

Division of Forestry, Community and Urban Forestry (CUF) Program
2025 Small Town Big Trees Grant Application Instructions

This grant program is made possible by funds awarded by the USDA Forest Service. This package contains the instructions and examples you will need to apply successfully.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU APPLY:

- Only communities who have a population of 10,000 or less are eligible for this grant.
- There is a **1:1 match requirement** for this grant opportunity.
- All funds will be dispensed on a reimbursable basis.
- All application materials can be found and submitted on the State Budget Agency (SBA) website. This grant opportunity will not be available for application until **September 15th**. Link is here: <https://www.in.gov/sba/grants/state-agency-grant-opportunities/>
- Application deadline is **October 23rd, 2025**.
- Awards will be announced via email by **November 17th, 2025**. Activities funded by these grants will begin upon notification of award and conclude by **May 1, 2027**.
- These application materials comprise a legal record of the conditions of the grant you're applying for. Keep a copy for reference and guidance.

Questions? Contact us at:

IDNR Division of Forestry CUF
Phone: 317-234-4386
E-mail: JRoos@dnr.IN.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Grant Program

Our quality of life is enhanced by effective state programs that foster cooperative efforts to protect, expand, and improve community trees, forests, and related natural resources. To that end, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Division of Forestry Community & Urban Forestry Program (CUF), and the United States Forest Service (USFS) sponsor this grant program.

This grant seeks to invest in the long-term growth and development of community forestry programs in Indiana to support:

- Protection of existing community & urban tree canopy cover
- Expansion of community & urban tree canopy cover
- Improvement of community & urban forestry tree canopy resilience to pests, storm events and changes in climate through best management and maintenance practices

Project types are listed below. **The list of project types is not all inclusive.** Please contact our office for questions about project types that are not listed in this document. Your requests for grant funds must be for a minimum of **\$500** to a maximum of **\$5,000**. The overall level of funds available is **\$410,493**.

- **Education/Training**
 - The community may use this grant to cover the costs of educating and training the Project Coordinator, tree advisory groups, municipal staff, and local officials in the proper care of trees.
- **Ordinance/Tree Protection Policies Development, Implementation or Update**
 - Communities may use funds to work with a consultant on developing, implementing or updating their tree ordinance/tree protection policies.
- **Establishment of a not-for-profit organization**
 - Communities may use funds to establish a not-for-profit organization that will benefit their local/regional urban tree canopy.
- **Tree Planting & Community Engagement**
 - Any tree planting project **MUST** include community engagement. If you already have a community engagement plan/program, please include it in your application.
 - Tree plantings must take place on public property. **100% of the project trees must be species native to Indiana (exceptions can be made for establishments of urban food forest). Additionally, this grant cannot be used for the purchase of trees in the Acer genus (maples). Exceptions will be made if a current inventory and management plan demonstrates your Acer population is less than 5% of the overall tree community.** All trees will be planted to the standards in Addendum A to receive reimbursement. All tree planting projects **MUST** include a maintenance plan with the grant application. If you do not indicate in your application how you will care for and maintain the newly planted trees your application will be ineligible, and you will not be considered for funding. See Addendum A: Tree Planting Project Requirements for additional information.
- **Tree Inventory or Urban Tree Canopy Assessment**
 - The community may use this grant for the development, implementation, and/or update of a community tree inventory or urban tree canopy assessment. The inventory will

conform to the minimum standards outlined in Addendum B.

- **Management/Response Plan**

- Communities may use funds for the creation or update of a Management/Response Plan.
- New or updated plans will be completed by qualified staff and/or contractors. Qualified staff and contractors are considered to be ISA Certified. If applicant is updating their management plan, their current plan must be at least 5 years old. Your project will not be reimbursed if these requirements are not met.
- Management plans that encompass managed/maintained areas must have an accompanying updated (5 years or less) tree inventory. **If there is no inventory or updated inventory, then pairing funding for an inventory and management plan is required.** For more information on Management/Response Plans please see our Frequently Ask Questions sheet.

