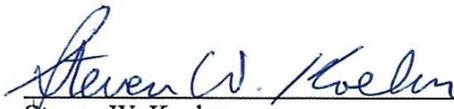


USDA Forest Service

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY
PROGRAM GUIDANCE

September, 2014



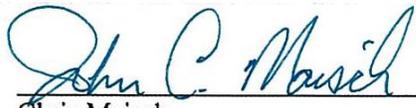
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INTRODUCTION

This document establishes direction for the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program, established by Section 9, Urban and Community Forestry Assistance, of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA) of 1978 (PL 95-313), as amended by PL 101-624¹.

The CFAA recognizes the value of non-federal forest lands to the health and welfare of the country and the stewardship for working forests across the urban-rural spectrum. These programs provide a coordinated federal investment to maintain and enhance the public benefits from non-federal lands.

The UCF Program was established to improve the condition and extent of community trees and forests, and to promote and expand the social, economic, and ecological benefits they provide in cities, suburbs and towns, nationwide. It accomplishes this by providing technical, financial, and science-based educational assistance to communities so they can implement urban forestry programs and plant, protect, maintain, and utilize community trees and forests.

PROGRAM AUTHORITIES AND STATUTORY PURPOSES

The UCF Program is authorized by Section 9, Urban and Community Forestry Assistance, of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 as amended [16 U.S.C. 2105]. This law authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture "to provide financial, technical, and related assistance to State Foresters or equivalent State officials for the purpose of encouraging States to provide information and technical assistance to units of local government and others that will encourage cooperative efforts to plan urban forestry programs and to plant, protect, maintain, and utilize wood from, trees in open spaces, greenbelts, roadside screens, parks, woodlands, curb areas, and residential developments in urban areas."

The law also states, "In providing such assistance the Secretary is authorized to cooperate with interested members of the public including nonprofit private organizations. The Secretary is also authorized to cooperate directly with units of local government and others in implementing this section whenever the Secretary and the affected State Forester or equivalent State official agree that direct cooperation would better achieve the purposes of this section."

The specific purposes of Urban and Community Forestry Assistance as stated in Section 9 are to:

1. improve understanding of the benefits of preserving existing tree cover in urban areas and communities;
2. encourage owners of private residences and commercial properties to maintain trees and expand forest cover on their properties;
3. provide education programs and technical assistance to State and local organizations (including community associations and schools) in maintaining forested lands and individual trees in urban and community settings and identifying appropriate tree species and sites for expanding forest cover;

¹ Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (Farm Bill) and its successors

4. provide assistance through competitive matching grants awarded to local units of government, approved organizations that meet the requirements of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or other local community tree volunteer groups, for urban and community forestry projects;
5. implement a tree planting program to complement urban and community tree maintenance and open space programs and to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, conserve energy, and improve air quality in addition to providing other environmental benefits;
6. promote the establishment of demonstration projects in selected urban and community settings to illustrate the benefits of maintaining and creating forest cover and trees;
7. enhance the technical skills and understanding of sound tree maintenance and arboricultural practices involving the cultivation of trees, shrubs and complementary ground covers, of individuals involved in the planning, development, and maintenance of urban and community forests and trees; and
8. expand existing research and educational efforts intended to improve the understanding of (A) tree growth and maintenance, tree physiology and morphology, species adaptations, and forest ecology; (B) the value of integrating trees and ground covers; (C) the economic, environmental, social and psychological benefits of trees and forest cover in urban and community environments; and (D) the role of trees in conserving energy and mitigating urban heat islands.

The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC) is authorized and established by Section 9 [16 U.S.C. 2105 (g) (1)] for the purpose of:

- (A) Developing a national urban and community forestry action plan;
- (B) Evaluating the implementation of that plan; and
- (C) Developing criteria for, and submitting recommendations with respect to, the urban and community forestry challenge cost-share program under subsection (f) of this section.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The Forest Service provides national UCF Program leadership and coordination. Program delivery primarily occurs at the regional and state level, through State Forestry agencies or equivalent State agencies (including District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and U.S. affiliated islands) and other key partners. These partnerships contribute to regional and statewide linkages of diverse groups focused on developing sustainable local UCF programs that improve the condition and extent of community trees and forests across metropolitan areas and in cities, suburbs and towns. State UCF Councils advise the State Forester on program direction and priorities and provide partnership support to expand the delivery of state programs.

