Protect Community Forests by Managing Ash for EAB Grants Program

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DNR Urban & Community Forestry Assistance

- We provide grants to local units of government (LUGs) for community forest management

- Eligible activities depend on funding

  - Inventories, EAB Management Plans, Tree Removals, Tree Plantings, Chemical Treatment

  - Public Land

- Grants are competitive, which means that applications are evaluated according to set criteria

Protect Community Forests by Managing Ash for EAB Grants

Grant Overview

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources welcomes applications from local units of government within Minnesota to assist communities in managing ash for emerald ash borer (EAB) on public land, and improve community forests by planting a diversity of trees and involving community members. The DNR has $2.4 million available to fund projects managing EAB through community forestry activities on public lands.

No minimum dollar amount exists. The maximum amount that will be funded is $150,000. No matching funds are required.

All local units of government within Minnesota are eligible. This includes cities, counties, regional authorities, joint powers boards, towns, Tribal nations, and parks and recreation boards in cities of the first class.

Priority will be given to:

- Communities who have staff, who plan to certify their staff during the grant period, or who will contract with companies with staff who have professional tree care credentials.
- Projects removing and replacing ash trees that pose significant public safety concerns.
- Projects that benefit underserved populations and areas of concern for environmental justice (communities with higher populations of low-income residents, or people of color, including tribal communities, or both).

Eligible Project Expenses

Eligible expenses are those incurred through project activities directly related and necessary to produce the outcomes described in the grant application. Grant funds can be used for:

- Professional contracts for assistance, resident education and engagement, or project implementation by individuals or organizations not a part of the LUG (including public tree inventories, EAB management plans, tree removal and replanting, chemical treatment of ash trees with injectable non-neonicotinoid insecticide, and tree planting)
- Site prep and planting, including mulch, watering bags, staking materials, tree wrap/guards
- Purchase of chemicals for injectable non-neonicotinoid insecticide treatment for ash trees
- Equipment purchases less than $5,000 used to complete the project
- Equipment rental
- Gravel bed construction
- Purchase of trees for diversity

Funds can be used to treat ash trees if:

- Treated with a non-neonicotinoid injectable insecticide (emamectin benzoate)