Eligibility Requirements

***Please carefully review all eligibility requirements. If you have questions regarding your eligibility, please review our Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ) document or you may contact our office. ***

Only communities with a population of 10,000 or less are eligible for this grant.

Applicants must be a:

- A. **Municipality:** A municipality is a city, town, township, county, school corporation, library district, local housing authority, fire protection district, public transportation corporation, local building authority, local hospital authority or corporation, local airport authority, special service district, or other separate local government entities that may sue or be sued. It does not include special taxing districts.
- B. **Non-profit 501(c)3:** Organization as defined under IC 23-7-1.1. Non-profit organizations must include documentation of their not-for-profit status.

Match

“Match” is an important part of your budget since grant funds must at least be equally matched (1:1) by the Subgrantee. Match can be all cash, all in-kind donations, or a mix of both. While you are not required to exceed the 1:1 match we do recommend that subgrantee’s provide as much “over-match” as possible. Over-match is any amount of matching funds that exceed the 1:1 ratio. As an example, if the amount of grant funds you will be receiving is \$25,000 you would be required to match that with at least \$25,000. Any amount of funds that exceed the \$25,000 match would be considered “over-match”.

Reasons we recommend you provide over-match is because:

- The more match you provide the greater the scope of your project.
- Grant applicants that include over-match in their budgets will receive bonus points during the grant scoring process. **See scoring rubric below for more information.**
- Any over-match that is provided also helps to provide funding to the CUF program ensuring grant programs like this are offered in the future.

Your application must include a detailed budget that details project costs and the sources of the project

funding. The proposed match must be directly related to the project and must occur during the grant period. Since this is a federally funded grant, you can use state or local funds for your match, but you **cannot use other federal funding sources for match.**

Here is a list of commonly used match sources and our guidelines for using them:

- **Budget Line Items:** Funds appropriated in your organization's budget for your project.
- **Training Registration Fees:** Funds paid for staff and/or volunteers to attend educational events on skills related to your project activities. Note: registration fees ONLY, you cannot claim attendee time at education events.
- **Private Cash Donations:** Donations of cash must be used on project expenses with full documentation of both source and expenditures. An example might be a civic organization underwriting the purchase of additional trees. The Project Coordinator will keep records that show a clear movement of funds from donation to purchase with copies of donation checks, their deposit in the organization's bank, purchase receipts or invoices, and proof of payments to the nursery.
- **Donated Materials:** Their values should be documented with a receipt or a quote on company letterhead from a local vendor who supplies those materials.
- **Donated Services:** Professional services like tree removal, stump grinding to gain planting space, tree planting, the use of equipment to record data, civil engineering, landscape architecture, etc. will be priced by the donating professionals and documented on their company letterhead, invoices, or receipts.
- **Equipment Usage:** To determine the value if it is not provided, obtain a scale of hourly rental rates on letterhead from a local rental company that rents similar equipment. Municipal equipment is valued at the rate used internally by the donating department or agency. Vehicles and equipment previously purchased with federal money **CANNOT** be used as part of the match.
- **Discounts:** Consultant fee discounts (i.e., a 5-year database subscription for the cost of 1), nursery discounts, etc. will be recorded on receipts and invoices documenting the project.
- **Mileage:** Mileage logs must be kept for all vehicles used as part of the match and valued at the business mileage rate accepted by the IRS. The CUF office will provide the most current value since the State of Indiana business mileage rate may change over the duration of your grant. Find current mileage rates at: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-issues-standard-mileage-rates-for-2020>. Statute sets the volunteer mileage rate at 14 cents per mile.

One of your largest sources of match, however, is in-kind labor, both volunteer and professional. Please use the following guidelines in estimating the match in your proposed budget:

- **Staff Time:** When your organization's employees work on the project (as the Project Coordinator, for example), their in-kind labor should be calculated at the employee's wage rate x hours.
- **Administrative:** Project Coordinators must take particular care to document their administrative costs separately from other project activities since the value of those hours used as match cannot exceed 10% of the total grant amount. Common administrative activities include grant reporting,

purchasing, compiling volunteer hours, any clerical functions, etc.

