



NEBRASKA INFLATION REDUCTION ACT COMMUNITY FORESTRY GRANT PROGRAM 2024



What is the Nebraska Inflation Reduction Act Urban and Community Forestry (IRA UCF) Program?

The recent Inflation Reduction Act is an unprecedented investment in **community forestry**. The USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program recently awarded 1.875 million in Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grant funding to the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS).

This program's goal is to help improve community forestry in disadvantaged communities.

- increased and equitable access to the urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental, and economic benefits in disadvantaged communities,
- broadened community engagement in local urban forest planning,
- improved resilience to climate change, pests, and storm events through best management and maintenance practices and
- improve heat resiliency.

How Funding Works

In 2024, a pool of \$100,000 will be available to communities with 8,000 or smaller populations—awards of \$2,000 (minimum) to \$25,000 (maximum). NFS intends to award all these funds in this round of funding. Another round of IRA funding through NFS isn't anticipated.

Will additional funds be available? Yes. Our partner, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, was awarded a 10 million IRA grant for work in disadvantaged communities. If you would like to be on their notification list for when funding becomes available, please visit plantnebraska.org

How to Apply

Get prepared by reading this guide and then completing the online application. Complete and submit your application by **May 15th, 2024**.

Don't hesitate to contact Christina Hoyt at 402-472-5049, choyt2@unl.edu .

WHO'S ELIGIBLE?

Nebraska cities, villages, towns, counties, tribal governments or Natural Resource Districts, school districts, public schools, 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations performing projects in Nebraska.
NOT individuals or businesses

All awardees must be eligible to receive federal funds.

WHAT LAND QUALIFIES?

Project Locations must be within a **Disadvantaged Community** as found on the Nebraska Forest Service IRA [map](#) **AND** within **municipal boundaries AND meet the following:**

Public tree projects on

- streets, trails (ROW)
- city parks
- schools, colleges
- libraries, courthouses
- cemeteries, fairgrounds
- other public places

NOT gated properties

NOT private businesses

NOT projects outside Nebraska

NOT on federal lands

Private Residential tree removal or tree planting may be done as part of an overall community strategy to improve tree canopy.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT COMMUNITY FORESTRY GRANT

2024

1. PROJECT AWARDS

The minimum total project cost is \$2,000. Grant requests must be between \$2,000 and \$25,000. There is no maximum project size; however, a grant award, and therefore reimbursement, is limited to \$25,000.

2. FEDERAL FUNDS

This grant pool is from federal funds. Project Sponsors to this award are subject to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance in subparts A through F of [2 CFR Part 200](#) as adopted and supplemented by the USDA in [2 CFR Part 400](#). Adoption by the USDA of the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 200 gives regulatory effect to the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 200 where the full text is found. Electronic copies of the CFRs can be obtained at the following internet site: www.ecfr.gov.

Project Sponsor shall have a Unique Entity ID (UNI) number. Information on how to obtain a UEI is found here: <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>.

A UEI number is not required for application submittal; however, a UEI number must be in place before the award agreement is signed.

The project sponsor should not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management. The Project Sponsor or its principals cannot be presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any federal department or agency.

3. DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES*

100% of the work must be completed within the geographical footprint of disadvantaged communities as identified by the US Forest Service. [You can find designated tracts in the Nebraska Forest Service IRA tool](#). Directions for using the tool are found in Appendix B.

*This document refers to Disadvantaged Communities because this is the terminology used by the federal government. However, it could be considered deficit-based language, when many of these areas are some of our most culturally diverse, vibrant communities in Nebraska. It's important to recognize the strength, resilience, and assets all communities contribute to Nebraska's culture, economic systems, landscape, and vitality.

4. MATCH

A match waiver is in place for the program, and no match is required. This authority requires a 1:1 match; however, the match requirement has been waived under the provision of Public Law 117-169 (Inflation Reduction Act) and based on assurance from the project sponsor that 100% of the work and funding will be directed to disadvantaged communities.

5. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

1. **Tree planting on public property**, planting large-maturing trees along streets and within parks. To build heat-resilient communities, we particularly encourage planting in areas of low-tree canopy to shade sidewalks, streets, and gathering areas.
 - i. Site preparation—prepare sites for tree planting, such as soil decompaction, soil amendments, or stump grinding.
2. **At-risk tree removal AND replacement on public property.** A minimum 1:1 tree removal to replacement ratio is required. Trees must be replaced as part of the IRA project in the same or nearby area to ensure benefits are retained in the neighborhood.
3. **At-risk tree removal AND replacement programs** on PRIVATE properties within disadvantaged tracks. A minimum 1:1 tree replacement is required. Federal funds may not be used to make direct payments to private property owners.
4. **Training-** send staff and/or other project participants to training (e.g. arborist certification)
5. **Young Tree management** (watering, mulching, structural pruning)
6. **Pruning**, conducted by a Nebraska Arborist Association or an International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist, for trees in street ROW, parks, and other public areas. Private property is excluded.
7. **Other UCF activities** such as food forests, urban wood utilization, and small green infrastructure projects that improve long-term tree survival may be considered (ex: removing concrete to expand a planting space).
8. **Staff and contracting costs** to implement the above activities.

6. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- a. Cost of trees, mulch, supplies such as stakes, tree guards, water bags, drip irrigation, and water tanks.
- b. Contract costs of qualified vendors to perform project activities such as tree planting, removal, pruning, and establishment care.
- c. Minor concrete removal (for example, creating or expanding areas to plant trees)
- d. Equipment rental for implementing, establishing, and maintaining the urban forestry project.
- e. Costs related to education and outreach as part of the project implementation, including printing, ads, translation, arborist certification, etc.
- f. Salaries and fringe benefit costs of personnel engaged in the project. Direct costs shall be supported by time sheets, vouchers, or similar documentation reflecting specific project assignments.

7. INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- a. Construction (Such as trails, permanent fences, shelters, buildings, site grading unrelated to planting, major irrigation plumbing, etc.)
- b. Land purchase or real property purchase
- c. In-ground irrigation that acts as a lawn-sprinkler system.
- d. Stump removals as a stand-alone project. However, this is eligible as part of a tree planting or removal project.
- e. Non-organic mulches/weed barrier
- f. No equipment. Equipment is defined as having a fair market value of \$5,000 or greater per unit and a useful life of over one year. Supplies are those items that are not equipment (less than \$5,000 value per unit).

- g. Alcoholic beverages; Bad debts; Contingencies; Contributions and donations; Entertainment; Fines and penalties; Compensation for property destroyed or damaged; Fundraising; Interest and other financing costs; Loan for promised work not yet completed.
- h. Undocumented or improperly documented project costs.
- i. Reimbursement of donated labor, equipment, supplies, facilities, or services.

8. FOLLOW SPECIFICATIONS

Tree removal, pruning, and planting must follow the IRA Specifications for Partnership Projects. Trees must be high quality, meet defined standards, be purchased from a nursery/arborist licensed to do business in Nebraska, and be planted correctly, all according to our Specifications for Partnership Projects. A qualified arborist must do tree removal and pruning work.

9. CORRECT ANY DEFICIENCIES.

All projects will be inspected after completion. Any deficiencies need to be corrected as directed before reimbursement is issued.

10. GET DONE BY THE DEADLINE.

Complete your project by December 30th, 2025, and submit paperwork no later than thirty working days after the project's completion date, no exceptions.

12. REIMBURSEMENT

- a. Awarded funds are paid as a reimbursement for completed projects. Project sponsors are expected to cover all costs until reimbursements are made. However, NFS can make multiple reimbursements to the project sponsor during the project to help ease the financial burden.
- b. Certification: NFS will inspect your project before a reimbursement is issued. Thus, to avoid delays in reimbursement, projects shall contact NFS immediately after their project (or phase) is complete, even if the project is still gathering documentation for reimbursement.
- c. If deficiencies are found, the project is expected to correct them before reimbursement.
- d. Reimbursements must be requested by preparing and submitting the online Reimbursement Request Form and associated documentation to NFS. Once NFS certifies the project and receives the reimbursement form and all valid documentation, a project can expect reimbursement within 40 working days.
- e. Only costs verified by receipt or invoice will be considered for reimbursement. Note: Each receipt/invoice must contain the name and address of the vendor, an itemized list of services or goods, and the delivery dates. Plant material receipts must itemize all plants used in the project, detailing species, size, and quantity.
- f. Reimbursement checks will be made payable only to the project sponsor, governmental unit, or organization suitable to act as an agent for the project. **The reimbursement will not be made payable to any individual or business.**

14. REPORTING

This program is part of a highly visible federal program. Grantees will have bi-annual reporting requirements to report on the progress of grant deliverables. Grantees should document their project in photos and/or videos that can be used as stories on your community's accomplishments. Grantees will be

asked to report on metrics such as # of trees planted/pruned/removed; # of volunteers, etc. Grantees may be asked to report using an online mapping tool provided by NFS.

