

CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Program  
Webinar #1: California IRA Grant Opportunity Overview  
Thursday, April 4, 2024: 9 – 10 am and 6 – 7 pm

Webinar Participant Questions and Answers

- 1. The guidelines say that urban forest management activities must “include the entire jurisdiction.” Our unincorporated County has urbanized areas (as defined by Census) and rural areas. We’re considering developing an urban forest management plan for the urbanized areas (so: not the entire jurisdiction). Could we apply to fund an urban forest management plan that applies to only the urbanized areas of our jurisdiction?**

Yes, for a county the term “entire jurisdiction” is interpreted to apply to all (unincorporated) urban areas not included within municipal jurisdiction boundaries. Rural/non-urban areas are not eligible for Urban and Community Forestry Grants.

- 2. Is a unique (new) Sam.gov registration required for this grant, or will an existing jurisdictional registration work?**

Please contact us separately from this webinar to review your status and determine if this is sufficient. The SAM registration (new or existing) should correspond to the applying organization identified on the application.

- 3. For the grant type only available to cities, since municipalities are required to send out RFP's to allow for competitive bidding they could not list any specific partners for the grant ahead of time. Would a city be scored poorly because no partners/subcontractors can be listed?**

To clarify, a contractor that is compensated for all activities at fair market value, is not a partner. An applicant will not rate more poorly if a contractor has not been identified. It may be wise to include some information on your process to identify a contractor in your application. Partners make significant contributions to the project for free. It would be beneficial to have partners and their contributions identified for the application and include a detailed letter of commitment from them.

- 4. Will this webinar be posted on your website?**

Yes

- 5. For management plans, please clarify whether plans covering the whole jurisdiction would qualify, even if the jurisdiction includes pockets of non-priority neighborhoods?**

Yes, it would.

**6. Please clarify what is meant by a partner and letters of commitment from them.**

Partners make significant contributions to the project that they are not getting compensated for at fair market value. Those contributions should be clearly listed/explained in their letters of commitment. We do not accept letters of “support”, we want to see the commitment and contributions to the project.

**7. Would Resource Conservation Districts/ Soil and Water Conservation Districts be eligible for this funding?**

Districts are eligible applicants. Note, projects are limited to urban areas. (population of 2,500+)

**8. Rachel, we are applying to create an urban version of our Forestry Challenge program. We work with high schools. Being that there is a requirement for the funding to go towards disadvantaged and priority populations, is there a particular way that we can show/prove that we are targeting those specific populations?**

Please follow up with us via email. There are a number of tools in the grant guidelines to choose from.

**9. Do these grants cover irrigation systems?**

They can include efficient irrigation systems.

**10. Does it cover main water line connections and water meters?**

Possibly, to establish efficient irrigation systems.

**11. Would the replacement of hazardous tree removals be eligible for grant funds?**

If those hazards arose from unforeseen circumstances or natural disasters, then yes. If it's deferred maintenance, it's not eligible.

**12. When would applicants be notified if they received funding? (Asking for fiscal year budget planning purposes)**

Given the application deadline, I don't believe that it is likely that decisions will be made before the end of June. Applications must be submitted by May 30, 2024. Review and

award recommendations typically require at least one month. Drafting and executing grant agreements typically takes a month or more. I anticipate July 1, 2024 is the earliest that a fully executed grant will be ready to implement.

**13. Are community events related to "tree-giveaways" as an educational tool eligible? And, would fruit trees be eligible?**

Gifts/promotional materials are not eligible. Give-aways are challenging as the grantee will need to submit information to us on where exactly the trees are planted and ensure trees are maintained. We collect that information and inspect project trees at least once per year. Yes, with justification. Fruit trees should complement shade trees that are part of the project. Tree give-aways should include a strategy for inspecting and assisting with planting and planning for future maintenance.

**14. Is software an eligible expense for the Urban Forest Management Activities category?**

Inventory software is eligible.

**15. You mentioned the Urban Forest Expansion and Improvement grant type allowed job creation and training. Could you expand on how this differs from the Urban Forestry Education and Workforce grant type?**

Urban Forest Expansion and Improvement projects focus on tree plantings and canopy expansion. Education and workforce development projects focuses on that. Grants can include other activities related to urban forestry as well such as hiring and training, even if the focus is on tree planting and urban tree canopy (UTC) expansion.

**16. Just curious, for the Urban Forest Equity Capacity Building grant type, is support for capacity building at our own nonprofit or only for providing technical assistance to an external organization?**

Ideally, both capacity building for an established organization, as well as, grassroots or new organizations.

**17. We are a city and are looking to update our 5-Year Urban Forestry Plan. The plan would cover the entire jurisdiction, which includes DAC and non-DAC communities. Given the requirement that 100% of the benefits must flow to DACs, would we be able to develop a citywide plan?**

Urban Forest Management Plans must be jurisdiction-wide. On-the-ground activities must focus on priority populations.

**18. Can a single entity submit more than one application?**

One application per entity is allowed.

**19. Are there funding targets per grant type? Or are all the grant types competing for the same pool of funding?**

All grant types are competing for the same pool of funding. There are no funding targets per grant type. All projects will be funded from the same available pool of \$30.8 million.

**20. Are construction costs eligible for the Green Schoolyards project type?**

Yes, depending on the focus of the construction. All activities have to focus on nature/trees and/or accessibility to nature-focused installations/activities.

**21. How would you recommend we demonstrate that a project is within a 1/2 mile radius of a disadvantaged community. Is there a specific tool you would like us to use to demonstrate this? I'm referring to the Evaluation Criteria form. Thank you.**

One of the tools (the Priority Populations tool) shows disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and "buffer communities" for census tracts. [Explore the map - Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool \(geoplatform.gov\)](#)

**22. I work for a special park district. We are interested in applying for the Urban Forest Expansion and Improvement grant type. We are seeking funding to begin development of a vacant/undeveloped parcel into a park parcel. We hope to apply for this grant to fund soil prep, tree planting, and irrigation. Would such a project be eligible for this grant?**

Yes, those all seem to be eligible activities. Yes, this sounds appropriate. Please contact your Regional Urban Forester to confirm project eligibility.

**23. As a special park district, would the application require a resolution from our Board of Directors as part of the initial application?**

A resolution must be provided prior to fully executing a grant agreement. The Board of Directors should be aware of the application but does not need to adopt a resolution to apply for the grant.

**24. We are a TK-12 school district with a special education preschool/regular education preschool complex. I am assuming that the preschool will qualify to apply for. (It is not a child care facility like the last grant)**

Eligible applicants include districts (such as school districts) and non-profit organizations. Public TK-12 and nonprofit child care facilities are eligible under the IRA Green Schoolyards grant type.

**25. Can you demonstrate the tools and what it means to be 80% or below?**

Please reach out to your Regional Urban Forester. There are links in the grant guidelines to maps for the assessment tools. The priority populations tool will show census tracts which are low-income, defined as 80% or less of California's median income. [inflation-reduction-act-grants -priority-populations-disadvantaged-and-low-income-communities.pdf \(azureedge.net\)](#)

**26. DSA approval usually takes forever. Do you know how long the waiting period is now?**

We do not. It may also depend on which regional office you will be working with.

**27. Students in the schools considered come from various census tracts that are low income and the students are part of priority populations. The work, however, will be done in a buffer area. We plan to list the student's census tracts as the project will benefit them, but the actual work may be a few miles away. Is there a problem with that?**

If you are applying for a Green Schoolyards grant for public school(s), you can use the unduplicated count data from <https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA> to show information on your schools' student population.

**28. What is the word count accepted in ecivis?**

That depends on the respective field. The application will indicate the word count for each field.

**29. Regarding the project timeline, the grant guidelines indicate to finish the project by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2027. Is it March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2028?**

That will be corrected. It is March 2028.

**30. When referring to the shared cost component within direct costs, the grant guidelines stipulate the submission of a written justification along with obtaining approval from CalFire. Could you provide further details on what specific information should be included in this written justification?**

\* See answer at end of document

**31. When it comes to planting smaller containerized stock less than 15-gallon, should we submit the written justification to Cal Fire to get approval? Can you elaborate which information we should submit?**

You would include the justification in the application.

**32. Is a nonprofit an eligible applicant for the Green Schoolyards grant, or is that restricted to District only?**

Non-profit organizations are eligible applicants for the Green Schoolyards grant type.

**33. Do projects have to be 4 years, or are shorter periods allowed?**

Shorter periods are allowed.

**34. Is there a recommended inflation rate that we should consider when budgeting?**

No, applicants should estimate reasonable increases in costs over the term of a grant. The consumer price index is a good reference to estimate future increases.

**35. Are the above hyperlinks in the guidelines?**

Yes, grant guidelines have live hyperlinks to applicable tools.

**36. What if an urban area contains both disadvantaged communities and non-disadvantaged census tracts in order to get beyond the 2,500 population requirement?**

Projects must be in urban areas, which is defined as communities with a population of 2,500 or more. If you are applying for an Urban Forest Management Activities grant, Urban Forest Management Plans must be jurisdiction-wide, however, on-the-ground project activities must focus on priority populations.

**37. Are populations included in the census tract information on the different DAC identification tools?**

Census tracts are often very large and reach far into the rural parts of the State. Census 2020 will give information on the latest population count for a community.

**38. For the Equity Capacity Building grant type, in the RFP there is a mention that "80% of the funds must support subgrantee needs." Can you explain what that means? Does that mean the funds must benefit or that 80% of the funds must be sub awarded? Or something else?**

80% of the funds must be sub awarded.

**39. Do the disadvantaged communities receiving the benefits have to be contiguous?**

No, they do not need to be contiguous.

**40. Can you give an example of types of projects for Urban Forestry Regional or Statewide Impact? Would developing a climate resilient planting list be in line with this grant type?**

Yes, tree planting is an eligible activity for this grant type.

**41. Can we list possible eligible priority population census tracts in our project area or do we need to specify which census tracts in a city or county the project will definitely be planting trees in?**

Census tracts should be listed where activities are planned. Changes would need to be approved in advance by CAL FIRE as a modification or amendment to the grant.

**42. The scoring criteria look to be the same for all the grant types. Is that true? Seems like they would have quite different project types (e.g., not all would be creating jobs)**

Scoring criteria does differ for some grant types. Workforce development activities are not required for most grant types and will not influence scoring except for the Education and Workforce Development grant type. We determine the scoring criteria to be meaningful and appropriate for each grant type. I suggest designing your project to meet your needs while keeping all information in the grant guidelines in mind.

**43. Is there a standard methodology for calculating net GHG benefits from planting trees?**

Yes, a modeling tool is hyperlinked in the grant guidelines. i-Tree Planting is the tool we recommend using. It's free and easy to use. [CAL FIRE Benefits Calculator Tool](#)

**44. Is there a list of trees that cannot be included, ie, invasive species, utility problems, etc?**

There are links in the grant guidelines to invasive species lists. Conflicts with utilities are determined by their placement on the site. [SelecTree](#) is a very useful tool to identify appropriate tree species. In addition, an ISA certified Arborist or other professional should be consulted as technical expert to help with tree species decisions.

**45. How do we meet/sign up for office hours?**

Office Hours Sessions every Wednesday from April 10th – May 8th via Microsoft Teams from 2:00 PM -3:00 PM:

Join [here](#) (Meeting ID: 287 425 873 623; Passcode: fBnBCq)

**\* On page 53 of the guidelines, in the “Other” costs definition provided, CAL FIRE states “Costs such as rent, utilities, phones, general office supplies, etc. that must be apportioned to the grant are considered Indirect Costs unless written justification is submitted and approved by CAL FIRE.” Our organization typically classifies these costs are direct. What kind of written justification does CAL FIRE require?**

The description in the Other Eligible Costs description box on page 53 of the Grant Guidelines will be corrected. The UCF-IRA grant is federally funded and, therefore, is subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards contained in 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 400. When using federal funds, items such as IT services, rent, utilities, phones, general office supplies, etc. are considered indirect costs and should not be included as direct costs in the budget. To determine how to classify costs as direct or indirect, applicants should follow the guidance provided by 2 CFR 200.412-414. Indirect costs are often referred to as facilities and administration (F&A) costs. Some administration (or administrative) costs may be considered direct costs when they are associated with the administration of a specific grant project or activity and are not otherwise considered indirect costs. Please reference pages 9-10 of the Grant Guidelines for more detail. Justification for billing administrative costs as direct costs should detail how the costs will be used solely for administration of the specific grant project or activity. For the UCF-IRA grant, administrative costs (not including indirect costs) cannot exceed 20% of total direct costs.