- **Skilled Labor:** Like project administrative staff, this should be valued at the donor's established wage rate, or the current average wage rate for that trade. To qualify as skilled labor the donor must practice or have been employed in that specific profession or trade (bobcat operator, arborist, etc.). All donated labor used on a project must be documented as the work is done.
- **Fringe:** The value of benefits paid to the employee may also be included in calculating match if it is known (usually determined by the employer as a percentage of salary).
- **Volunteer Labor (Adult):**
 - Calculate the labor of adults who serve on urban forestry non-profits, tree boards, or commissions at \$28.00 per hour.
 - Volunteers who serve or offer advice in a professional capacity have their labor calculated at the wage rate which they normally receive in their professions.
 - Unskilled labor donated by the public should be valued at the wage rate for that job. A beginning volunteer wage rate for jobs for adults involved in the unskilled aspects of urban forestry is: \$15.51 per hour (Bureau of Labor Statistics/forestry work).
- **Volunteer Labor (Youth):**
 - Ages 13-18: \$7.25 per hour (Indiana minimum wage rate).
 - Ages 7-12: \$4.00 per hour.

National & State Grant Guidelines

When your community or organization is awarded a grant through DNR, it then becomes a Subgrantee of the USFS and the State of Indiana. Both entities require that you fulfill certain conditions, benchmarks, and/or deliverables throughout the course of your grant. Failure to do so will result in withholding of grant reimbursements.

Subgrantees will comply with USFS Urban Community Forestry Program (UCF) direction, appropriate Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars (2 CFR Part 200 subparts A through F; 2 CFR 200.330 through .332), and applicable Federal and State regulations.

A municipality must also show that it has or is attempting to move toward accomplishing the following national performance measures in its CUFA grant proposal:

1. **Professional Staff:** Individuals who have one or more of the following credentials, and who the community directly employs or retains through a written agreement to advise and/or assist in the comprehensive development or management of their urban and community forestry program (not just a project or for one aspect like tree removal):
 - A. Degree in urban forestry or a closely related field (e.g., forestry, horticulture, arboriculture, etc.); or
 - B. International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist, American Society of Consulting

Arborists Registered Arborist, Society of American Foresters Certified Forester, or equivalent State or professional credential; and/or

- C. At least 3 years of experience practicing arboriculture or urban forestry according to industry standards and urban forestry best management practices.
- 2. **Advocacy/Advisory Organization:** The community has one or more local citizens groups that serve as catalysts for active local urban forest resource management within the community.
 - 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.
- 3. **Ordinance:** Local, community-wide laws that identify who has the responsibility for oversight of urban and community forestry activities and that direct the use of best management practices for establishment, conservation, protection, and/or maintenance of urban and community trees and forests. At a minimum, ordinance clauses must address public trees.
- 4. **Management Plan** A detailed document or set of documents that identify and prioritize action items based on professional-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 **current and actively used within the past five years** by the community to guide management decisions and/or resource allocation and updated as needed to incorporate new information.

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.

Management plans for forested tracts may be counted if they meet the above and the forest meets all the following criteria:

- A. located in or near a town/municipal/community population center, business district, or residential area,
- B. primarily managed for benefits of the residents and to keep the land forested, and
- C. owned by the local government (i.e., in public ownership).

Monitoring and Accountability

Grant recipients shall document and report all expenditures and accomplishments. Projects will be reviewed by IDNR personnel upon completion. The purpose of the review is to verify financial expenditures and ensure that it is properly documented. The following guidelines will assist you in correctly planning your project costs.