- Trees are within 10 miles of a known EAB infestation

Grant funds can be used to purchase chemicals, or to hire a contractor for chemical treatments. If budgeting to treat trees, please list your cost per DBH in the 'cost per item' section of the budget
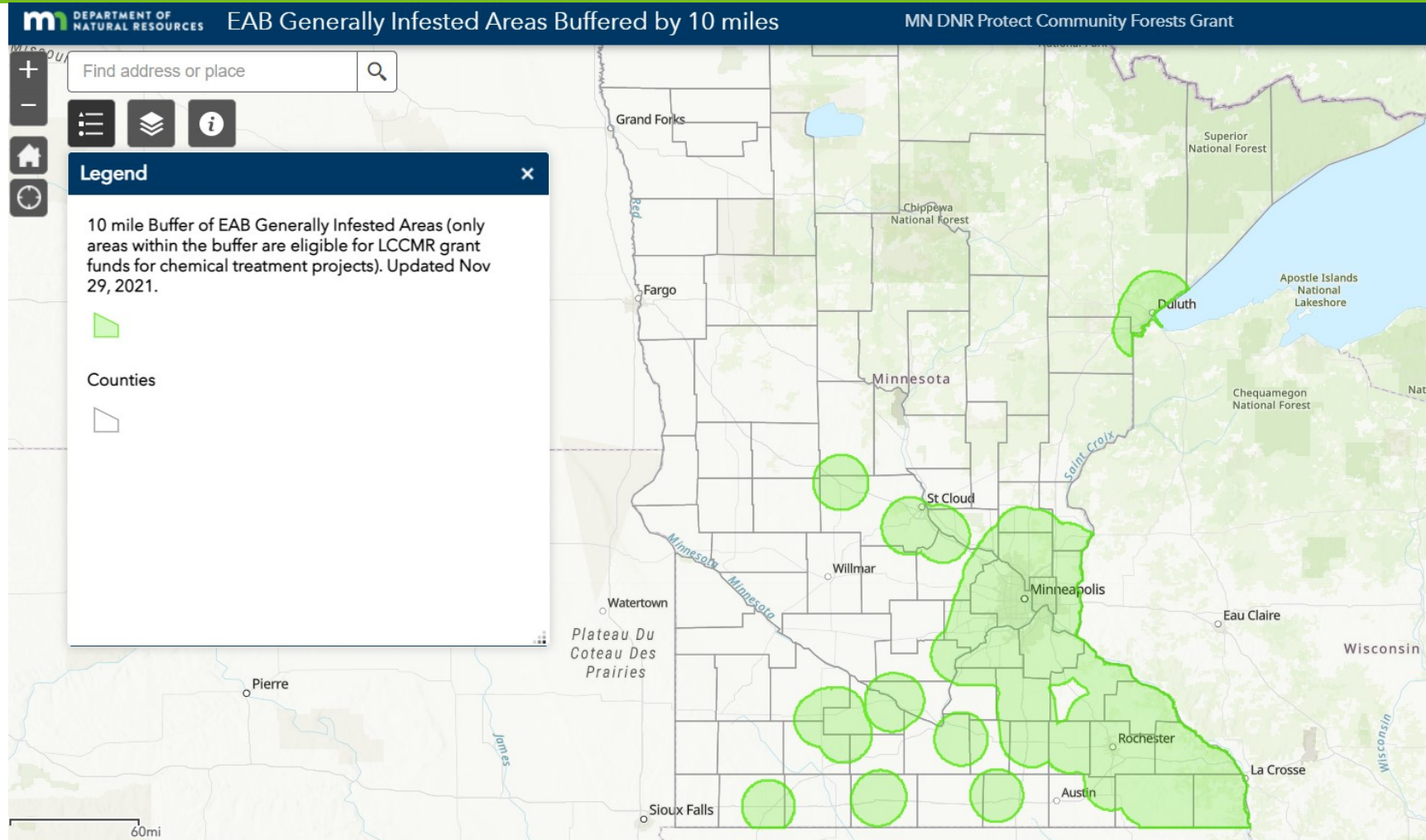
Eligible project expenses

Eligible project expenses are those incurred through project activities that are directly related and necessary to produce the outcomes described in the project application. Grant funds can be used for, but will not be limited to:

- Professional contracts for technical assistance, resident education and engagement, project implementation by individuals or organizations not a part of the local government unit (including public tree inventories, EAB management plan, tree removal and replanting, chemical treatment of ash trees with injectable non-neonicotinoid insecticide, and tree planting)
- Site preparation and planting, including mulch, watering bags, staking materials, and tree wrap or guards
- Purchase of chemicals for injectable non-neonicotinoid insecticide treatment (such as emamectin benzoate) for ash trees
  - Treatment of ash trees with non-neonicotinoid insecticide (such as emamectin benzoate) is an eligible expense for this grant. However, your community must be within a 10-mile buffer of generally infested areas. Refer to map showing the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Generally Infested areas buffered by 10 miles.
- Equipment purchases less than $5,000 that are used to complete the project
- Equipment rental
- Gravel bed construction
- Purchase of trees for diversity

More on Chemical Treatment

mndnr.gov/communityforestry

Resident education and engagement – *you will not have to budget (pay) for technical assistance through either of the following programs; if applying for assistance with tree plantings, you **will** need to purchase the trees for planting.*

Operational Assistance through **Tree Trust**, working in conjunction with **Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMN&IA)**: Tree Trust is uniquely suited to assist communities with the design, planning and management of community volunteer tree plantings. Tree Trust, with additional support from CCMN&IA, is able to supply the tools, technical assistance and volunteer support necessary to engage and empower your community's volunteers in creating a greener future.