Other external partners, such as academic institutions, federal agencies, non-profit and community-based organizations, as well as local and tribal governments play an important role in expanding public-private partnerships to promote the understanding and management of urban and community forests and related natural resources.

State Forestry agencies and their equivalents, (including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and U.S. affiliated islands) provide statewide leadership, direction, networks, program management, including technical, financial and educational assistance. Delivery of the UCF Program relies primarily on the cooperation of State Forestry agencies, local and tribal governments, the private sector, nonprofit and community-based organizations, academic institutions, and Forest Service offices.

In the event that a state cannot meet certain program requirements, a requirement may be temporarily waived or modified by mutual agreement of the Forest Service Regional Offices/Area/International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF) and State Forestry Agency or equivalent. The waiver or modification must be in writing, state the beginning and end of the time period, and be signed by the State Forester and the Regional Forester/Area Director/IITF Director.

In addition to state level action, the Forest Service provides financial and technical assistance to national and regional partners and research institutions. These entities leverage available agency resources and produce information and materials that strengthen overall program outcomes across a broad spectrum of partners.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

USDA Forest Service

The Forest Service Washington Office State and Private Forestry (WO-SPF) provides national leadership and coordination among agencies and other national groups. In consultation with the Forest Service Regional Offices/Area/IITF, NUCFAC, the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), other agencies, and partners, the WO-SPF establishes policy, strategies, direction, procedures, priorities, provides management oversight, supports the exchange of information and technology transfer, and addresses emerging issues at the national level. The WO-SPF also coordinates interagency and intra-agency cooperation, facilitates partnerships with non-governmental organizations, and identifies common challenges to be addressed nationally. The WO-SPF is also responsible for annual program accomplishment reporting and staff support for the operations NUCFAC.

NUCFAC is an appointed federal advisory council to the Secretary of Agriculture on urban and community forestry and related issues. The council provides advice and guidance to the USDA regarding strategic objectives to advance urban and community forest health nationwide, and advises the Secretary on USDA's national competitive cost-share challenge grant program. NUCFAC is responsible for producing a 10 year action plan for urban and community forestry that should address at a minimum the following: the current status of urban and community forestry in the U.S., recommendations to improve the current conditions, the state of urban and community forestry research and recommendations for new and expanded research, as well as estimated resources to implement the action plan.

The Forest Service Regional/Area/IITF Offices manage implementation of the UCF Program within their jurisdictions. These field units convey regional program direction to states and partners, support technology transfer, and technical and financial assistance. They award and monitor grants and agreements, evaluate and communicate program results, identify and address emerging issues and technological and science delivery needs to ensure effective program delivery, and elevate regional priorities of national significance. They promote cooperation and foster partnerships with State Forestry agencies, tribal governments, organizations and other

agencies. UCF Program staff collaborate with researchers to identify needs, and develop and transfer resulting tools and products to advance urban and community forestry.

Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) operates urban research units and field offices across the agency's seven research stations. Critical research advances basic and applied science relating to urban trees and forestry resources, urban ecology, ecosystem services and values, watershed rehabilitation, human health and well-being, urban wood utilization, and green infrastructure. The WO-R&D coordinates research efforts, builds science capacity and partnerships, and bridges science and policy to inform science-based decisionmaking. The UCF Program and R&D work closely together to identify urban research needs, key partners, and opportunities for science delivery.

Forest data collection, analysis, and reporting occurs on an annual basis as part of the Forest Service's Resources Planning Act (RPA) Assessment, Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA), and the Forest Health Monitoring program, providing information needed to assess the status, trends, and sustainability of urban forests across the nation.

The Forest Service assures that the UCF Program is available to all segments of the population without restriction or limitations and that all grant recipients, direct and indirect, comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and other applicable civil rights laws and regulations. State Forestry Agencies and any sub-grantees must also be compliant with relevant Office of Management & Budget (OMB) circulars for auditing purposes.

The Forest Service implements the agency's tribal consultation policy, shares information and technology, provides financial and other assistance to tribes as appropriate, and resolves disputes with tribal governments. The Forest Service will consult with Tribes on decisions regarding agency policies, plans, programs, and actions that could affect tribal rights and interests and will coordinate with other federal and state agencies and local governments during consultation.

State Forestry Agencies

State Forestry agencies, or equivalent State organizations, (including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and U.S. affiliated island)s, provide statewide leadership and delivery of State UCF Programs, engage in Region/Area/IITF cooperation, and participate in and advance national and strategic priorities.

