



Urban Trees Mini Grant Program

Request for Proposals



Chesapeake Bay Trust | 108 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403
(410) 974 - 2941 | www.cbtrust.org

Introduction and Program Goals

The [Chesapeake Bay Trust](#) (Trust) is a nonprofit, grant-making organization dedicated to improving the bays, streams, rivers, forests, parks, and other natural resources of our local systems, from the Chesapeake to the Coastal Bays to the Youghiogheny River. Since 1985, the Trust has awarded over \$190 million in grants to municipalities, nonprofit organizations, schools, and public agencies throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Urban Trees Mini Grant Program is part of the Maryland General Assembly's commitment to plant 5,000,000 native trees by 2031. The goal of the Urban Trees Mini Grant Program is to green communities; enhance quality of life, human health, and community livability by improving air quality and reducing urban heat island effect; and mitigate some of the effects of climate change in urban, underserved areas. The Urban Trees Mini Grant Program empowers communities with resources to plant trees, and thereby transform their neighborhoods into healthier, greener environments for current and future generations.

The Trust has a mission to empower all people to participate in the restoration and protection of our region's natural resources through its award-making. As a result, the Trust strongly encourages applications directly from or that engage communities underrepresented in the environmental space. For more about the Trust's commitment to engage underrepresented groups, see our strategic plan at www.cbtrust.org/strategic-plan and <https://cbtrust.org/diversity-inclusion/>.

The Trust recognizes that application processes can be complicated and time-consuming; the Trust continues to work to simplify our application processes where possible. New applicants, new organizations, small organizations, or any group that is experiencing capacity challenges or other barriers to applying, is eligible to receive guidance on the application process. Please contact the Program Officer for assistance.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Trust staff to discuss applications prior to submission. Trust staff can provide assistance to develop project plans and budgets. Applicants interested in larger projects that cost more than \$10,000 should apply to the larger [Urban Trees Grant Program](#).

At a Glance

Program Summary:

This grant program will support urban tree planting projects that enhance livability in underserved communities.

Deadline:

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until funds for this fiscal year are exhausted. The Trust must receive all applications a minimum of eight weeks prior to the start of the proposed project. The Trust cannot provide reimbursement funding for already completed projects.

Eligible Project Locations:

This program will fund projects in urban underserved communities across Maryland as shown on this map:

<https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webapviewer/index.html?id=4258d3e39f6a47fca146b854c0f01e31>

Request Amounts:

Up to \$10,000

Submit Your Application:

Follow the instructions at: <https://cbtrust.org/grants/urban-trees-mini-grant-program/>

Contact:

Lianna Gomori-Ruben, (410) 974-2941 ext. 112, lgomori-ruben@cbtrust.org

Eligible Applicants

The Trust and our funding partners welcome requests from the following applicants:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Schools
- Community or neighborhood associations
- Service, youth, or civic groups
- Institutions of higher education
- Counties and municipalities
- Forest conservancy district boards

As per statute, grant applications from qualified organizations located in the underserved areas where the proposed tree planting projects will be implemented will be prioritized.

If your organization type is not listed above, contact the Trust to verify eligibility prior to submitting your application. All applicants, but particularly new applicants, are encouraged to contact the Trust for assistance.

Eligible Project Locations

Tree planting projects proposed as part of this program must occur in urban, underserved areas, defined in [Section 8–1911 of the Natural Resources Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland](#) as:

- An urban area, as delineated by the United States Census Bureau AND
- An area that meets ONE or more of the following criteria:
 - **Historic disenfranchisement**: A neighborhood that was, at any point in time, redlined or graded as “hazardous” by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation; OR
 - **Unemployment**: A census tract with an average rate of unemployment for the most recent 24-month period for which data are available that exceeds the average rate of unemployment for the State; OR
 - **Household income**: A census tract with a median household income for the most recent 24-month period for which data are available that is equal to or less than 75% of the median household income for the state of Maryland during that period; OR
 - **Housing project**: A housing project as defined in Section 12-101 of the Housing and Community Development Article.

To determine if a community is eligible, view this online map produced by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources:

<https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4258d3e39f6a47fca146b854c0f01e31>.

Trees funded through this program **must** fall within the orange areas on the map or fall within proximity to a housing project. The applicant is ultimately responsible for site eligibility. If you have questions about your site’s eligibility, contact your Program Officer for assistance.

Eligible Project Types

This program funds tree planting projects that follow the guidelines below.

- Projects must be fully or significantly focused on planting trees.
- All trees planted with funds from this grant program must be native. More information about Native Tree Species Selection can be found in [Appendix A](#).
- All trees planted with funds from this grant program must receive two years of maintenance after they are planted. More information about the required elements for those two years of maintenance are in [Appendix B](#).
- Proposed trees to be planted **must not** be required as mitigation for new or re-development, regulatory offset, or for any other regulatory reason.
- Sites include, but are not limited to, streets and rights of way, vacant lots, institutional grounds, or other open space. Details about site selection can be found in [Appendix C](#).
- For projects on property other than that of the applicant, attach a letter stating that permission has been granted by the entity owning the land on which the project will be completed. If permits are required, describe the status of those permits.
- As part of site preparation, requests for invasive vegetation removal are permitted. Removal of dead or dying trees are not applicable under this grant program. More information about site preparation is in [Appendix D](#).
- Signage for requests in highly visible areas is strongly recommended.

Project Timeline

Trees funded by Urban Trees Mini Grants must be planted within 12 months upon receipt of the award and receive two years of maintenance post-planting. Requests to extend the project implementation period will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis.

Eligible Project Expenses

Proposals to the Urban Tree Mini Grant Program may request costs from two categories of funding detailed below.

Are you planning to plant street trees?

Contact the department of planning and/or public works in the jurisdiction in which the project is located (either for the city/town if the project is in an incorporated area within a county or the county if not).

Are you planning to plant trees in a right-of-way?

Contact the Maryland Forest Service about roadside tree planting via information found at: <https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/programapps/newrtlaw.aspx>.

All projects must check for the presence of underground utilities.

Maryland Law Title XII requires that any project intended to perform excavation or digging must contact Miss Utility to ensure the project can proceed and to map out any specific areas to avoid.

For more information about Title XII and Miss Utility visit: <https://www.missutility.net/>.

Costs Associated Directly with Tree Planting Activities

Funds in this category may be used for supplies, site preparation, personnel costs, and other expenses and materials related to planning, implementing, and maintaining tree planting projects in underserved areas (as per statute). Specific eligible expenses in this category include those in the categories of project readiness (outreach and engagement activities to identify sites and engage residents/landowners); site readiness (tree pit creation, stump removal, etc.); tree planting (costs of trees, labor to plant the trees, tree shelters, mulch, and other materials); and tree maintenance. Funds in this category cannot be used for food or other plant material. If you plan to sub-contract work (e.g., hire an entity to plant or water the trees), the Trust recommends that you solicit estimates from at least three consultants or contractors. Funds in this category are provided by the State of Maryland and governed by statute.

Costs Associated with Community Needs that Indirectly Support Greening Activities

Applicants pursuing tree planting projects through this grant program may request a limited amount of funds for expenses not directly related to tree planting activities as listed above but for activities related to community needs associated with the spaces that cannot be supported by State funds. A wide range of activities may fall into this category. Examples include:

- Costs needed to convene people and groups that cannot be covered by State funds such as food;
- Community revitalization elements that incorporate other plant material;
- Costs associated with community meetings around public safety; and
- Youth education needs associated with the physical space identified for tree planting.

Communities will have unique needs and aspirations, so requests should be tailored accordingly. **The maximum request for funds in this category is \$250.** BGE, an Exelon company, has committed funding to cover these costs.

Cost Per Tree

To attempt to accomplish the ultimate goal of planting 500,000 trees in underserved urban areas by 2031 (see the Introduction and Program Goals on page 2), we ask that applicants limit their costs wherever possible (though request enough for a successful implementation project).

Generally, street tree project requests should result in a budget averaging \$600 or less per tree (especially if tree pits need to be created or expanded), though if higher costs are required, they can be justified in the proposal. Other types of tree projects may be closer to \$100 per tree if less site preparation is required and smaller trees can be used.

The Trust at present is aiming for an overarching goal of an average of \$180 per tree in the overall program. However, individual applicants do not need to aim for that goal if their sites or projects do not allow.

One way to reduce cost per tree would be through matching resources. However, because the Trust aims to engage underserved communities for which providing matching funds could be a barrier, the program does require match. That said, applicants are encouraged to consider other resources that can bear some of the costs of their project. For example, several programs exist that will provide trees at reduced or no cost,

depending on type of applicant and geographical location. Many counties offer discounted trees to certain landowner types. In addition, the Tree-Mendous Maryland program offers discounts for native trees that are to be planted on certain types of property: <https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/treemendous/default.aspx>

Application Requirements

The following document will be required upon submission when completing the questions in the online application form (see [Appendix E](#)):

1. Completed Narrative Questions (Microsoft Word or PDF) describing the project goals, project site(s), project costs, organization background, and community background (see [Appendix F](#)).

The following documents are optional for submission at this stage but highly encouraged. Trust staff will provide assistance as needed to develop them. Final approval of projects will occur after all elements are finalized. Examples are available under Application Resources on the Urban Trees Mini Grant Program website.