More on Resident Education and Engagement (cont'd)

Educational Assistance through the **U of M's Tree Steward volunteer program**. This education can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Properly planting trees and leading others at planting events
- Properly pruning young trees to improve the overall health and structure
- Pruning suckers and sprouts from young and mature trees to ensure safety and proper sightlines for the public
- Watering devices available for use and the benefits of utilizing watering devices for young and newly planted trees
- Installation of watering devices on public trees
- Identification of common tree diseases and pests
- How to identify trees of concern
- How to report trees of concern to your community so action can be taken

Ineligible Project Expenses

Ineligible project expenses include:

- Costs incurred prior to the start date on the fully executed grant agreement
- Staff time for local government unit employees
- Purchase of trees listed on the <u>Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants</u> list, including Amur cork tree, Amur maple, autumn olive, black locust, buckthorn, Norway maple, Russian olive, Siberian elm, and tree of heaven
- Purchase of B&B trees, containerized trees larger than #20, and bareroot trees greater than 2" caliper diameter
- Purchase of tree species that already make up 10% or more of the community's public trees, or whose family makes up 20% or more of the public trees
- Purchase of plants such as shrubs, living ground covers, sod, grass seed, and flowers
- Purchase of land or easements
- Major soil and grade changes or construction
- Equipment purchases equal to or exceeding $5,000
- Purchase of meals or snacks for volunteers
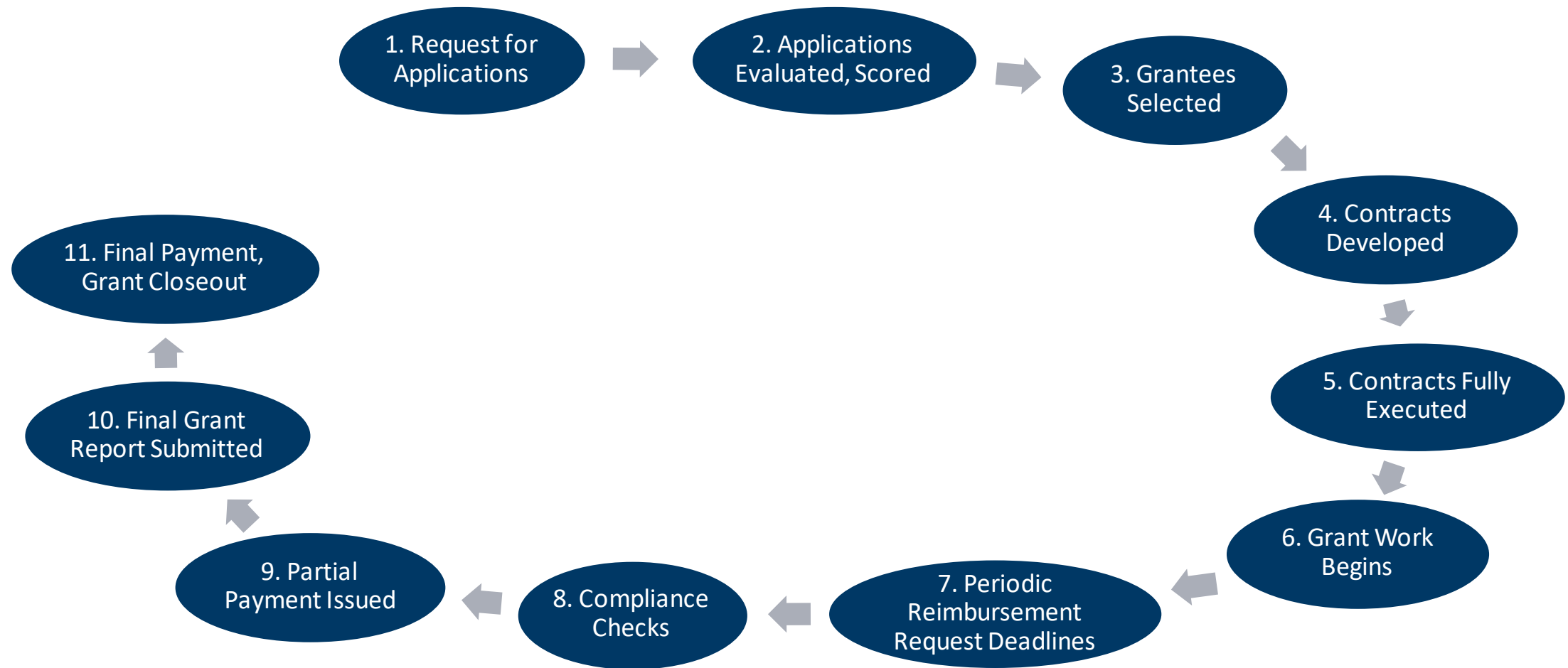- Experimental practices not approved by DNR