15. HOW TO SUBMIT A BETTER PROPOSAL:

COST ESTIMATES:

- Since grant awards are based on the applicant's cost estimate, careful cost estimating will ensure you have enough funds to complete the project.
- Round up to the nearest dollar in the individual components sections.
- Double-check your math.

IMPROVING YOUR APPLICATION:

- **Contact your community forester for advice and assistance.** While they can't write the application for you, community foresters can provide technical assistance for project development and review your project with you. Don't wait until the last minute!
- **Ensure that the person who completes the application is familiar with the proposed project** and can articulate it well.
- **Answer each question clearly, succinctly, and completely.** Your response should address all parts of each question asked. Avoid simply saying yes or no within the narrative section.
- **Avoid irrelevant information.** Answers should be specific to the proposed project and the information requested.
- **Have another person read the proposal.** Does it make sense to them? Are all the questions fully answered?

16. SCORING

Applications will be scored by a group of Nebraska Forest Service staff according to a rubric (Appendix C)

17. Submit your application by the deadline.

Appendix A provides application instructions.

APPENDIX A

APPLICATION DIRECTIONS

The application portal can be found here: <https://nfs.unl.edu/ira>

Complete Section 1, Profile.

- a. Enter the name of the project- Be descriptive and concise
- b. Funding request amount—Utilize whole numbers
- c. Project sponsor (entity responsible for the project and who will be listed on the award agreement and will receive reimbursements)
- d. A UEI number will be needed to issue an award agreement. If you don't currently have a UEI number, please write "In-Progress".
- e. Contact information of sponsor: Please provide the contact information of the project sponsor
- f. Please provide the contact information of the project contact, the person responsible for implementing and coordinating the project.
- g. Tree City USA community status can be found here: <https://www.arboday.org/programs/treecityusa/>

2. Complete Section 2, Eligibility Disadvantaged Community

- a. Does the project take place in a disadvantaged community? Include a screenshot of the project area from the Nebraska IRA [map](#). Visit the Nebraska IRA tool, find your project area, and utilize your computer's snipping tool to save an image of the project area.
- b. If the project work is not located in a defined area but benefits residents of geographically defined disadvantaged communities, describe the connection and define the population of interest.
 - i. For example, the neighborhood park serves the disadvantaged community; however, it lies just outside the defined disadvantaged track because it is on the other side of a neighborhood road.
 - ii. For example, the project is at a public school in a geographical area not delineated as disadvantaged by the Nebraska IRA tool. However, the public school serves students and families living within the disadvantaged tracts.

3. Complete Section 3, Narrative

- A. **Background:**
 - Clearly state the need for this work, describe how you will positively and directly impact the community forest canopy, and convey the benefits of the project)
- B. **Outcomes:**
 - Clearly describe your anticipated outcomes. These are the measurable results of your actions (how many, how much)
- C. **Scope of Work:**
 - How will your project be implemented?
 - How will you make sure your project is on track?
 - Include sufficient detail about your project activities.
 - Include a description of who is responsible for the work and who will be involved.
- D. **Sustainability and Resiliency:**

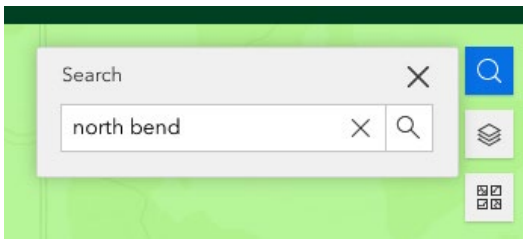
- Are community forestry best management practices being used?
 - How will the project be maintained in the future?
- E. **Project Timeline:**
- Ensure the timeline is reasonable and specific.
 - Provide a specific timeline with beginning and end dates that show the project is achievable. Describe anticipated quarterly milestones.
- F. **Partners & Engagement:**
- Describe the collaborative partners and contributions to the project's planning, implementation, and management phases.
 - How will this project broaden community engagement?
- G. **Underserved communities:**
- How will you ensure that this funding increases equitable access to the urban tree canopy and associated human health, environmental, and economic benefits?
 - How will you ensure underserved communities are included and engaged in this project? (ex: planning, implementation, leadership, etc)
4. **Complete the Budget Template** and upload
5. **Upload Disadvantaged Community Eligibility Map (s)**, utilize a snip from the [Nebraska IRA map](#), and ensure the map shows your project areas.
6. **Complete the 3-Year Tree Maintenance Plan** Template for Newly Planted Trees and upload (only if your project includes tree planting)