1. Planting plan with native tree species selected for the project
2. Letter of landowner permission and/or partner commitment
3. Two-year maintenance plan

Online Application Submission Instructions

We have a new online award management system, hosted by SmartSimple! The Trust uses this online system for the application process, and if awarded, project management. **Please login to SmartSimple to access your awards and applications.** You can access SmartSimple in two ways:

1. Through our website: <https://cbtrust.org/login> and clicking the link “Log In to the Bay Trust Awards Portal” **or**
2. The Chesapeake Bay Trust’s SmartSimple page: https://chesapeakebaytrust.us-1.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp

If you have applied to the Trust in the past, your profile and award data has been migrated to our new system. You can access the new system by entering the same email you used in our former system (Blackbaud), click ‘forgot password’, and follow the prompts to create a new password. If you are a new applicant, click the blue “Register” button on the landing page and follow the instructions.

See <https://cbtrust.org/login> for help setting up your account and finding funding opportunities.

By submitting an application to this program, applicants acknowledge that: 1) they are compliant with federal employment and non-discrimination laws and 2) they have not been debarred, convicted, charged or had a civil judgment rendered against them for fraud or related offense by any government agency (federal, state or local) or been terminated for cause or default by any government agency (federal, state, or local). In addition, all final products will be provided to the funding partners for use and distribution at the sole discretion of the funding partners.

Deadline

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until all funds have been exhausted for the fiscal year. Please submit your application at least eight weeks before your project starts so that we have time to review your application and work together on any missing items.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used by internal expert reviewers to evaluate applications for this grant program and we will work with you to support your project (as we aim to align your project with this program and provide support):

Most Important Criteria:

- **Consistency with Requests for Proposal (RFP):** Is the project proposed consistent with the intent and goals of the grant program?
- **Cost Effectiveness/Budget:** Is the budget appropriate (at or below \$10,000 requested), cost-effective, and justified in the application? Costs will be compared to the standard of \$100-\$600 per tree planted, which includes the trees themselves, supplies, labor, two years of maintenance, and tree pit work when necessary.
- **Likelihood of Project Success:** Is the plan described in the proposal likely to accomplish this type of project?

The inclusion of a planting plan with a native tree list, landowner permission and/or partner commitments, and a two-year maintenance plan are optional at this stage but strongly encouraged. Trust staff will assist you in developing these materials as needed. Final approval of projects will occur after all elements are finalized.

Important Criteria:

- **Likelihood of Long-term Project Success:** Is there a realistic maintenance plan in place that will ensure the tree's survival for a minimum of two years following planting?
- **Demonstration Value:** How visible and impactful will the installed trees be to the receiving community? Are the people and groups needed to do this work included in and supportive of the project (e.g., landowner, neighbors, etc.)?

Awards and Notifications

All applicants will receive a letter stating the decision on the grant request. An application may be declined, partially awarded, or fully awarded. If approved, the Trust will send an award agreement with award conditions and due dates of requirements and reports. The Trust will mail the award payment to the requesting organization following the satisfaction of any award contingencies, including upload of the signed award agreement. In cases where the awardee fails to submit a requirement by the due date, the Trust reserves the right to terminate the award agreement and require a refund of funds already transferred to the awardee.

When the project is complete, awardees are required to complete a final report by meeting with the Program Officer to discuss the project's outcomes, successes, and challenges, and by providing visual proof (e.g., photos or videos) and a map of the trees that have been planted. Alternatively, financial documentation for supplies and contractual expenses above \$500 may be provided in lieu of a map that may include but are not limited to submission of all receipts for supplies and invoices for subcontractors/contractors. All financial back-up documentation will be grouped and numbered to correspond to the budget line item reported as spent. All

trees planted with Urban Trees Program funds must be registered to the Maryland Department of the Environment's Five Million Trees Tracking Tool at <https://five-million-tree-tracking-tool-maryland.hub.arcgis.com/pages/register-trees-survey>.

Organizations with outstanding final, progress, or status reports, or pending refunds, may be declined or if awarded funding will be required to submit all outstanding items prior to receiving additional award funds.

Additional Resources

The resources below are provided to assist applicants in planning their tree planting projects and submitting successful applications. To view more resources available to applicants, visit the [Applicant Resources](#) page.

[Appendix A - Native Tree Species Selection](#)

An overview to the factors to consider when selecting native tree species with links to native tree lists.

[Appendix B - Maintenance Requirements](#)

A list of the maintenance activities that should be included in a two-year maintenance plan to support the survival of newly planted trees.

[Appendix C - Planting Site Selection](#)

Considerations and actions to be included in the project planning process when selecting sites to ensure that the tree plantings will be successful in the short and long term.

[Appendix D – Site Preparation](#)

Activities to prepare sites for tree planting that are eligible expenses under this grant program.

[Appendix E – Online Application Form](#)

A preview of the questions you will be asked when submitting the application form.

[Appendix F – Application Narrative Questions and Supporting Documents](#)

The application narrative questions and recommended supporting documents needed to submit your application. Also available in a downloadable Word template on the Urban Trees Mini Grant Program website.