Review Process and Timeline

A UCF Grants Steering Committee, made up of DNR Forestry staff, MDA staff, and select stakeholders, will recommend projects and award amounts. The steering committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. DNR will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for final award decisions. *The award decisions of DNR are final and not subject to appeal.*

RFA posted on the DNR website..November 29, 2021
Application Questions due .... January 12, 2022
Applications due... January 24, 2022
Application Grant Review Process...three weeks
Project Selection; Grant Agreement Negotiations Begin ....February 14, 2022
Work Plans Approved, Contracts Executed, Grant Work Begins..... May 31, 2022

Grant Life Cycle

1. Request for Applications

➡️

2. Applications Evaluated, Scored

➡️

3. Grantees Selected

4. Contracts Developed

5. Contracts Fully Executed

6. Grant Work Begins

7. Periodic Reimbursement Request Deadlines

8. Compliance Checks

9. Partial Payment Issued

10. Final Grant Report Submitted

11. Final Payment, Grant Closeout

All funds will be awarded on a reimbursement basis. Following reimbursement request submissions, grants funds will be reimbursed up to 90%, with the final 10% retained until the project is completed. Requests and reports must be received by:

1. December 15, 2022
2. June 15, 2023
3. December 15, 2023
4. June 15, 2024
5. December 15, 2024
6. June 30, 2025

Project Completion

All project work must be completed, and the final request for reimbursement (along with final reports) must be submitted by June 30, 2025.

The steering committee will be reviewing each eligible application on a 100-point scale. Applicants are encouraged to score their own applications using the evaluation score sheet before submitting the application. Applications to the Protect Community Forests by Managing Ash for EAB Grants will be evaluated and ranked according to the following criteria and points:

1. **Project Overview and Need (25 points)**
   - Application is clear and complete
   - Community has a readiness to take on a project of the proposed scope and size
   - Project focuses on significant public safety concerns

2. **Project Timeline (20 points)**

    - Timeline provides specific dates for all activities
    - Timeline is easy to read and comprehend
    - Timeline follows best management practice of not removing ash trees when EAB are actively flying (no ash removals May-September)

3. **Project Budget and Budget Explanation (15 points)**

    - Budget explanation provides specific dollar amounts for anticipated use
    - Budget totals equal amount requested
    - Financially realistic and cost effective
    - Project seeks to replant more trees than removed

4. Project Impacts on Priority Populations (20 points)

- Planning and collaboration clearly serves and includes areas of concern for environmental justice (communities with higher populations of low-income residents, people of color, including tribal communities, or both)

- Applicant demonstrates actionable items for these communities (examples include program focal areas, outreach offered in multiple languages, added inclusion); impacts on diverse populations are clear and tangible

5. Communications (10 points)

- Communication strategies directly related to project accomplishments, activities, or both, and multiple forms of communication are listed with potential to reach the public

- EAB-related messaging included

6. **Key Personnel (10 points)**

   - All certifications and education degrees are listed for staff or contractors
   - A high scoring community will have staff or contractors with a degree in a related field, or a combination/multiple staff with ISA Certified Arborist, TCIA accreditation, or both

- The care and attention you (LUG) put into your application gives it the best chance of scoring highly, and receiving funding, so:

  - Spell check

  - Ask a coworker to review / edit

  - Brush up on match funding

  - Do the math twice (and then again)

  - ASK! If there is something confusing or unclear, please ask – I am here to help

Effective Grant Writing: Application Quality

- Presenting a polished and effective application

  - Why spelling and grammar matter

  - Why outside eyes are helpful

  - Recognize criteria

  - Importance of technical terms?

- Step away from your application, then re-read it after a few days away. This fresh look will allow you to evaluate your writing, and read it as you intend it to be read by others.

Effective Grant Writing: Understanding Match Funding

- What is match funding?

  Some financial assistance requires recipients to demonstrate a contribution to total project costs. These are match funds. If not required, providing match funds is generally viewed as advantageous.

- Match funds, once part of a project, must be reported on

- Match fund limitations?