1. **Project Applicants and Coordinators MUST be able to communicate online in a timely manner with CUF staff via email at minimum.** It is advised that you, or someone on your grant management team, secure access to and know how to use a personal computer or tablet with standard office software programs (Microsoft Excel and Word, Adobe PDF Reader, a web browser like Chrome), a scanner, and a printer.
2. All project expenditures and payments must occur during the project period (award notification date through 5/1/2027).
3. For each budget item expense over \$3,000, Subgrantees must solicit a minimum of three quotes/bids before selecting a contractor and MUST submit that information to CUF for approval prior to selection. You'll then document the quotes/bids in writing and list the contractor, address, phone number, and the dollar amount. Contractors declining to submit a bid must provide that information to you in writing so that you can document a good-will effort to solicit bids. If the lowest quote/bid is not chosen (which is allowable), you must explain why when submitting to CUF.
4. Reimbursement requests and final expenditures must conform to those proposed in your application. Any budget changes must receive written approval from CUF staff before funds are spent.
5. Save copies of invoices, receipts, credit card statements, purchase orders, claim vouchers, and/or cancelled checks (front and back) to document all expenditures of "grant money."
6. Document all grant labor activities as the work is done using the spreadsheets, forms, and reports provided by the CUF office.
7. The following uses of grant money or donations are **INELIGIBLE** as grant expenditures:
 - C. Food
 - D. Shrubs or other ornamental plants
 - E. T-shirts or promotional prizes
 - F. Vehicles
 - G. Labor from federally funded employees
 - H. Tools or equipment that exceed \$500 each in value and are not likely to be used up during your project (this rule does not apply to software developed specifically for urban forestry purposes).
8. All **tree plantings** will be implemented in accordance with the guidelines found in *Addendum A* and inspected by CUF staff for compliance with those guidelines.
9. All **tree inventories** must be compiled, presented, and published in accordance with the guidelines found in *Addendum B*.
10. All **management plans and urban tree canopy assessments** must be compiled, presented, and published in accordance with the guidelines found in *Addendum C*.
11. From time to time, you may need to adjust the terms of your grant project. **You must have all changes approved in writing by the CUF Director in advance of any action.**

Grant Review, Evaluation, and Award

The process of grant application review, scoring and awarding can be found below.

1. Once you submit your grant application it will be reviewed by CUF staff for eligibility.
2. Applications that are eligible for funding will then be passed on to the scoring committee. This committee is an independent scoring committee comprised of urban forestry professionals that does not include CUF staff. Members of this scoring committee are, however, selected by CUF staff. Great detail is put into developing this committee so that there is no bias in the scoring process.
3. All eligible grant applications will then be scored by at least 3 committee members using the scoring rubric found below. Besides providing scores for each application the committee will also state “Yes” or “No” as to if an application should receive funding or not. An application must receive majority “Yes” votes in order for it to receive funding.
4. After all the scores have been submitted by the committee the scores and votes will then be reviewed by CUF staff. The applications, in order from highest to lowest score, will be awarded funding. Final grant budgets may need to be adjusted. CUF staff will work with grant applicants on editing any budgets, timelines, and project scopes prior to award notification.
5. CUF staff will then notify grant applicants if their application was awarded funding or not. Applicants will be notified by **November 17th**, as to the status of their applications.

Scoring Guide:

Criteria	Good	Average	Poor
Application	<u>7-10 Points</u> Applicant includes all required materials. Applicant designates different people in the roles of Applicant and Project Coordinator. Materials clearly show who will be responsible for what. Detailed contact information. All contacts have email addresses. Application dollar amounts match the separate budget.	<u>4-6 Points</u> Applicant includes all required materials. Same person listed as Applicant and Project Coordinator. One email address listed.	<u>0-3 Points</u> Same person listed as Applicant and Project Coordinator. No responsibilities outlined. Missing contact information. No email addresses listed. Missing dollar amounts or do not match budget.
Narrative Questions	<u>30-40 Points</u> Great detail in terms of personnel, responsibilities, project activities and outcomes. Inspires confidence that the Applicant & Project Coordinator will bring this project to a successful conclusion. Strong project activities with clearly articulated results. All outcomes and results are clearly defined, described, and justified.	<u>11-29 Points</u> List the personnel, responsibilities, project activities and outcomes. Applicant & Project Coordinator have adequate knowledge and experience. Outcomes and results make sense in the overall context of the project.	<u>0-10 Points</u> Lack of detail for personnel, responsibilities, project activities and outcomes. Outcomes and results are poorly described with a weak association to the project goals. Outcomes and results do not add to the overall project and have no clear relevance.
Statement of Need	<u>16-20 Points</u> Specific description of meaningful commitment to engaging with and supporting the community. Clearly describes evidence/data of how the project will benefit this	<u>10-15 Points</u> Describes how the community will be supported and engaged. Describes how the project will benefit the community, generally. Describes the areas included in	<u>0-9 Points</u> Does not describe how the community will be supported or engaged. Does not describe how the project will benefit the

