

CHICAGO TREE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM GRANT Request for Proposals

This opportunity is made available through a partnership with the Chicago Region Trees Initiative and the City of Chicago

Funding provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service through the Inflation Reduction Act

Applications Due: Wednesday, December 4, 2024



Contact: Melinda Escobar

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Contents

Introduction and Grant Program Goals.....	3
Scope of Work.....	4
General Criteria.....	5
Proposal Scoring.....	6
Award and Execution of Agreement.....	7
Allowable Costs and Payment.....	8

Introduction

This request for proposals provides funding assistance to community groups to increase tree canopy, preservation, and care in priority areas within the City of Chicago. These community groups, Tree Ambassadors, will work in partnership with the City of Chicago and the Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) based out of The Morton Arboretum to engage individuals in selected neighborhoods in the City of Chicago to increase tree planting requests using the City of Chicago's 311 system and to help residents learn how to advocate and care for trees in their neighborhood to increase the benefits these trees provide. **The Morton Arboretum is the grant administrator.**

Funding will be provided to awarded community groups with a maximum allowable funding amount for any one organization of \$20,000. The minimum allowable funding amount is \$3,500.

The performance period for this project is from March 1, 2025 to October 31, 2026.

Assistance is available for any Applicant needing assistance to complete a proposal. Assistance can be provided by contacting Melinda Escobar at mescobar@mortonarb.org. All requests for assistance must be received by November 15, 2024.

Grant Program Goals

The Tree Ambassadors Program (TAP) was started as a means to gain resident support to increase tree canopy in priority areas, tree advocacy and engagement in support of trees. It is made possible by the City of Chicago, CRTI/Morton Arboretum, the USDA Forest Service, and community-based organizations. The Tree Ambassadors Grant provides funding and training for participating community groups to build capacity within their networks to support trees. The requirements of the grant are designed to achieve these goals in each of the partnering communities.

Tree Ambassadors, will work in partnership with the City of Chicago and the Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) to engage individuals in selected neighborhoods in the City of Chicago to increase tree planting requests using the City of Chicago's 311 system and conduct community workshops to help residents learn how to advocate and care for trees in their neighborhood. Funds awarded through this grant are provided to enable the community group to accomplish the work outlined in the Scope of Work.

All of the funding from this program will be used to help communities in the City of Chicago to improve tree planting and care in their communities with prioritization of under-resourced communities. Under-resourced communities, where this work will take place. The priority community areas determined by the City of Chicago and CRTI are the following:

	Chicago Lawn	Austin	West Elsdon
West Lawn	Riverdale	Washington Park	Gage Park
West Garfield Park	Englewood	Auburn Gresham	Brighton Park
Fuller Park	Oakland	G.Grand Crossing	New City
North Lawndale	West Englewood	Archer Heights	South Lawndale
East Garfield Park	Armour Square	Humboldt Park	

Please find additional geographic details using the [Chicago Community Areas PDF](#) on the [City of Chicago's website](#): www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dgs/supp_info/citywide_maps.html

Scope of Work

Following is a list of the requirements, to be completed by the community group, for the completion of this grant program. The contractor is defined as the community group.

1. Participate in advocacy training provided by the Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI).
2. Advocate to community members, neighbors, and others for tree protection and preservation. Work with a minimum of 100 individual residents.
3. Participate in training and pass City of Chicago requirements to utilize the City of Chicago 311 Tree Request system provided by the CRTI.
4. Identify and locate, 100 resident approved tree locations within the priority census tracts as directed by CRTI. NOTE: All trees will be planted on City of Chicago property in the residential or commercial parkways and will be warrantied for the first two years after planting.
5. Participate in an annual workshop content training provided by CRTI.
6. Complete a minimum of 2 community workshops per year (total of 4 workshops for the grant period) in Contractor's designated priority census tracts. (Trainings shall take place between March 1, 2025 and October 31, 2026.)
 - a. Workshops will teach tree care, planting skills, and the value and benefits of trees. Topics and content are to be pre approved by CRTI.
 - b. Trainings shall comply with nationally recognized tree care standards, e.g. International Society of Arboriculture, American National Safety Institute, etc.
7. Participate in tree inventory training provided by CRTI.
8. Reporting:
 - Participate in biannual evaluations with CRTI. Evaluations will take place in June 2025 and December 2025 until project completion. Submit quarterly reports on project progress to achieve funding requirements and provide lessons learned. Reports are due 06/15/25, 9/15/25, 12/15/25, 03/15/26 until project completion. Submit a mid-grant period report by January 31, 2026.
 - Provide a comprehensive final report by October 31, 2026 outlining all deliverables.

Applicant community groups may complete the projects listed above by using in-house staff, and/or volunteers (lead by qualified staff).

No work shall start on the project until the Applicant is awarded funding. All work shall be completed within the specified grant time period.

