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# Shade Tree Program Bonding Grants

2021 Request for Applications

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Minnesota DNR is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

## Grant Overview

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources welcomes applications from local units of government within Minnesota that use strategic actions to reduce the impacts of emerald ash borer (EAB) on community forests.

## Eligible Activities

- Removal and replanting of shade trees on public land to provide environmental benefits
- Replacement of trees on public land lost to forest pests, disease, or storm
- Tree planting on public land to establish a more diverse community forest better able to withstand disease and forest pests

Any tree planted with this grant must be a climate-adapted species to Minnesota. This includes but is not limited to Minnesota native trees, and regionally native species that are growing zone-appropriate.

## Eligible Applicants

All cities, counties, townships, and park and recreation boards in cities of the first class are eligible to apply.

Priority will be given to:

- Applicants with a known emerald ash borer infestation within their boundaries for removal and replacement of ash trees
- Projects removing and replacing ash trees that pose significant public safety concerns
- Projects that benefit underserved populations and areas of concern for environmental justice

## Funding

The DNR has \$1 million available in general obligation bond dollars to fund projects managing forest pest and disease (with priority given to EAB) through community forestry activities on public lands. No minimum dollar amount is required. The maximum amount funded is \$100,000.00.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive grant process with review by a committee representing content and community specialists with regional knowledge. DNR expects to announce selected grantees by Monday, April 12, 2021. If selected, grantees may only incur eligible expenditures after the grant contract is fully executed and the grant has reached its effective date.

## Match Requirements and Explanation

No matching funds are required. If match is provided, it cannot be met with services or funds derived from other grants funds from State of Minnesota.

There are two kinds of match funding, cash match and in-kind match. A cash match is a direct project expense provided by a grantee as a contribution to the project; i.e., cash expenditures for costs related to the specific project. This can include project-related staff salaries if they are dedicated to the project, consultant's fees or contractor expenses, equipment rentals and travel costs. In-kind match funds are materials and services, salaries and wages (including fringe benefits) being used that are not project-dedicated, space or utilities, equipment and/or technical assistance provided by the grantee or donated by a third party specifically for the project.

All contributions, whether cash or in-kind, will be accepted as the grantee's matching funds when those contributions meet the following criteria:

1. Are verifiable from the grantee's records;
2. Are not included as matching contributions for any other project, contract or program;
3. Are necessary and reasonable for accomplishing grant objectives; and
4. Are incurred and contributed within the grant period (not before the contract is fully executed, or after the grant timeline ends).

### **Minimum Requirements**

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements to be considered for this grant opportunity. Minimum requirements are:

- Showing the ability to implement the project and submit final report by December 10, 2024.
- Showing an understanding of and ability to follow all bond fund requirements.
- Replanting a minimum of one tree for each tree removed through grant, match funds, or both.
- Providing photo documentation of the project's progress at appropriate phases, and illustrations, diagrams, charts, graphs, and maps to show results. All trees removed and planted must be mapped and submitted.
- Publicly post and promote grant project information and purpose.
- Complying with all Federal and State laws and regulations related to the completion of projects as stated in the grant agreement.

### **Additional Criteria**

- Tree planting projects must follow standards set in [A Pocket Guide to Planting Trees](#)
- Tree planting projects must identify tree species; site location; and number, size, and type of planting stock
  - Species list must increase the diversity of the community's tree canopy to work toward the 20-10-5 guidelines, meaning a community has no more than 20% of their trees within a single family, no more than 10% of their trees within a single genus, and no more than 5% of their trees within a single species. If your community does not have a completed tree survey, contact the DNR at [ucf.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:ucf.dnr@state.mn.us) to receive your community's 2010 tree survey.
  - Species list for trees to be planted needs to be submitted and approved by DNR prior to planting, and must be limited to climate-adapted species to Minnesota.
  - Tree planting projects must include a 3-year maintenance plan.
  - Tree stock can be 1-2 inch caliper bareroot or a container class size #20 or smaller. DNR recommends trees be purchased with a one-year warranty.
  - Balled and burlapped trees are not eligible through this grant program.

### **Priority Projects**

Ensuring fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards is a policy of state of Minnesota. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant making. [The Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities, disparities, or both.

Priority will be given to communities with known EAB infestations. Priority will also be given to communities who have staff, plan to certify their staff during the grant period, or will contract with companies with staff with professional tree care credentials such as Minnesota Tree Inspector, International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist, etc. Any such credentials must be listed on the application to be considered. Projects that clearly 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) will be rated higher. Please reference the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's interactive environmental justice [map](#) for more information. Applicants should describe how the proposed project activities benefit these communities.

### **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 or project implementation by individuals or organizations not a part of the local government unit
- Site preparation and planting, including mulch, watering bags, staking materials, and tree wrap or guards
- Equipment purchases less than \$5,000 that are used to complete the project
- Equipment rental
- Purchasing of trees for diversity

### **Ineligible Project Expenses**

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- 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 [Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants](#) list, including Amur cork tree, Amur maple, autumn olive, black locust, buckthorn, Norway maple, Russian olive, Siberian elm, and tree of heaven
- Purchase of balled and burlapped 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 chemicals for insecticide treatment
- Gravel bed construction
- Materials and staff time used to educate, engage, and conduct outreach to citizens
- Purchasing of plants such as shrubs, living ground covers, sod, grass seed, and flowers
- Purchasing of land or easements
- Major soil and grade changes or construction
- Equipment purchases equal to or exceeding \$5,000
- Experimental practices not approved by DNR

Questions about additional eligible or ineligible expenses can be direct to [ucf.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:ucf.dnr@state.mn.us).

## Application Instructions

When filling out the application, ensure all sections are completed and the application is submitted before the deadline. Pay close attention to requested information and respond to all questions. If funded, answers will be incorporated into the grant work plan; therefore, make sure enough information is provided, especially in the timeline and budget sections, to serve as a complete work plan. Clearly demonstrate how the application connects to eligible activities.

A complete application will consist of the following documents:

1. Application form (PDF, format unchanged)
2. Budget (Excel, format unchanged)
3. 3-Year Tree Maintenance Plan for newly-planted trees (PDF, format unchanged)
4. Species and Stock List from which trees will be planted (must be climate-adapted species to Minnesota; contact [ucf.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:ucf.dnr@state.mn.us) with questions about species eligibility)

## Application Submission Instructions

After reading through the Request for Applications, complete all parts of the application found [online](#). Grant applicants are required to submit applications by email to [ucf.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:ucf.dnr@state.mn.us). Applications must be received electronically by **March 22, 2021** to be considered eligible for funding. DNR is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems causing an application to be received late. The applicant is responsible for ensuring their submission is received by DNR by the deadline; applications received after the deadline will not be eligible for consideration. All applicants will be notified by Monday, April 12, 2021 whether or not project is to be funded.

## Review Process and Timeline

A UCF Grants Steering Committee, made up of Department of Natural Resources Forestry 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 <a href="#">website</a> .	February 1, 2021
Application Questions due .....	March 12, 2021
Applications due .....	March 22, 2021
Application Grant Review Process.....	three weeks
Project Selection; Grant Agreement Negotiations Begin.....	April 12, 2021
Work Plans Approved, Contracts Executed, Grant Work Begins.....	June 11, 2021

## Questions:

Submit questions to [ucf.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:ucf.dnr@state.mn.us). Questions must be submitted no later than March 12, 2021. Answers will be posted weekly [online](#).

## Data Privacy and Trade Secret Notice

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a Shade Tree Program Bonding Grant. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete

this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applications are private or nonpublic until opened. Once the applications are opened, the name and address of the applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in an application is private or nonpublic data until all agreements are fully executed. After DNR has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the applications is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in Minn. Stat. § 13.37. A statement by a grantee that the application is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the application (Minn. Stat. § 13.599, subd. 3).

### **Liability and Project Implementation**

DNR will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation and production of a proposal, nor for any work performed prior to the execution of the contract. Project work and expenses that are eligible for reimbursement with grant funds CANNOT be started or incurred until the grant contract is fully executed. Grant agreements are expected to be finalized by June 11, 2021. Related grant project work can begin after all signatures are obtained. Interim reports and final reports will be required for all grant-funded projects.

Minnesota Department of Agriculture considers **May 1 – September 30** to be the flight season for EAB. This means that EAB adult beetles are emerging from infested wood or trees and flying in search of new hosts during this time. The best management practice is to not remove ash trees when EAB are actively flying (May-September), to avoid the risk of EAB emerging from this material in transit or at a processing location.

### **Reimbursement**

All funds will be awarded on a reimbursement basis. Up to 90% is reimbursed each reimbursement period, with the final 10% retained until the project is completed. The Reimbursement Request Form and required reports must be received by January 10, 2022; July 10, 2022; January 10, 2023; July 10, 2023; January 10, 2024; July 20, 2024; December 10, 2024. Projects must be completed, and final grant reports must be submitted, by December 10, 2024.

### **Tracking Bond Financed Property**

This grant requires a declaration be recorded against real estate that is purchased or improved with state general obligation bond proceeds. When trees are planted in parks or public-owned properties, a General Obligation Bond Financed Property Declaration must be recorded on the legal description with the County Recorder. The recorded declaration proclaims a property as “Restricted Property,” which prevents these properties from being sold, mortgaged, encumbered, or otherwise disposed of without the approval of the Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget for 125% of the useful life of the Restricted Property. The useful life for this grant is 30 years, meaning 125% of that is 37.5 years.

If the grant project involves more than one park or public-owned property, one declaration can be recorded with multiple legal descriptions (this means you only pay one filing fee). Consider recording the declaration *after* trees have been planted in parks or on public-owned properties, instead of beforehand, since removing a declaration from a legal description requires a written release from the commissioners of Management and Budget and Department of Natural Resources.

For projects or portions of projects that lie within roads, highways or utility or transit corridors, easements or rights-of-way, a certification in which the grantee acknowledges that the property purchased and/or improved is still state bond financed property and thus subject to certain statutory requirements will suffice in lieu of a declaration.

Certifications and declarations must be submitted **before** requesting reimbursement from DNR.

### Project Completion

All project work must be completed, request for final reimbursement, and final reports submitted by December 10, 2024.

### Other Considerations

All proposals submitted in response to this RFA become the property of the DNR. DNR reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement.

DNR also reserves the right to:

- Post funded proposals and reports, including images and maps, to the DNR website
- Reject any or all proposals received
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and agreement of applicant
- Use any or all ideas submitted unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights
- Clarify the scope of this program, within the RFA requirements and with appropriate notice to potential applicants, to best serve the interests of the state of Minnesota
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate notice to potential applicants
- Require a good faith effort on the part of the grantee to work with DNR subsequent to project completion to develop or implement project results
- Withhold any payments when contract conditions are not met

## Exhibit A: Application evaluation score sheet

### Selection Criteria and Weight

The steering committee will be reviewing each eligible application on a 100-point scale. Scores will be used to develop final recommendations. Applicants are encouraged to score their own applications using the evaluation score sheet before submitting the application. While not required, this step may help applicants meet the criteria that grant reviewers will be scoring.

Applications to the Shade Tree Program Bonding Grants will be evaluated and ranked according to the following criteria:

<b>1. Known EAB infestation Within Applicant's Boundaries</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Project Overview and Need</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application is clear and complete</li> <li>• Community has a readiness to take on a project of the proposed scope and size</li> <li>• Project focuses on significant public safety concerns</li> </ul>	20
<b>3. Project Timeline</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeline provides specific dates for all activities</li> <li>• Timeline is easy to read and comprehend</li> <li>• Timeline follows best management practice of not removing ash trees when EAB are actively flying (no ash removals May-September)</li> </ul>	15
<b>4. Project Budget and Budget Explanation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget explanation provides specific dollar amounts for anticipated use</li> <li>• Budget totals equal amount requested</li> <li>• Financially realistic and cost effective</li> </ul>	20
<b>5. Project Impacts on Priority Populations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	20
<b>6. Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategies directly related to project accomplishments, activities, or both, and multiple forms of communication are listed with potential to reach the public</li> <li>• EAB-related messaging included</li> </ul>	10
<b>7. Key Personnel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All certifications and education degrees are listed for staff or contractors</li> <li>• 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 accreditations, or both</li> </ul>	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>