	specific community at this time. This can include extenuating local circumstances like ongoing natural disaster recovery or relevant local use patterns and priorities. Clearly describes the areas included in the project.	the project.	community. Does not describe the areas included in the project.
Budget & Timeline	<u>16-20 Points</u> All budget items are clearly described, justified and are allowable. Math is correct. Budget figures match what is shown on the application form and the spreadsheet. Timeline fits within parameters of the grant. Timeline items are realistic.	<u>10-15 Points</u> All budget items are justified and allowable. Math is correct. Budget figures match what is shown on the application form and the spreadsheet. Timeline fits within parameters of the grant. Timeline items are realistic.	<u>0-9 Points</u> Budget lists items that are not justified or allowable. Math is not correct. Costs are too high with no justification. Timeline has missing items. Timeline exceeds grant deadline. Unrealistic expectations on timeline.
Public Comment Forms	<u>7-10 Points</u> Applicant exceeds the minimum amount of Public Comment Forms. Comment Forms come from a wide range of local community interests.	<u>4-6 Points</u> Applicant meets the minimum amount of Public Comment Forms.	<u>0-3 Points</u> Applicant did not meet the minimum amount of Public Comment Forms. Applicant submitted duplicated or prepared responses.
Partnerships/Other Considerations	<u>7-10 Points</u> Key partnerships with jurisdiction in the project area are included with clear indication of roles and involvement. All partnerships are listed, and their roles are clearly defined.	<u>4-6 Points</u> All partnerships are listed, including those with jurisdiction in the project area.	<u>0-3 Points</u> Partnerships were not listed and if they were, their roles were not listed.
BONUS POINTS*	<u>30 Points</u> Applicant over-match is at least 50% of the grant funds.	<u>20 Points</u> Applicant over-match is 25-49% of the grant funds.	<u>10 Points</u> Applicant over-match is 10-24% of the grant funds.

*Applications will **NOT** be penalized for not including over-match in their budget. Applicants can only receive a maximum of 30 bonus points.

- **Example of how to calculate over-match: If the amount of grant funds you will be receiving is \$25,000 and your overall match is \$50,000 then that would make your over-match \$25,000 or 100% of your grant funds.**

Grant Period

The official start date of the grant project will be the date you are informed of your award via email. **Your project must be completed by 5/1/27.** Expenses incurred prior to the start date or after the deadline for completion are not eligible for inclusion in the project and will not be reimbursed with grant funds.

Grant Payments

Grant money will be received by the Subgrantee **as reimbursements ONLY**. This means that *the*

Subgrantee must make expenditures and then submit proof of payment for reimbursement as outlined in the 'Monitoring and Accountability' section above. Reimbursement requests may be made on a periodic basis to the CUF office if the reimbursement request is at least \$500. The first request for reimbursement payment may not be submitted until the Subgrantee and all parties have signed the state Grant Agreement. All payments will be made via bank transfer.

Grant Application Checklist

Follow the steps below to complete your grant application.

- * **Read the Entire Grant Application Packet:** Review the eligibility requirements and make sure the focus areas you are applying for are available to you. Make sure your timeline and workplan fit within the timeframe of the grant. Double check your budget. Be sure you have reviewed all appropriate addendums.

