Urban & Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act Subaward Program Funding Opportunities

Frequently Asked Questions *(UPDATED 10/09/2024)*

1. **What is the Inflation Reduction Act and how is the Oregon Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program involved?**

   - The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is a federal law that makes historic investments in clean energy and climate action. The IRA advances the Justice40 Initiative, which commits to providing 40 percent of climate, clean energy, and infrastructure investment benefits to overburdened and underserved communities. "The Inflation Reduction Act recognizes the importance of conserving, connecting, and restoring the nation's coasts, marshes, forests, and landscapes as a means to sequester carbon and deploy nature-based defenses to climate impacts. The law also prioritizes reducing the risks posed by catastrophic wildfires" (Building a Clean Energy Economy: A Guidebook to the Inflation Reduction Act's Investments in Clean Energy and Climate Action, pg. 145).

   - The IRA provides up to $1.5 billion to the United States Forest Service (USFS) for urban and community forestry investments to foster 1) increased and equitable access to urban tree canopy, 2) broadened community engagement in local urban forest planning, tree planting, and management activities, and 3) improved community and urban forest resilience. $250 million was awarded directly to state urban and community forestry programs, and $1.13 billion in additional funding was awarded through a competitive grant process (see https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf/2023-grant-funding for more details).

   - The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program received $26.6 million in IRA grant funding from the USFS to stand up two subaward programs— $10 million devoted specifically to Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations, and $12.5 million that will be available to all eligible entities in the state of Oregon—to promote urban and community forest investment and tree equity for overburdened and underserved communities.

2. **What are the goals of the ODF UCF subaward programs?**

   - These programs will provide funding to eligible entities to advance the following priorities:

     ο Support urban and community forestry assessment, planning, and prioritization

     ο Significantly expand urban and community forestry tree production, planting, and maintenance

     ο Support culturally responsive urban and community forestry education, engagement, immersive/experiential outdoor recreation, and community-building initiatives

     ο Support urban and community forestry workforce development

     ο Build capacity with collective impact through an urban and community forestry network

     ο Support urban and community forestry monitoring, adaptive management, and lesson sharing

3. **Who is eligible to apply for UCF subaward opportunities?**

   - **Eligible entities:**

     o Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations

     o Local government entities (e.g., city, county, or regional government; public school districts; soil and water conservation districts; etc.)

     o Public and state-controlled institutions of higher education (e.g., Oregon University System)

     o Non-profits and community-based organizations

     o *Note: Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with other organizations/entities as project partners (e.g., local government entities, non-profit or for-profit organizations, public school districts, contractors, etc.)*

4. **What organizational information will be required for eligible entities to apply?**

   - All applicants must have an ***active registration*** and ***Unique Entity ID*** through the System for Award Management ([SAM.gov](SAM.gov)) and maintain an active registration throughout the life of the award. This is the U.S. governmentwide web-based system that supports all contracts, grants, and the electronic payment system. This requirement for registration may be found at [2 CFR 25.200](2 CFR 25.200).

     o We strongly encourage potential applicants to begin this process early, as it can take some time to complete.

     o The applicant must have a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN).

5. **Where can these funds be used?**

   - Funding may be used for projects on non-Federal lands, which include:

     1. Tribal lands (includes fee and Trust land)

     2. Private lands (*Note: while private lands are eligible, work on private land should provide community benefits, and will require landowner agreement*)

     3. State and local government-owned land

     4. Homeowner association managed private land

   - Lands owned or administered by the federal government are not eligible for this funding opportunity except for lands held in trust for Native American Tribes and individuals (i.e., Trust lands).

6. **Are there additional geographic eligibility requirements?**

   - Yes, 100% of program/project benefits must go to 1) Federally recognized Tribes of Oregon, or 2) disadvantaged communities in Oregon, as defined by the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CJEST)](), the [Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) IRA Mapping Tool](), [Title 1-A school]() campuses, or other government-sponsored vulnerability tools that are applicable to the scope of work to be performed in or for disadvantaged communities. The USFS and ODF UCF will have final approval on geographic eligibility for proposals using "other government-sponsored

vulnerability tools". Proposals must include the tool(s) referenced to demonstrate the designation of the disadvantaged community your program/project will be serving. Please reach out to UCF Program if you are unsure whether your program/project proposal meets the geographic eligibility requirement.

7. **Can this funding support community-wide management planning, even if only some areas of the community meet the geographic eligibility criteria?**

   - UCF IRA funds can support community-wide management plans if the process and plan is focused intentionally on supporting disadvantaged communities. The planning process should include intentional community engagement in disadvantaged communities. The final plan should include specific strategies and recommendations for improving service to disadvantaged communities. Upon completion of the community management plan, any implementation and projects supported with UCF IRA funds will need to be focused solely on disadvantaged communities.

8. **Can I still apply if my program or project doesn't appear eligible based on the approved geographies?**

   - You can complete a pre-eligibility application is now available for the All-Entities subaward program (PDF or Word versions). Submit completed form via email to UCF.Program@odf.oregon.gov. Pre-eligibility applications may take up to three weeks to review.

9. **What activities are not eligible for funding?**

   - Types of projects that are not eligible in this subaward application process:
     - **Basic research** as defined in 2CFR 422.1: the "systematic study directed toward fuller knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and of observable facts without specific applications towards processes or products in mind." Note: Projects that include data collection, monitoring, and tracking associated with applying research to management decision-making are eligible activities.
     - **Equipment purchases**. Equipment rental should be considered as an alternative. Equipment is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit.
     - **Construction and capital improvements**. Examples of construction include facilities, infrastructure, roads, new buildings, culverts, and boardwalks.
     - **Land acquisition** (i.e., conservation easement and fee simple) projects.
     - **Cost-share, reimbursement, and other types of payment provided directly to private landowners.** However, Urban and Community Forestry funding may be used to perform work on private lands; for example, an eligible entity could pay for trees to be planted on private lands with permission of the landowner.
     - **Small business start-up** funding.
     - **Gift cards**
     - **Food and Childcare services**

- *Active participants providing specific and measurable value to the project or program by attending meetings may be eligible to receive stipends for attending.*

10. **Will projects be required to adhere to the <u>Build America Buy America Act?</u>**

- Build America Buy America only applies to federal financial assistance projects dealing with the construction of infrastructure. This would apply to iron or steel products, manufactured products, and construction materials. As construction is not an allowable expense for this funding opportunity no subawards will need to follow Build America Buy America in any circumstance.

11. **What are the minimum and maximum dollar amounts for subawards?**

- Subaward program for Federally Recognized Tribes:
    - $10,000 to $1,000,000

- Subaward program for all eligible entities
    - The ODF UCF Program will accept subaward proposals ranging from $10,000 to $750,000 dollars.
    - Two funding levels will be available for this competitive subaward program. We recognize that potential applicants are at various stages of program/project development, and we want to invite entities at all stages to apply. Entities funded through this subaward program may also apply for implementation funding through subsequent funding opportunities.
        - **1) Planning, Partnership, Project Development, and Small-Budget Project Subawards ($10,000 to $100,000).** This funding level is intended for entities in the initial stages of urban and community forestry program/project development or those with small-scale projects.
        - **2) Large-Scale Planning, Program or Project Implementation Subawards ($100,001 to $750,000).** Entities with existing programs and staff, existing partnerships, or a well-developed project plan consistent with UCF program priorities are encouraged to apply for implementation subawards. This funding level can be used to expand ongoing programs, for complex planning initiatives, or to implement a multifaceted program/project with clear outcomes.

12. **For proposals submitted with a coalition of partners where co-applicants have their own Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement (NICRA), will all NICRAs be honored?**
- All active NICRAs approved by a federal agency will be honored in the subaward, but the specifics depend on how the budget is structured (see below).

13. **Any other considerations a lead applicant may want to know about honoring coalition proposals with multiple NICRAs?**
- <u>If the lead applicant chooses the sub-subaward pathway</u>: If awarded by ODF, the lead applicant will by default become a Pass-Through Entity and be responsible for administering all sub-sub agreements with the partner organizations. Each subaward agreement the lead applicant enters

into will include the partner organization's program/project's SOW, timeline, associated budget, phase/milestones, and anticipated reimbursement/advance payment dates. These agreements must include, verify, and honor each partner organizations' NICRA and comply with Federal rules and regulations (2 CFR). Each sub-subrecipient must have a Unique Entity ID number who receives a sub-subaward.

- <u>If the lead applicant chooses the contractual pathway</u>: If the lead applicant chooses to contract with other entities, they must adhere to Federal procurement standards (2CFR). Each partner organization who elects to be a contractor must provide the lead applicant with a bid/quote, which should include a statement of work of the goods or services with any deliverables, rates, and terms & conditions they can agree to. Any existing NICRAs should be incorporated within the bid/quote provided to the lead applicant by the partner organization.

14. **If eligible costs are paid for using a credit card and there is a surcharge fee associated with that transaction: is the fee an allowable cost and if so, what budget category does it fall into?**
    - If the surcharge fee is part of the transaction, it is an allowable cost and it should be included in the same category as the purchase.
    - Other costs associated with credit cards may not be eligible (i.e. interest payments).

15. **Which address should I use for the proposal application?**
    - The lead applicant's organization address can be used as a default if the proposal has a yet-to-be-confirmed project site or includes multiple activity site locations. Include all addresses on the map(s) uploaded to the online grant portal.

16. **Are matching funds required for these subaward opportunities?**
    - No, matching funds are not required for these subaward opportunities.

17. **When do applications open? When will the funding be awarded?**
    - The ODF UCF Program issued a call for proposal (CFP) for the nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon on May 1, 2024. Proposals will be reviewed and awarded on a rolling basis until June 30, 2026.
    - The ODF UCF Program issued a CFP for all entities on May 31, 2024. Proposals may be submitted starting on July 15, 2024, through October 15, 2024 (11:59 p.m., PDT). All applicants will be notified in writing of subaward decision within 3 months of submission close date.

18. **When will the project funding period end?**
    - All subaward activities and expenditures must be completed by September 1, 2028.

19. **How does my organization determine start and end dates for a proposed program/project?**
    - The applicant must provide start and end dates of their program/project within the stated funding periods outlined in each subaward program's CFP.
    - Expenses incurred before the subaward agreement is complete will not be reimbursed.

20. Will there be more than one opportunity to apply for this funding?

- A second CFP for all eligible entities will be announced in 2025. Awarding will be based on available funding. A second CFP for Federally Recognized Tribes will be developed depending on funding availability after the application period closes (June 30, 2026).

- The ODF UCF subaward program webpage is available with information about the current funding opportunities (https://www.oregon.gov/odf/forestbenefits/pages/ucf-subaward-programs.aspx)

    Note: All interested applicants are encouraged to submit proposals for every funding opportunity available to the eligible entity.

21. How do I apply for the subaward opportunities?

- Proposals for the subaward program for Federally recognized Tribes should be submitted via email to UCF.Program@odf.oregon.gov.

- Proposals for the subaward program for all eligible entities should be completed using the UCF online grant portal.

22. How do I submit a proposal through the online grant portal?

- The first step is to complete the registration form. You can find written instructions for how to register here.

    ○ Account registered but didn't receive a second email with the temporary password. Please check your spam/junk mail, and if the temporary password email is not located, use the 'reset password' button and follow the instructions sent to the user.

- You can find written instructions for completing an application through the online grant portal here.

- The ODF UCF Program hosted a virtual information session to help applicants navigate the online grant portal. You can watch the recording here or download the presentation slides here.

23. Have there been any updates to the online grant portal?

- Yes, since the deployment of the WebGrants system the UCF program has added the following features.

    ○ Added subaward category as a budget line item.

    ○ Modified rental category to include equipment, facility, and stipends. These line items are not eligible for application of indirect costs.

    ○ Added another upload field to allow applicants to submit documentation to support proposal and budget narratives.

24. What will the review process be like?

- Specific details regarding the review process are outlined in each subaward program's CFP.

25. Will my organization receive the money upfront, or will we be reimbursed?

- Generally, subawards are funded via reimbursement, but there may be circumstances in which funds can be made available in advance.

- Advance payments can be requested during the subaward agreement process and award phase. Advance payments will require a payment schedule and a list of anticipated costs before ODF can disburse the funds. ODF will assess and approve requests on a case-by-case basis. Some considerations for advance payments may include but are not limited to requesting for minimum amount needed, duration the payment request will apply to, and using the advanced funds before future payments can be approved.

26. Where can I receive support to apply for these subawards?

- Schedule a meeting with UCF Program staff using the UCF Program Booking Site.

- Applicants can complete a short questionnaire to receive support in the subaward proposal process. The subaward assistance questionnaire link is available at https://forms.office.com/g/VhzDdsXWJr.

- Help with SAM.gov registration is available through the Government Contract Assistance Program, https://www.gcap.org/registration-assistance-duns-sam-dsbs-fbo or the APEX Accelerator Program, https://www.apexaccelerators.us/#/service-area-locator, and contact the Federal Service Desk directly from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. (EST) at 1-866-606-8220, Monday to Friday.

- Contact ODF's UCF Program staff for additional support or with any questions:
  - **Email:** UCF.Program@odf.oregon.gov
  - **Phone:** (503) 945-7390

27. Where can I find more information as it becomes available?

- Additional information will be made available on the ODF UCF subaward program webpage is available with information about the current funding opportunities (https://www.oregon.gov/odf/forestbenefits/pages/ucf-subaward-programs.aspx).

- Sign up for electronic notifications to receive the latest updates from ODF at https://www.oregon.gov/odf/aboutodf/pages/email-updates.aspx.

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Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.