement is a legal, binding document. Project recipients are expected to keep accurate financial records of the project including proof and documentation of all expenses.

Hennepin County requires insurance coverage for most Healthy Tree Canopy grantees in the following amounts: general liability insurance coverage of \$2 million in general aggregate, \$2 million in products – completed operations aggregate, \$1.5 million in personal and advertising injury, \$1.5 million in combined bodily injury and property damage. Workers' compensation coverage is required by state law unless a certification of exclusion from workers' compensation requirements can be provided. Each occurrence, \$500,000 for bodily injury by accident – each accident, \$500,000 for bodily injury by disease – policy limit, and \$500,000 for bodily injury by disease – each employee. If applicants do not have the insurance coverage listed above, contact the program manager to discuss waiver options. You may submit your organization's "Certificate of Insurance" with your Application for review.

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

Virtual Pre-Proposal Conference Meeting: Wednesday, March 5 at 10am. (CST)

Last day for questions: Tuesday, March 18, by 3:00 P.M. (CST)

Applications due: Tuesday, March 25, by 3:00 P.M. (CST)

Anticipated Hennepin County board approval: July 2025

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 help 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 contact trees@hennpein.us.

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to attend a virtual informational meeting on:

Virtual Informational Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 5 at 10am**. Please [register here for the meeting](#). Attendance to the Virtual Information Meeting is not mandatory or required to apply to the solicitation.

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 Documents' 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

Under Minnesota law, applications are private or nonpublic until the proposals are opened on the proposal due date. Once the applications are opened, the name of the Applicant becomes public. All other data in the application is private/nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process. The evaluation process is completed when the County enters into a contract with an Applicant. At that time, all remaining data submitted by all Applicants is public with the exception of data classified as private/non-public trade secret data under Minn. Stat. § 13.37 of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Applicants must not submit trade secret material, as defined by Minn. Stat. § 13.37, as part of their application. The County does NOT consider cost or prices to be trade secret material, as defined by the statute. Applicants may present and discuss trade secret information during an interview or demonstration, if applicable.

The Applicant agrees, as a condition of submitting its Application, that the County will not, as between the parties, be liable or accountable for any loss or damage which may result from a breach of confidentiality related to the Application. The Applicant agrees to indemnify and hold the County, its officials, agents, and employees harmless from all claims arising out of, resulting from, or in any manner attributable to any violation of any provision of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, including legal fees and disbursements paid or incurred to enforce this provision. This indemnification survives the County's award of a contract. In submitting an application in response to this Solicitation, the Applicant agrees that this indemnification survives as long as the Application is in the County's possession. The County is required to keep all the basic documents related to its contracts, including applications, for a minimum of seven years.

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