What to include in your application. If you are missing any of the below forms from your application, your application will be considered not eligible:

1. **Application:** The application portal will be open starting September 15th. Starting on that date you will be able to apply for this grant on the State Budget Agency (SBA) website found here: <https://www.in.gov/sba/grants/state-agency-grant-opportunities/>. You will submit all documents through the Euna Grants Portal found on the SBA website by clicking on the apply button within the grant announcement. Instructions on how to use the Euna Grants Portal can be found here: <https://www.in.gov/sba/grants/resources-for-subrecipients/>. We no longer will be accepting grant applications submitted to our email inbox. All applications and documents must be submitted through this portal.
2. **Narrative:** You must answer **EVERY** narrative question. Each narrative point for your desired project must be discussed in this section. If a question is not applicable, then answer N/A. But make sure to answer **ALL** questions that apply to your project! You may also include maps, photographs, graphics, etc. as appendices. Any application that does not address all questions will be considered **not eligible**.
3. **Budget:** Prepare a detailed itemized budget that describes your anticipated grant expenditures for each part of the project. Reviewers will deduct points for budgets with inaccurate arithmetic or overly broad budget items. If needed, please include a Budget Explanation for information not addressed in the project narrative: include any rate or price estimate explanations necessary to understand your budget clearly. **Administrative costs may not be more than 10% of your total budget.**
4. **Timeline:** Provide a detailed project timeline including project execution items, accomplishment reporting, and a project end date. All project work must be completed by **5/1/2027**. Any application with a timeline end date after the project close date will NOT be considered. The timeline should be included as a separate document and labeled.

5. **Work Plan & Map:** This item is **required** if your application includes tree plantings. We recommend that the work plan should include general area of proposed plantings, proposed species, proposed size of tree, and maintenance plan. Exact planting details can be determined after funds have been awarded and 811 has located utilities. After a planting has taken place, we will then require a work summary that includes exact planting details.
6. **Public Comment Forms:** Include a minimum of six (6) Public Comment forms **55862 fill-in.pdf** from:
 - A. Three from agencies/organizations (local, state, and county governments, not-for-profit organizations, and universities/colleges).
 - B. Three from individuals or partners (corporate entities, local business, community residents/private landowners, and nongovernmental organizations) who will benefit from your project.
 - C. **Save and submit in PDF.**
7. **Not-for-Profit Documentation:** Not-for-profit applicants must include proof of 501(c)3 status. **Save and submit in PDF or JPG.**
8. **Proof of Bidder Registration:** All Project Applicants must register as Bidders on the State of Indiana Supplier Portal at <https://www.in.gov/idoa/2464.htm>. Doing so sets up a formal relationship between your organization as Subgrantee and the state government to enable the two of us to fulfill contracts and financial transactions. **We require proof of Bidder registration at the time of application.** Include a copy of your Bidder registration confirmation that includes a Bidder ID number. **Save and submit in PDF or JPG.**
9. **Automated Direct Deposit Authorization:** Even if your organization already has direct deposit with the State, every new grant requires a confirmation of that financial information with a freshly completed agreement **form 47551. Save and submit in PDF.**
10. **W9:** Every Direct Deposit Authorization form must be accompanied by an IRS W-9 form, downloaded at <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-w-9>. **Save and submit in PDF.**
11. **Subrecipient Report:** This report is used to report basic information about your organization to the state of Indiana and US Forest Service. This form must be completed and submitted with your grant application.

Submitting Your Grant Application

Starting **September 15th** and ending on **October 23rd** you will submit all documents through the Euna Grants Portal found on the SBA website by clicking on the apply button within the grant announcement. All available grant opportunities through the state can be found here:

https://www.in.gov/sba/grants/resources-for-subrecipients/#tab-717686-3-Grant_Opportunities

Instructions on how to use the Euna Grants Portal can be found here:

<https://www.in.gov/sba/grants/resources-for-subrecipients/>

Deadline to submit your application is **October 23rd 2025.**