Effective Grant Writing: Understanding Match Funding

Kinds of Match Funding

- In-Kind Contributions

- Cash Contributions

Effective Grant Writing: Calculating Match

- A dollar-for-dollar match (1:1, or 50/50) is easily understood

- Use the following formulas to calculate required match funding:

$$Total\ Project\ Cost = \frac{Grant\ Funded\ \$}{Grant\ Funded\ \%}$$

$$Required\ Match = Total\ Project\ Cost - Grant\ Funded\ \$$$

Effective Grant Writing: Calculating Match Example

- How much match is required if a $60,000 grant has a 25% match requirement?

$$Total\ Project\ Cost = \frac{\$60,000}{75\%} = \$80,000$$

$$Required\ Match = \$80,000 - \$60,000 = \$20,000$$

Effective Grant Writing: Proper Budgeting

Avoid Common Mistakes!

- Make sure to calculate required match correctly – remember that a match percentage is a percentage of the total project cost, not of the amount to be granted.

- Make sure your match funds are added to your grant fund request, not considered a part of it – match funds are considered part of the total project cost.

Q: Is this grant really only available to first class cities (Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester, St. Cloud)?

A: No! All cities, and counties, and townships, <u>and</u> park and recreation boards in cities of the first class are eligible to apply.

Q: Is it appropriate to include maps in our application if we think it would better explain our project area or priority populations?

A: You are welcome to include maps. If you include attachments with your application, please reference them within the application, and explain why they have been included in order to be considered part of the submission.

Q: I see that matching funds are not required. Does providing matching funds - whether in-kind or cash - improve the scoring of the grant application?

A: While matching funds are not a specific scored component of the application, and no matching funds are required, a commitment to the project through the inclusion of match funds may be reflected by grant reviewers in the criteria 'Community has a readiness to take on a project of the proposed scope and size' or within the Project Budget criteria.

Q: Will we need a council resolution to be submitted with this grant?

A: Council resolutions are not needed on our end as a part of this grant.

Q: I would like to get a Species and Stock List for selecting trees that meet the grant criteria.

A: The species and stock list must come from you, the applicant. The 2010 rapid assessment for your community can be used as guidance for what to avoid planting if you do not possess a current tree inventory, and the guidelines in the RFA will let you know what stock you can select from in order to be eligible for reimbursement. If you have not developed a species/stock list and would like guidance, reach out and the UCF Team can provide you with examples.

Q: I manage a homeowners association. We wanted to reach out to see if Homeowners Associations are eligible to apply for this grant.

A: All applications must come from a local unit of government. I recommend reaching out to your municipality if you are looking to propose a project.

Q: Our planting may be done over two years. Can we submit multiple years under the "Year and season of plantings" question in the 3-Year Tree Maintenance Plan, or does all of the planting through this grant need to be done in one year?

A: Multiple years are fine, as long as the work is finished by the end of the grant. Include all appropriate information in one Tree Maintenance Plan.

Q: Why are you requiring containerized stock and not allowing balled and burlap trees? If the cost is the same, can we spend the money on balled and burlap trees instead of containerized trees?

A: We allow reimbursement of up to #20 containerized or 1-2" bareroot trees. Balled and burlap stock is not eligible for reimbursement in this grant program, due to the additional cost, care and skill often needed to properly plant balled and burlap trees. This is especially the case when trees are sold with excessive soil over the root collar flare; stem girdling roots may be present and trees may be planted too deeply. While this may be mitigated in your community by knowledge and proper planting techniques, it may not be the case for other communities. Since we aim to see trees planted with our funds alive and well into the future for <u>all grantees</u>, we have made the decision to not reimburse for B&B stock.

Q: Is my municipality eligible to apply if we don't currently have EAB present?

A: Yes, all local units of government across Minnesota are eligible to apply.

Q: Can grant money be used to assist private residences within the City to remove infested ash trees from their property?

A: Project funding stipulates that funds be used on public lands only, so tree work on private property is not an eligible expense.

Q: I would like to use the grant funds for removal and stump grinding. We would plant replacements (one-for-one) with separate budgeted dollars. I think it would be more efficient to manage them as separate contracts. Is that an okay approach?

A: Our grants require that each tree removed be replanted, and the only way for us to monitor and manage this is to make it a requirement of the grant. Grant applicants can structure their budgets however they choose to make this feasible for them; for example, grantees can use grant funds for removal, and cover the costs of tree planting with match funds. However, to make sure that replanting occurs at a 1:1 minimum, both removals and planted trees must be incorporated into the grant application and budget.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

Thank You!

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES