



ReLeaf & Community Tree Planting Grants

2025 Webinar Transcription

Time	Transcription
0:00	<p><i>Introduction</i></p> <p>Valerie McClannahan: Let's get this up and rolling. All right. All right. Hi, everybody. My name is Valerie McClannahan and we're here today to talk about available grant funding for community forestry.</p> <p>So, I'm guessing that there might be a number of questions about the grants and the processes. There will be specific times that I actually will open for questions from the audience and, and we'll have some time also at the end as well, so hold your questions for then.</p> <p>If you're going to, folks online, go ahead and put them in the chat, like I mentioned, and we have someone here who will read them out loud. We'll repeat it for the video. Great. All right, oh.</p> <p>Oh, this thing is not, oh buddy, my slide thing isn't working. Alright none of its working. Great. There we go. Okay.</p>
01:53	<p><i>Application Overview</i></p> <p>Valerie McClannahan: So, each grant has a unique request for application, which lay out in detail all of the requirements of the grant. Please read it, as this is what your application should be based around. There are also required documents for each of the grant. The first one off the top, the application form. It should be filled out and guides by the request for application. The budget form. The application itself should identify location of grant project work. Submission should show whether work will take place within the Priority Areas and general geographic locations or examples may include that the application itself states that the project work is taking place community-wide or that its taking place both within Priority Area and outside of it or that NO work will be taking place within a Priority Area. You can also, I would highly recommend providing maps. This could even just be as simple as a screenshot of a map and an outline of the project area that you're intending to conduct work.</p> <p>Additionally, letters of support, if you're collaborating with an outside organization, listing any of your authorized signers, so anyone from your organization that would need to sign off on a grant agreement.</p> <p>And then, there are additional components that may be required, depending on the grant or the activities that you are proposing to do. So, for example, if you are applying for \$50,000 or more and you are not a Tribal government, you will need to submit a Pre-Award Risk Assessment Questionnaire and supporting documentation. Or, for example, if you are planting trees, you will need to submit a three-year tree establishment plant and species selection and stock list. So just depends on the activity and what you're doing as to what additional documentation you may need.</p> <p>So, organizations, including political subdivisions, nonprofit organizations, and schools applying for \$50,000 or more to our grant programs will be required to fill out the Pre-Award Risk Assessment Questionnaire and provide any supporting documentation.</p>

Tribal Governments, sovereign Nations, and those applying for less than \$50,000 do not need to fill out the paperwork for the Pre-Award Risk Assessment. This policy was created with the intent to assess and mitigate the risk that a potential grantee may have prior to awarding the grant agreements.

Before making a grant of \$50,000 or more granting agencies must request, review, and analyze required information. This analysis must be completed for all potential grantees to assess the risk that potential grantee cannot or will not perform the duties specified in the grant agreement.

If applicable, you will need to submit this document with your application. So, we're actually gonna walk through that because this is probably new for a lot of folks here.

05:20 *Pre-Award Risk Assessment Questionnaire Walk Through*

Valerie McClannahan: So, this is what the Pre-Award Risk Assessment Questionnaire looks like, and we're just gonna walk through beat by beat. So, first question, please describe your organization's services and experience such as skills, knowledge, available resource, processes, and leadership with administering grants.

Second question, have you ever received a grant from the Department of Natural Resources? Have any the, so going on – third question, have any current principles of your organization been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years? If yes, please explain. If no, you will complete an Exhibit A and insert some attachment of an organizational chart or list the principle in your organization that you are certifying.

Any, so for any, are any of your staff or board member, current employees of the DNR? Five, choose your organization type. So, if you're a local unit of government, nonprofit, or for-profit organization. So, if you're in a local unit of government, you essentially stop there. For nonprofit organizations, you move on to question six – did you file a, the form 990 or 990-EZ in the last fiscal year. If yes, attach a copy of your most recently filed 990 or 990-EZ and then skip to question nine. If not, you'll jump to question seven.

Question seven covers, were you eligible for an exception to the filing requirement? If yes, you'll attach a copy to your, of your, IRS determination letter and explain your exception. If no, you'll explain why you didn't file.

Eight, if you did not file a 990 or 990-EZ in the last discal year, you are to attach the most recent set of board reviewed, or managing group if applicable, financial statements. Nine, please describe the internal controls you have over business expenditures and outcomes of the grant funds if awarded. Example of internal controls include, but are not limited to, documented policies and procedures, segregation of duties, such as having different staff who enter receivables versus those who post payment using a payrolls systems, requiring usernames and passwords, et cetera.

Ten, did you have \$750,000 or more in revenue in the last fiscal year and were required to have an audit? If yes, please attach a copy of the audited financial statements.

Eleven, are you registered in good standing with the Secretary of State? For-profit organizations do have additional questions to answer. However, for-profit organizations are

not eligible for this funding or to apply for this funding, so we're not gonna cover those in detail.

Alright, so, the process, if an applicant is applying for \$50,000 or more and does not qualify for exemption as noted earlier, the Pre-Award Risk Assessment Questionnaire and all accompanying paperwork must be submitted with your application by the application due date.

We will end up reviewing all of the documentation you provide, as well as the grant closeout forms from previous grant you have had with DNR and fill out a Pre-Award Risk Assessment checklist for all grantees and a financial review form for non-profit organizations.

After working through the supplemental checklist and financial review form, we then determine if there is a risk that needs to be mitigated based on those checklist prompts. If no risk is found, the award process can continue as normal. If there is risk found, we will fill out a risk plan and communicate with you on risks that we found.

We then give you time to address those risks that were found during this process, and we'll discuss a risk mitigation plan. Risk mitigation plans will be individually tailored to each grantee to address any existing risk and may be subject to change during the grant period if any substantial changes happened to the grantee organization. Risk mitigation plans will be attached to grant documents and additional monitoring will be included in the Exhibit A documents, as needed. If a grantee has a risk that cannot be mitigated through a risk mitigation plan, agencies have the authority to not award a grant.

If a grant is not awarded based on the outcome of a Pre-Award Risk Assessment, the agency must provide written notification to the potential grantee. So DNR will be working to process the Pre-Award Risk Assessment paperwork in conjunction with the rest of the application materials and will be working to finishing this process prior to award notifications being sent out. If DNR needs further information from applicants, we may request additional information. If awards are contingent on addressing risk, the DNR will note contingency within an email. I understand that it's likely that you, more questions will ultimately arise as you navigate through this process, but if there are any questions as of right now about the Pre-Award Risk Assessments at this time, I want to open that up.

Give it a second. Alright, we're gonna move on, hearing no questions at this time.

11:20 *Project Components*

Valerie McClannahan: Alright, so project application scoring varies by grant. However, each of these components are listed as part of the application process. Generally, application should be clear, complete, descriptive, and meet all of the minimum and requirements, and additional requirements.

Timelines should provide specific dates for all activities and should be realistic given the extent of the proposed project activities, as well as realistic based on the resource available and requested to accomplish the project.

Budgets should only request grant funds for eligible expenses and budget should be realistic and cost effective. We would recommend that if you are planning to contract out work, that you obtain bids so that you have an accurate budget. Communities that are affected or benefited should be engaged and input, incorporated prior to project implementation and

throughout the project. Communication strategies should be directly related to project accomplishment, activities or both. And multiple forms of communication are listed with potential to reach the public.

Key personnel are listed with corresponding project roles and showcase the expertise and capacity to complete proposed grant work. We should be able to see that you or your contractor have the capacity and expertise to conduct the work that you are suggesting.

Each of the web, each website for each of the two grants that we're offering has a checklist that should hopefully help you through this process.

Alright, so we are obligated to take past performance into account.

13:14 *Past Grant Performance Consideration*

Valerie McClannahan: This is something that we do through the Pre-Award Risk Assessment, but we are also not incorporating it into the scoring system in an effort of transparency. If you have had a grant with the DNR UCF program in the past, you will need to address your past grant performance.

This holds its own scored section in the application itself. In order to address this section, you will need your most recent UCF grant closeout form, which you can get by emailing UCF.dnr@state.mn.us. If you are unsure if your organization has previously held a grant contract with the UCF program, please reach out to us and our staff will confirm your past grant status and provide you the closeout form if applicable.

If you have never had a grant with the DNR UCF program or we do not have a grant closeout form for your organization on file, you may leave this section blank and there will be no penalty for the applicant. Past grant performance when applicable will be a consideration when awarding grant funding. This means that a project could score really well based on the strength of the application itself, but receive additional grant conditions reduced funding or even no funding due to past grant performance issues for which there is no evidence of corrective actions being taken.

Okay. So, in this section, you're gonna make sure that you have obtained and are addressing the most recent UCF grant closeout form. Make sure that your past performance issues and corrective actions are explained if applicable. Describe strong grant management practices from past performance and how they will be continued. A high scoring applicant will provide insightful reflection on their past performance and provide specific examples of learning and corrective actions or continued strong grant management practices, alright? I'm gonna pause here again for questions just in case. Great.

15:30 *Questions*

Emily Ball: I, I have a question, Valerie, she's not gonna be able to hear me.

Valerie McClannahan [answering inaudible question from room]: No, so you would not need the grant closeout form for a currently open grant because we wouldn't have one. So that was, sorry. The question was, if the grant is currently open, would you need the grant closeout form? So no, you wouldn't have a grant closeout form at that time.

Your current, your, the current activity or current performance is considered, as a part of that Pre-Award Risk Assessment, but it's not something that you would then address

within the application. I would be really sure that this was your first and only grant with our program because if you have a, a grant, you know, from earlier, it's it's, it may be helpful to just reach out just to double check, to see if we have one for you on file.

Great, [inaudible] moving on to specific grants available. Oh finally, we're finally here.

16:49

Community Tree Planting Grant Overview

Valerie McClannahan: The DNR has 4.8 million available for community tree planting grants to fund community forestry projects. There is no minimum to the dollar amount that application, applicants, can request, but the maximum amount that will be funded per applicant is \$500,000. No match funds are required and submitting match as a part of your application is not recommended.

Eligible applicants for this grant include Tribal governments, cities, counties, townships, and parks and recreation board in cities of the first class. Eligible activities for this grant include removing and planting shade trees on public or Tribal land to provide environmental benefits; replacing trees lost to forest pest, disease, or storm on residential land; establishing a more diverse community forest better able to withstand disease and forest pests on public or residential land. This means not ultimately that this, with this grant fund, you can fund the removal and replacement of trees on public or Tribal land, and you can plant on public, Tribal, or residential land. That, those are the eligible activities essentially.

Eligible expenses are those incurred through project activities that are directly related and necessary to produce the outcomes described in the grant application. Grant funds can be used for but may not be limited to professional contracts for technical assistance or project implementation by individuals or organizations that are not a part of the local unit of government, staff time for grant recipients, site preparation, and planting, including trees, mulch, watering bags et cetera. Equipment purchases of \$4,999 or less that are used to complete the project are eligible.

Multiple pieces of equipment, tools, or project supplies over \$5,000 can be purchase with grant funds, but no one single tool can have a unit cost of \$5,000 or more. Additionally, it is eligible to use grant funds for equipment rental and gravel bed construction.

Ineligible costs. So ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to, because it's hard to cover everything that's not eligible, costs incurred prior to the start date of the fully executed grant agreement, so you need to have a fully executed grant before you can start spending funds.

It is also ineligible to purchase trees on the Minnesota noxious weed list or the DNR's invasive terrestrial plant list. The purchase of balled and burlap trees larger than two and a half caliper, containerized trees larger than a number 20, or bare root trees greater than a 2 inch diam- caliper diameter are not eligible.

The purchase of trees in a genus that already make up 10 % or more of the community's trees or in a family that make up 20 % or more of the trees are not eligible. If you're unsure of this information, you can reach out to DNR staff here, and we'll provide you with the most up to date information that we have and the data from your, for your, community.

Purchase of plant other than trees, such as shrubs, living ground covers, sod, grass seed, and flowers are also not eligible. Purchase of land or easements, major soil purchases, grade changes, or construction, also not eligible.

Capital expenditures, this means items of a unit cost of \$5,000 or more and include items such as building, motor vehicles, trails, or other permanent structures. A purchase of one piece of equipment that has a value of \$5,000 or more is not eligible even if that cost is split across grant and match funds. Additionally, experimental practices are not, that are not approved by DNR are not eligible.

Alright, I'm gonna pause there. Any questions offhand? Great.

So important timelines for the Community Tree Planting Grant include questions from the applicants on the application process are due by September 30 of 2025. This is set, this, we have a deadline for this because we are required to publicly post responses to questions to ensure that they're available to all possible applicants. So, questions will, and responses will be updated weekly on the website as applicable.

The applications themselves are due on October 13th, 2025, and then project selection recommendations, financial and capacity review, grant agreement negotiations, that will take place November 5th, 2025 and December 23rd, 2025.

This is where we anticipate that work plan should be approved and contracts should be executed, and grant work should be able to begin by March 15th of 2026. And then the grant funds expire, and projects must be completed by June 30th of 2027.

22:26 *Community Tree Planting Grant Priority Scoring*

Valerie McClannahan: Priority. So, through legislative direction, priority for this grant will be given to projects that remove and replace ash trees that pose significant public safety concerns and projects located in a census block group with a supplemental demographic index score in the 70th percentile or higher within the State of Minnesota.

What this means, supplemental demographic index is a combination of five socioeconomic factors averaged together for each census block group. It includes populations of low income, persons with disabilities, less than high school education, limited English speaking, and low life expectancy.

Applicants should describe how the proposed project activities will benefit and serve these communities. Additionally, here is an image of the UCF grant Priority Areas. You can find this map on the Grant website to garner a closer look to see where in your community you may have a priority area. Priority scoring will be based on the percent of work that meets the priority.

This means that when 100% of the trees removed and replaced are ash with public safety concerns and 100% of the work takes place within the priority area, the application will score the highest in priority points.

If no ash are removed and replaced that pose public safety concerns and no work is taking place in the priority area, the priority scoring will be lower. I will explain in a future slide how this scoring is implemented.

But first I'm gonna run through a project example because I think it's gonna really help. I hope it helps. We're going, so in this example, this community is removing and replacing 80 ash trees of public safety concern within the priority area.

They're also removing and replacing 20 non-ash trees within the priority area. They are planting an additional 100 trees within the priority area and they are planting an additional 100 trees outside of the priority area.

Okay. So, when you're looking at ash as the prioritization, we'll actually be looking, this will be prioritized based on the percent ash that you are removing and replacing that are public safety concerns. In the application, you will put the total number of ash that you, you are removing and replacing.

For the purposed of this application, one removal and one replacement equals one. So, within this application, they're removing 80 tree, 80 ash trees of public safety concern, and they are planting replacing 80 trees. This applicant is also removing and replacing 20 non-ash trees, so there they would enter 20.

In the next column, you put the total number of removals. In this example, they are removing and replacing a total of 100 trees this means that they're removing and replacing 80 ash trees that pose public safety concern and additional 20 trees that are not ash, which brings it to 80% of the trees being removed and replace that of Ash that posed a public safety concern. Ash.

Kinda got tongue tied there, but we're, we're gonna keep going. I feel like it should, hopefully that math should be pretty easy. The next one is where it gets a little funny. Alright so when looking at the priority scoring, you're taking that example of the 80% of the removals and replacement being asked for public safety concern. This example would receive two priority points.

So next, we're gonna look at the percent of project in the priority area.

So, as shown in the previous example, this applicant is doing a total of 100 removals and replacements. So, you'll see here that all of those removals and replacements are taking place within the priority area. However, they're planting an additional 200 trees.

100 of these additional trees are taking place in the priority area, and 100 are taking place outside of the priority area. This would mean that within this application, they're removing 100 trees and we're planting them with 100 trees and then planting 100 additional trees within the priority area. This means that a total of 200 trees are being removed and replaced and planted within the priority area.

This shows that 100 % of the trees they are removing and replacing are within the priority area, but they are planting an additional 100 trees outside of that priority area. The total work of the whole project is that 300 trees are being removed and replaced and planted. So this means that the percent of work taking place in the priority area is 66.67%.

As you are navigating this, make sure that your total numbers match the work you list in your application and budget sheet. So, using this example, your budget would show 100 removals and the purchase of 300 trees.

Given our example of 80% removals and replacements being Ash of public safety concern and 66.67% of the work taking place in a priority area, this proposal would score a four in priority points.

Priority scoring dictates when applicants will be scored. Within community tree planting grants, those that have a score, a priority score between four and six will be scored first. In order to be funded, the application must meet a minimum project score of 70 and either not be applicable for a past performance score or meet a minimum past performance score of three.

In our example, the applicant scored four priority points, so they were scored within the first tier. If the applicant meets all of their requirements and their project, project score meets the minimum 70 and past performance score of three, it is very likely that they will be offered an award.

But it will be ranked based on your score, so. All right, I'm gonna pause here for questions.

30:26 *Questions*

Valerie McClannahan: Sure. So ReLeaf we'll get to, so I'm gonna pin that question. So the question was that if, if the applicant doesn't have any priority areas, is it still worth applying? I can't tell you that. I'm sorry. I don't know if it's worth applying or not. It will really depend on how many applications we get, what they look like, how, how, how well they're scoring, all of those kinds of and how, you know, how much money their requesting. So there are too many variable for me to tell you whether its really worth it or not for you to apply.

At the most, if you don't have any Priority Areas, you, if you're removing, if all the tree ah trees that you're removing are ash of public safety concern and you don't have any Priority Areas, the highest score that you can get for priority is three. Which would then put you potentially in that second tier. So, yeah. So I don't have a better answer for you for them, but are there any other questions?

So, we're gonna jump to ReLeaf, and hopefully, so if you have that question again for folks online about ReLeaf as once we get through it, please feel free to ask.

32:03 *ReLeaf Overview*

Valerie McClannahan: So the DNR has 7.2 million available for 2025 ReLeaf grant funds to fund community forestry project. There is no minimum to the dollar amount applicants can request and the maximum amount that will be funded for applicant is \$500,000.

No matching funds are required and submitting match as a part of your application isn't recommended. So for eligible applicants, nonprofit organizations with a 501(c) status, educational institutions, local units of government within Minnesota, including cities, counties, regional authorities joint power board, towns, and tribal governments, parks and recreation boards in cities of the first class, also eligible to apply.

Eligible activities for 2025 relief are extensive. I'm gonna go through them because why not? Community forestry work conducted on non-state public land or on residential land for low-income residents. Work on residential land must be conducted by companies or

organizations with an International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist on staff, tree care industry association accreditation, or an equivalent qualification.

Additional eligible activities include work conducted by staff or contractors, Tree inventories, developing a management plan which can include but is not limited to a forestry related climate adoption plan, an all lands management plan, an emerald ash borer management plan, and the incorporation of environmental justice components or wood utilization components into your management plans is encouraged.

Continuing on eligible activities also include tree and stump removal and tree replacement. Tree planting for diversity, chemical treatment of ash trees with an injectable non-nitrophenol insecticide, if it provides a long-term impact or seed funds an intended long term program in communities up to 10 miles outside of generally infested areas across Minnesota.

So go ahead, you'll you can see online for guidance, we will have a map put up. Gravel bed construction and maintenance is also eligible, developing a tree ordinance, tree cabling if a long-term evaluation plan is included.

Additional eligible activities include maintenance pruning, development, purchase or printing of materials used to educate, engage or conduct outreach to residents about urban community forestry, urban and community forestry or arboriculture education and outreach generally.

Professional certifications and or training related to the proposed project would oh, oh NO. Oh. Yes. Sorry guys.

Sorry about that. Professional certifications, wood utilization, and plant healthcare treatments as approved. So eligible expenses are those that are incurred through project activities that are directly related and necessary to produce the outcomes described in your application. Multiple pieces of equipment, tools or project supplies over \$5,000 can be purchased with grant funds, but no one tool can have a unit cost of \$5,000 or more even if that cost is split across grant and match funds.

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to essentially the same as it is with community tree planting grant, but costs incurred prior to the start date of a fully executed grant agreement. Purchase of trees listed on the Minnesota noxious weed list or DNR's invasive terrestrial plant list.

Purchase of balled and burlap trees larger than two and a half caliper containerized trees larger than 20 and number 20 or bare root trees greater than 2-inch caliper diameter. Purchase of trees species that already make up 10% or more of the community's trees or in a family that makes up more than 20% of, or more of, the trees.

So, for example, if your community has 12% maple, you will not be allowed to plant maple with grant funds.

If you are unsure of your current tree species rates, you can reach out to us like I said earlier, and we'll provide you with the most up to date data that we have on file for you.

Additionally, ineligible expenses are the purchase of plants other than trees living ground covers, sod, grass seed and flowers, purchase of land or easements, major, major soil purchases, grade changes, or construction, and then of course the capital expenditures, the

items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more. Items such as buildings, motor vehicles, trail, or permanent structures, experimental practices not approved by DNR are also not eligible.

37:17 *Questions*

Valerie McClannahan: Yes, open up for questions. Officially you're supposed to replace them, is what it's supposed to look like. It depends on the grant and how long ago as to what that really looks like.

You can apply to plant trees, I'll say, but yeah, I forgot to repeat the question, which was, if we had a grant in the past, could we use these funds, if the trees had died from that grant, could we use these funds to replant for those trees? And so, yeah, it officially it depends on the grant as to whether or not it's still your responsibility, so yes, please.

[Inaudible, off camera]

Valerie McClannahan: Okay, so I'm gonna summarize the question. A community is 30 miles outside of a generally infested area for emerald ash borer and they are looking to conduct pretty significant outreach to the community. Yeah, I mean it sounds as though it would be eligible. The creation of engagement materials and things like that are absolutely eligible.

And so that should, I I don't see any issues with that offhand based on the question, so absolutely. Any other questions?

Okay, great.

39:19 *ReLeaf cont.*

Valerie McClannahan: So, important timelines, the timelines are different from the Community Tree Planting Grant. Questions from applicants on the application process are due for ReLeaf on October 14th, 2025. The applications are due on October 28th, 2025.

The project selection recommendations, financial capacity review and grant agreement negotiations should be taking place between December 1 of 2025 and January 23 of 2026. Work plans approved and contracts, we intend to have executed and have work begin by April 15th of 2026, and then the grant funds expire, projects must be complete by June 30th of 2027.

All right. So, through legislative direction priority for this grant will be given to projects located in a census block group with a supplemental demographic index score and the 70th percentile are higher within the state of Minnesota.

This priority area is the same definition, therefore the same geographic locations as in Community Tree Planting Grants. Applicants should describe how the proposed project activities benefit and serve these communities.

So, prioritization in Minnesota ReLeaf, or in our 2025 ReLeaf, is navigated a bit differently than our other grant, just because of the expanded eligible activities. So, within the application, you will be asked what percent of your project is dedicated to the Priority Area? Then you will be asked to explain how you arrived at this percentage. This should be a logical and clear description and should provide any data that you use to show how you arrived at the percent you provided.

An easy example of this would be that 50% of the grant funds would be allocated to the priority area and then a description of the work taking place within the priority area would be provided. In the example that I just provided.

50% of the funds will be used within the priority area, which would then give it a priority score of two. And then the justification score would really depend on the actual description provided. Priority scoring dictates when applicants will be score.

So, within 2025 ReLeaf, those that have a priority score between five and six will be scored first. In order to be funded, the application must meet a minimum project score of 70 and either not be applicable for a past performance score or meet a minimum past performance score of three.

42:24 *Questions*

Valerie McClannahan: So I'm gonna pause there again for questions.

It's a, I'm sorry is it appropriate? Oh I mean.

Yes, so I'm gonna repeat the statement quick. So essentially someone is disappointed at the priority areas for both grants because they're the same, but it sounds like they understand the DNR is not the organization who's set these priority areas. Yes, this was done by the legislature. It's a part of the, the actual statutory authority that we have to use these grants now, so.

So yeah, I'm happy to talk to folks more about that, off, you know, in this in this at a separate time. So, alright, anything else? No.

44:25 *Grant Comparison*

Valerie McClannahan: Okay. Moving on. All right. So, we're gonna do a quick run through of some of the key pieces of Community Tree Planting Grants versus the 2025 ReLeaf. So, the total available funding for Community Tree Planting Grant is less than ReLeaf with Community Tree Planting Grants having 4.85 million available in funding and ReLeaf having 7.2 million available.

Neither Grant has a minimum dollar amount that you can request and the maximum for each is \$500,000. Questions are due for Community Tree Planting Grants by September 30th and for ReLeaf questions are due on October 14th.

So again, this mean that if you have a question for the grant, it does need to be asked by those deadlines, as we are required to post questions publicly to ensure everyone has access to the information. Questions will be posted weekly as applicable to respective websites.

Community Tree Planting Grant applications are due by end of the day October 13th and ReLeaf applications are due end of day October 28th. We will notify applicants of awards no later than December 23rd, 2025, for Community Tree Planting Grant and no later than January 23rd, 2026 for ReLeaf.

Grant projects for both grants must be completed by June 30th, 2027.

Eligible applicants for Community Tree Planting grants are Tribal governments, cities, counties, townships, parks and recreation boards in cities of the first class, and in 2025 [ReLeaf] it also includes non-profit organization, educational institutions, regional authorities, all sorts of fund things. Bit more inclusive.

Eligible locations for Community Tree Planting grant depend on the work performed. Removals and replacements can only take place on public property. On residential property, only tree planting is eligible.

If ReLeaf, work can take place on public non-state land or on low-income residential land. So, I'm not gonna list, re-list, out all of the eligible activities 'cause there are so many with ReLeaf, but take a look at the RFA [Request for Applications].

Eligible activities for Community Tree Planting grants are more limited and include only removing and replacing, or tree planting. And ReLeaf has that wide, wide array of eligible community forestry activities, so we really, like, maintenance, pruning, it's, you know, it's very wide wide ranging.

Both grants have priority scoring for work in the supplemental demographic index. However, only Community Tree Planting grant has priority scoring for removing and replacing Ash that pose a public safety concern.

So some considerations for, is there a, Oh there's a question.

47:37 *Questions*

Valerie McClannahan: Yes. It would end up being zero.

Yeah. Oh, sorry. Yes, thank you Maddy. I'm so bad at this. Then question would be, what is the highest that an organization could get for priority scoring if they don't have any.

Priority areas essentially, and they, yeah, they would not get a high score for that unfortunately. It would be zero. That, yeah, sorry.

Any other questions?

48:32 *Reimbursement*

Valerie McClannahan: Some consideration for applicants around reimbursement. So, if awarded, all funds will be awarded on a reimbursement basis. Each reimbursement request is reimbursed at a rate of 90% with a final 10% being retained until the project is completed.

Reimbursement requests will only be paid with all required paperwork and reporting. Organizations that cannot navigate on a reimbursement basis, accommodations may be able to be made in collaboration with DNR staff. So just reach out.

We understand that the costs change over time and that there are things that are unexpected that arise. If awarded, we will work with you to navigate, but we do need to hold you accountable to what you put in your application.

I would say especially when it comes to the falling within those legislative priorities, what you submit in your application is what becomes your contract and, and we really need to hold you to that especially with the way that we're having to navigate these priorities.

So be thoughtful when you apply. Some people seem to be surprised when we do hold them accountable to do what they said they would do in their applications and ultimately eat all you take and take all you eat, use all of the funding that you are awarded.

Giving funds back means that funding goes back and make it looks like communities don't need this funding when they do desperately do. Only apply for what you are certain you can use.

And it looks like there's, we've got another question.

50:28

Questions

Valerie McClannahan: So, yeah, so the question was, if there, if an applicant is not in a priority area, they shouldn't not bother applying for a ReLeaf grant?

I mean, I would say it's really up to you. We, we do have that opportunity to award and score based on, on, on that, but you, it would like a lower priority. So, I'm gonna go back quick, to that [slide].

So it would be in that third tier and, it would really depend on, like I said, the applications that we receive, the amount of funding that they're requesting, as to whether or not we'll ultimately end up working through that tier C.

[Inaudible, off camera]

Valerie McClannahan: Yeah, so comment: Historically, our funding has outpaced our available funding, which is absolutely true. Yes. We historically do get more funding requested than what we have available.

There, you know, it's a, it's a gamble, right? It's a, it's a dice roll. You know, just because we've received that much in, in applications doesn't mean that there are all, that they would all even be eligible for funding, frankly. So, we certainly get our fair share of applications that don't meet minimum requirements. People who have clearly not read the request for applications who are requesting ineligible grant funds for multiple things that have, right, like that are simply no eligible. For the grant, these things happen consistently, whether or not your application would fall high enough to get within that space, really, really, depends. So, yeah.

[Inaudible, off camera]

Valerie McClannahan: Well, it depends on the grant that you are applying for. If you are doing it in ReLeaf, you know, it, there are a couple, I would run it in a couple of different ways, you know. What percent of the populations is within your priority area? What percent of the, just, geographic distribution, how many acres are in the priority area vs no within your community? Find ways to make that, that, like to fund that percentage to make that justification.

And that, that's what we're asking folks to do with ReLeaf specifically.

So, and I forgot to repeat the question, of course, because that's where I'm at today. The question was, are, a city is looking to do a citywide tree inventory, and, they don't have very many components of their community that would fall within the priority area, so what would that, what would that look like ultimately when they're looking at the priority scoring piece, so.

[Inaudible, off camera]

Valerie McClannahan: Yeah, so, and like it said, there are, so the question that we're asking is, what percent of your project is dedicated to the priority area? So it sounds like your, your acreage is small, but is it a higher density area? Like, do you have more people living within that part of the community? Is that something you want to look at?

You might want to look at incorporating additional requests. So maybe in your priority area, you're, you do a full tree wide inventory, but maybe you also incorporate some tree planting within your priority area. Then maybe you're looking at your total, how much of your budget is going to that priority area, instead of, like a geographic location. So.

[Inaudible, off camera]

Valerie McClannahan: Yeah, we can do that. Yeah, someone asked if we could add city boundaries to the map so that they can better discern those locations and yest, yeah, we can get that added. It'll probably be a little but, but hopefully within the next week or so.

Okay.

56:10 *Application Tips*

Valerie McClannahan: Okay.

Alright. So, my, this is really my last slide, once I, then I get to the thank yous.

So, some tips when filling out your application. Read the entire Request for Application. It is really common for folks to not read it thoroughly and miss components and, and missing component, components, may make you ineligible for award.

Respond thoroughly to each question, as applicable. Applications should be clear and detailed.

And ensure that you are meeting all of the grant requirements. Most activities have specific requirements. So, for example, if you're planting trees, like I said earlier, you have to submit the three-year maintenance or the three-year establishment plan. And you have to submit the stock requirements and meet diversity requirements.

So, some of the activities require even more specific expertise. So, for example, if you are planting balled and burlap trees, you should show in your key personnel section that you have staff or a contractor that has the MNDOT [Minnesota Department of Transportation] certified landscape specialist training that's required.

We have checklists posted to each website that should help you and navigate, help you navigate, in meeting these requirements. And ultimately, I encourage you to incorporate how you are meeting those requirements, as applicable, in your actual application.

So, ensure that your application is consistent with itself. So, for example, if you priority section you're planting 200 trees, make sure that your budget shows that you are purchasing 200 trees.

57:33

Conclusion

Valerie McClannahan: So, with that. We know that the funding is so needed. We know that these priority components add a whole other layer of complication to application, to applicants. We appreciate your understanding as you navigate this process, but we are here to help you as best we can.

So, we have a number of events coming up that will be available in person. We will also have office hours that are virtual that you can jump in on. So check you the website to find those.

And as needed email the UCF.DNR@state.mn.us email address to ask any additional questions and things like that.

Alright. Are there other questions? About the grants or the process? Put a little bow on it.

Alight. Wonderful. Okay, well thank you so much all for being here. I know that, that these things are time consuming and do take a lot of work to pull meaningful proposals together. All of your work on these things is appreciated. We know, we know that funding is needed, but we also know that we need well maintained urban forests, and you guys are the ones doing it. So, thank you for that.

Yeah, as you have questions, please reach out and attend any of the outreach meetings that you need to.