APPENDIX B

UTILIZING THE NEBRASKA IRA ONLINE TOOL

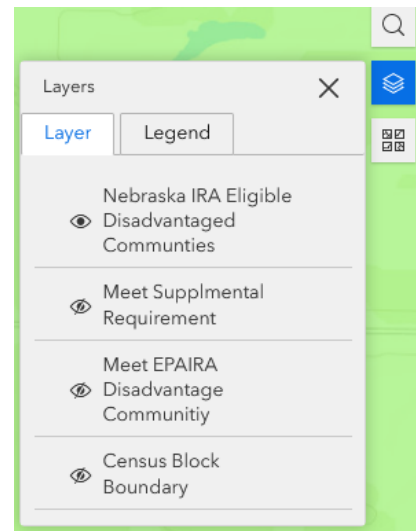
The Nebraska IRA Compliance Online Tool combines guidance from USFS as to what qualifies as a disadvantaged tract into one easy-to-utilize tool.

1. To use the tool launch the map by clicking this [link](#).
2. **Search for a community** by clicking the search icon in the upper right corner and entering the community name. Hit enter on your keyboard. The map will zoom in to the area of interest.

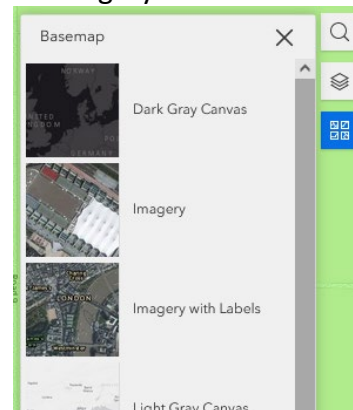


3. **Multiple layers are available** on the tool that can be toggled on or off.
 - a. Nebraska IRA Eligible Disadvantaged Communities shows all compliant tracks under IRA.
 - b. [EJ Screen Supplemental Index](#) at or above 80th percentile when compared to the state and nation. To know the qualifying index, right-click on the selected census block.
 - c. [EPA IRA disadvantaged track](#) shows all tracts within Nebraska considered disadvantaged using the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool](#), tribal lands, and [EJ Screen Supplemental Index](#) at or above 90% when compared to state and nation.

- d. To find the layers utilize the layer icon in the upper right corner. Utilize the eye icon to the left of the layer title to toggle the layer on or off.



7. **Multiple Basemaps, including aerial imagery and street maps, are available depending on your preference.** Click the map icon in the upper right corner to select your preferred base map. Scroll to the preferred imagery and click the map.



APPENDIX C

HOW WE SCORE APPLICATIONS

We select IRA UCF projects competitively, and applications are reviewed using this rubric.

Program Compliance - required to be considered

- (✓) Received by deadline
- (✓) Application complete
- (✓) Budget comprises qualifying expenses
- (✓) Qualifying activities
- (✓) Project will be implemented 100% in disadvantaged tracks as defined by _____.
- (✓) Eligible to receive federal funding

A. Background- 10 points possible

- (2) The need for the work is clearly stated.
- (3) The project will positively and directly impact the community forest canopy.
- (3) The project's goals are clear and aligned with IRA funding purposes.
- (2) Bonus points: Tree City USA

B. Outcomes- 4 points possible

- (4) Anticipated outcomes are clear and reasonable.

C. Scope of Work- 12 points possible

- (5) There are sufficient details about project activities, and they align with the budget.
- (3) There is a clear plan in place to make sure the project is on track
- (2) Project Coordinator is identified.
- (2) There is municipal support for the project.

D. Sustainability and Resiliency- 6 points possible

- (2) Project has a thoughtful and realistic long-term plan for maintenance.
- (2) Community forestry best management practices are utilized.
- (2) optional BONUS: Project uses bare root, Rootmaker or grow-bag trees and/or certified arborists.

E. Project Timeline—3 points possible

- (2) The timeline is reasonable and specific.
- (1) Quarterly milestones are described.

F. Partners and Engagement- 4 points possible

- (2) The project involves multiple partners, volunteers, or other types of community engagement.
- (2) Project includes a thoughtful community outreach and education effort.

G. Underserved Communities- 6 points possible

- (3) It is clear how this funding will increase equitable access to the community tree canopy.
- (2) There is a plan to engage underserved communities.
- (1) BONUS: Representatives from underserved communities are part of the project implementation team.

H. Project Budget- 5 points possible

- (1) Budget template is completed
- (4) It is clear how funds will be spent.