State Forestry agencies, or their equivalents, deliver financial, technical and/or educational related assistance for the establishment and growth of sustainable local urban and community forestry programs, oversee the delivery of federal cost-share assistance, and report on program accomplishments. They are responsible for implementing federal program direction and authorities, consulting with the State UCF Council, and integrating urban and community forestry issues and priorities into State Forest Action Plans.

State Forestry agencies create and maintain partnerships, engaging the public, including regional and local units of government, tribal government, academic institutions, non-profits and community-based organizations to support, invest, and build capacity for urban forestry programs, practices and policies.

Other Key Partners

Other key partners are essential in encouraging and supporting the development and implementation of urban and community forestry programs. They assist by serving on advisory councils, committees, or boards, and they serve an important role in engaging communities to plan and implement activities. These partners implement collaborative urban and community forestry projects and strengthen and promote urban and community forestry policies, programs, and research. These organizations may receive financial, technical, and/or educational assistance for projects that align with national program authorities and State Forest Action Plan priorities. Partners include, but are not limited to: federal agencies, regional and local units of government, non-profit organizations, volunteers and community-based organizations, academic institutions, tribal governments, and professional and trade associations.

CORE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The USDA Forest Service, acting for the Secretary of Agriculture, has determined that States, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and U.S. affiliated islands, must meet four core program performance requirements, as described below, to receive federal funding:

1. An urban and community forestry program coordinator
2. Volunteer/partnership coordination
3. An urban and community forestry council
4. State program strategic planning

States may implement these core program requirements in a variety of ways to best meet their unique state legal and program needs, including the use of grants, contracts and/or agreements. However, failure to comply with these basic requirements will result in an adjustment of annual State allocations by the Region/Area/IITF until all four of the elements are satisfied. In order to receive full funding, each State shall document that it meets the program requirements in its annual grant narrative.

Urban and Community Forestry Program Coordinator

Each State shall establish and maintain a full-time UCF Program Coordinator position. This individual, in cooperation with other State staff, works with urban and community forestry partners to plan and deliver the State UCF program. The coordinator is the State Forester's UCF program manager and is the primary contact for the Forest Service regional counterpart. State UCF Coordinators should have competency, knowledge, experience, or certification in the urban forestry profession or a related discipline. With Region/Area/IITF approval, State Forestry agencies may contract for services to meet this requirement, however, the services must be rendered by a single, qualified, full-time principal contact and accountability for program delivery must remain with the State Forestry agency.

Volunteer/Partnership Coordination

Each state shall provide volunteer/partnership coordination in addition to the State's UCF Program Coordinator. This function is to deliver technical assistance to local governments, communities, and volunteer based organizations and to extend external partnerships, leverage program support, and diversity stakeholder and citizen engagement in State UCF Programs. This full time equivalent function may be one staff, split across staffs, a contract/consultant, or non-profit partnership, etc. as approved by the Region/Area/IITF. Each state should determine the

most effective way for the individual(s) or partners to deliver state wide coverage and work cooperatively and in coordination with the State UCF Program Coordinator.

Urban and Community Forestry Council

Each State shall have an appropriately broad-based UCF Council that consists of governmental agencies, industry, academic institutions, nonprofit and community-based organizations, and grassroots volunteers concerned with urban and community forestry, and reflects diverse public participation. States are encouraged to utilize the State Council to expand delivery of the state program, leverage external resources, grow public-private partnerships, and build a vibrant statewide constituency empowered to promote urban forestry statewide. The State Council is, at minimum, required to advise and/or assist the State Forester in the development of program emphasis, priorities and implementation, and periodic review and revision of the 5 Year State Strategic Plan/ State Forest Action Plan.

State Program Strategic Planning

States shall incorporate UCF program strategic planning in the State Forest Action Plan. Planning will be future oriented, identify action items to achieve priority goals and objectives, and be based on a current assessment of resource needs and conditions. Planning will address the following components:

- Sustaining the Statewide UCF Program
- Enhancing, protecting and conserving the state's urban and community forest resources
- Building local capacity to actively manage urban and community forests
- Identifying emerging strategic issues and priorities and how they may relate to national and/or Region/Area/IITF strategic priorities at a landscape scale.

A State may develop a separate five-year state UCF Strategic Plan to address the above and incorporate it by reference into its State Forest Action Plan.

CORE FUNDING

Funding is distributed according to the Performance-Based Methodology for Allocating Urban and Community Forestry Program Funds. Each Region/Area/IITF office will distribute funds in consultation with State Forestry agencies in compliance with the performance-based allocation methodology (Appendix A).

Regions/Area/IITF offices may dedicate up to 10% of the regional allocation for regional strategic priorities in addition to the percentage of UCF Program funds allocated to competitive resource allocation grants.

Forest Service funding for State and local programs is not intended to substitute for State and local urban and community forestry funds. The federal share of program or project support to any direct recipient shall not exceed 50-percent.

By agreement of the State Forester(s) and Region(s)/Area/IITF, UCF funds may be provided to other key partners for delivery of UCF Program assistance. These funds must be used for activities identified in the 5 Year State Strategic Plan and/or the State Forest Action Plan and be consistent with UCF program direction.

STATE SUB-GRANTS

States are encouraged to offer competitive grants for developing and managing sustainable urban and community forestry programs. If state sub-grants are provided, sub-grants shall:

1. Establish matching criteria for funds and comply with UCF Program authorities, appropriate Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, and applicable Federal and State regulations.
2. Have a work plan and a defined product or measurable outcomes consistent with the program purposes.
3. Meet the American Standards for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60.1) and ANSI A300 Part 6 for tree planting and comply with industry standards for tree care as defined by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI A300 series) and related industry best management practices.
4. Recognize the USDA-Forest Service in products and projects developed using Forest Service program funds, and include a non-discrimination statement on all printed materials.

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Forest Service and States will negotiate targets for performance annually and include these in the annual grant narrative. Targets for other key partners will be established, as needed, and be included in the grant or agreement narrative. Grant narratives shall reflect compliance with the core program requirements. Direct grant recipients shall provide performance and accomplishment reports annually.

Forest Service WO/Regional/Area/IITF offices will:

1. Report accomplishments and performance annually including information on state grants, national or regional projects, competitive resource allocation grants, and grants to others as directed by congressional priorities, recommended by NUCFAC, and/or agreed to with affected State Forestry agencies.
2. Report annually the amount granted to each state for operation of its UCF Program.
3. Evaluate State UCF Program effectiveness and compliance with program authorities and direction, at least every five years, through technical assist visits.
4. Reviews will comply with Forest Service Manual Chapter 1460 requirements. When a Cooperative Forestry Management Review takes place, the UCF Program shall be included.

States will:

1. Provide accomplishment and performance reports, including information on all sub-grants, program highlights, and innovative state products or technologies, to the Forest Service on an annual basis.
2. Report annually on other performance measures as agreed upon with NASF such as: hours of volunteer service, amount of state UCF funding, sub-grant awards, and amount of local match provided.

3. In order for State Forestry agencies to compete for federal funds, states must maintain records substantiating the ‘Managing’ or ‘Developing’ status of each community they report as participating in the UCF Program. For ‘Developing’ status, one or more of the following elements must be documented, along with records of state technical assistance provided to those developing communities. For ‘Managing’ status, the first four elements (a – d) must be documented:
 - a) **Management Plans:** Possessing, using and periodically updating a management plan demonstrates a community’s commitment to the comprehensive management of its community tree and forest resources.
 - b) **Professional Staff:** Professional staff members have education, training and experience in the fields of urban forestry, arboriculture, forestry, natural resource management, and/or horticulture. These requirements are intended to ensure that the person with the primary responsibility for program management has the training and experience to properly and professionally manage the urban forest resource and advance the community’s UCF program.
 - c) **Ordinances/Policies:** Ordinances and/or policies must be codified, be followed and/or routinely enforced by some mechanism within the community, and guide the community in the proper care, establishment and protection of community trees and forests. Effective public policies are not always contained in a single “Tree Ordinance,” and are likely to be delivered through a variety of policies and regulations.
 - d) **Advocacy/Advisory Organizations:** Many local UCF programs began through the efforts of local citizens’ groups, and these groups often serve as a catalyst to encourage active local urban forest resource management for the long term. This measure aims to ensure that community residents and program stakeholders are informed, educated, and provided with opportunities for active stewardship and community leadership in the development and implementation of a sound community forestry program at the local level.
 - e) **State Assistance:** State assistance should have a significant impact on a local community’s ability to develop its own self-sustaining UCF program.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The Forest Service national office (WO-SPF), and Forest Service Region/Area/IITF offices, may establish program emphasis areas and deliver national and/or regional strategic initiatives, which may evolve or change from year-to-year. Such initiatives are intended to advance the UCF program and will be communicated to and coordinated with affected partners.

States will be encouraged to take advantage of national, Region/Area/IITF and strategic initiatives to advance state and local program priorities and objectives.

National and regional priorities will be transmitted through the program budget and financial direction on an annual basis.

Appendix A

Performance-Based Methodology for Allocating Urban & Community Forestry Program Funds

April 2005

Introduction

The purpose of the Urban and Community Forestry Program is to provide technical, financial, educational, and research services to communities so they can plant, protect and maintain community trees and forests, and utilize wood from these trees, to maximize environmental, social and economic benefits. Program performance will be measured on an annual basis by tracking the percentage of U.S. population living in communities that are: 1) managing, or 2) developing programs to plant, protect, and maintain their urban and community trees and forests (as compared to total U.S. population living in communities). This performance methodology, detailed in I - IV below:

- Measures and rewards performance using nationally accepted standards;
- Ensures that no state is precluded from participating in the program;
- Includes a mechanism to fund nationally and regionally significant projects;
- Provides different areas of the country flexibility to address their unique needs;
- Supports the agency mission to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

I. Determining funds for allocation to Regions, Northeastern Area, and International Institute of Tropical Forestry (Regions/NA/IITF)

The Washington Office will reserve the following from the Appropriation received from Congress:

- Congressional priorities (earmarks)
- WO operations
- National projects/initiatives, e.g., challenge cost share grants and other initiatives developed in consultation with the National Association of State Foresters (NASF)
- Funds for the U.S. Territories & Freely Associated States of the Pacific

II. Allocation of Funds to Regions/NA/IITF (national performance)

Remaining funds shall be allocated to Regions/NA/IITF based upon their percentage of the total U.S. population living in communities within each unit's administrative boundary that are managing² or developing³ programs to plant, protect, and maintain their urban and community trees and forests.

III. Distribution of funds from Regions/NA/IITF to States (regional performance)

1. Before distributing funds to the states, each Region/NA/IITF will reserve funds for the following:

² Communities "managing" programs have received state assistance to achieve all of the following national performance measures: management plans, professional staff, ordinances/policies, and a local advisory/advocacy group (see performance measure descriptions on page 2, item IV).

³ Communities with "developing" programs have received state assistance to achieve at least one, but less than four, of the following national performance measures: management plans, professional staff, ordinances/policies, and a local advisory/advocacy group (see performance measure descriptions on page 2, item IV).

- Operations and technical assistance.
 - Funding for competitive, regionally significant projects within or among Regions/NA/IITF using up to 10% of regional allocations in consultation with the applicable State Foresters.
2. **Allocation Performance Elements:** Remaining funds shall be distributed from the Region/NA/IITF to each state based upon each state’s share of the FS unit’s total population living in communities that are:
- Managing programs to plant, protect, and maintain their urban and community trees and forests, and
 - Developing programs to plant, protect, and maintain their urban and community trees and forests. (See footnote on preceding page for definition of “managing” and “developing.”)

Regions/NA/IITF will assign weights to the allocation elements with no less than 20% of the funds assigned to either the “managing” or “developing” element, in consultation with affected State Foresters.

Forest Service Regional Foresters, Northeastern Area Director and Director of IITF retain the authority to adjust funding distributions, in consultation with affected State Foresters, to maintain a basic UCF program at \$200,000 for states meeting national program direction and requirements. The Deputy Chief may adjust the national distribution to ensure that all FS Regions, the Northeastern Area, and IITF have sufficient funding to support continuation of technical assistance activities and program operations.

This new performance-based methodology provides for transition to full implementation so that, if possible, no state would receive a reduction in funding greater than 10% a year, phased in over a three-year period (FY 2006 – FY 2008).

IV. National Performance Measures

The following national performance measures are quantifiable indicators of successful technical, financial, and educational assistance to communities.

1. **Management Plans:** Communities that have active urban and community tree and forest management plans, developed from professionally-based resource assessments/inventories.
2. **Professional Staff:** Communities relying on the services of individuals who have one or more of the following credentials, and who are directly employed or retained through written agreement to advise and/or assist in the planting, protection, and maintenance of urban and community trees and forests:
 - Degree in forestry or related field;
 - International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist or equivalent professional certification.
3. **Ordinances/policies:** Communities that have adopted and can present documentation of local/statewide ordinances or policies that focus on planting, protecting, and maintaining their urban and community trees and forests.
4. **Advocacy/Advisory Organizations:** Communities with active tree boards, commissions, or non-profit organizations that are formalized or chartered to advise/advocate for the planting, protection and maintenance of urban and community trees and forests.