General Criteria

1. The maximum allowable funding amount per eligible community group is \$20,000. The minimum grant request is \$3,500.
2. The deadline for receipt of proposals is December 4, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.
3. Community groups eligible for funding shall be located in the City of Chicago.
4. Community groups shall be a registered 501(c)(3) organization or partner with a qualified organization that can act as their fiscal agent.
5. All proposals shall be submitted electronically to Melinda Escobar via email at mescobar@mortonarb.org
6. **Technical Assistance is available to help you develop a proposal. Please contact Melinda Escobar at mescobar@mortonarb.org no later than November 15, 2024.**
7. All Applicants will be notified of their status via email by February 15, 2025.
8. The funding period is approximately 20 months. All work for this grant, including the final report must be completed by **October 31, 2026**. Final reporting and reimbursement must be submitted by **October 31, 2026**.
9. All aspects of all categories of this proposal shall meet or exceed the most current American National Standards Institute (ANSI), International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), and/or other nationally recognized specifications and/or standards.
10. All work completed through this proposal shall meet or exceed requirements identified in the Scope of Work.
11. No part of the grant funding can be used to pay for land or to purchase equipment (Equipment is any item that costs over \$5,000 that has a useful life of over 1 year. Equipment is considered more permanent and longer lasting than supplies).
12. Funding will be awarded based on score, need, and alignment with the grant's program goals. Preference will be given to community groups that did not receive a grant in previous cycles.
13. Incomplete applications will not be scored.

Proposal Scoring

Your proposal will be evaluated and ranked by an independent scoring committee. The criteria listed below will be used to score each proposal. In the event of a tie, the following additional factors will be used to score proposals: Applicant need and leveraged benefits; Orderliness of the overall application.

Criteria:	Highest Possible Score
Application: Grant application is thoughtfully prepared, all questions are concisely answered, and follows the application form. Proposal is viable and the work plan is clear.	20
<p>Scope of Work: (Maximum 1,500 words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Applicant shows capability and clear plans for carrying out the project and maintaining long-term project benefits listed in the Scope of Work. • The Applicant and/or partners and/or community resident show adequate expertise to address elements of the project or will seek out persons with adequate expertise. • The Applicant describes the role, training, and qualifications of any participants and/or potential volunteers. • The project is designed to increase community capacity to sustainable care <u>for trees and influence peers on the benefits of trees.</u> <p>Timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Applicant's timeline is clear and realistic • Major milestones detailed <p>Budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identified costs • The budget indicated in this table is balanced • The Applicant provides a clear explanation on how they arrived at project cost (e.g., quotes, previous projects). • The Applicant details any "other" expenses listed in the budget. 	25
Need: Applicant demonstrates economic or programmatic need.	20
Support letters: Letters from peer organization or others may be attached and should describe that entity's commitment to and role in this project.	10
Total Possible Points	100
Bonus: If an Applicant commits to additional deliverables and shows a strong project connection to the Tree Ambassadors Program.	4
Bonus: if an Applicant encourages a peer community group to apply and both apply, both will receive extra points. (Be sure to state this in your application.)	2

Award and Execution of Agreement

1. All completed proposals shall be submitted electronically, including all attachments, to Melinda Escobar at mescobar@mortonarb.org by December 4, 2024 at 5:00 PM.
2. Any Applicant requiring assistance either to complete the application or to submit it electronically shall contact Melinda Escobar at mescobar@mortonarb.org no later than November 15, 2024.
3. Each proposal will be scored according to stated criteria by three separate, independent grant reviewers. The highest scoring proposals will be recommended for funding. Partial funding is possible.
4. Applicants will be notified by February 15, 2025 of funding status.
5. Awarded Applicants will be provided an Award Agreement via email. This agreement must be executed by the Applicant's Executive Authority and returned via email no later than 30 days from receipt. Failure to return a signed agreement by the due date may cause the funding award to be revoked.
6. Once executed by The Morton Arboretum, the Agreement will be sent via email to the Applicant. Once received by the Applicant, and after training has been satisfactorily completed, the work as outlined in the Scope of Work may begin.
NO WORK SHOULD BE STARTED PRIOR TO THE APPROVAL AND EXECUTION OF THE AGREEMENT.
7. Applicants are required to report quarterly on project progress, following is a schedule of reporting:
 - ❖ *Participate in biannual evaluations with CRTI. Evaluations will take place in June 2025 and December 2025 until project completion.*
 - ❖ *Submit quarterly reports on project progress to achieve funding requirements and provide lessons learned.*
 - ❖ *Reports are due 6/15/25, 9/15/25, 12/15/25, 3/15/26 until project completion. Submit a mid-grant period report by January 31, 2026.*
 - ❖ *Provide a comprehensive final report by October 31, 2026 outlining all deliverables. Applicants will be*
 - ❖ *required to submit a final report with their reimbursement report which will include a budget form and expense documentation worksheets.*

All work related to this grant, including the final report, must be completed by 10/31/2026.

Final report and reimbursement materials must be received by October 31, 2026.

Allowable Costs

Examples of how grant funds may be used to complete this work include:

Reimbursable Expenses (not all are listed)	Non- Reimbursable Expenses
Salary expenses, stipends, or other payments to individuals working on the project	Indirect/ Overhead Costs (example: accountant fees and building fees)
Individual supplies or materials that cost less than \$5,000 per individual item (ex. office equipment, iPad, projector, logowear, subscription services, shovels).	No one item may cost more than \$5,000
Transportation costs including gas and uber	No food related costs.
Equipment rental and meeting space rental	

For clarification of other qualifying expenses contact Melinda Escobar at mescobar@mortonarb.org.

Payment

Reimbursement and payment procedures:

1. The Applicant is responsible for all expenses and will receive reimbursement. Reimbursement frequency will be agreed upon between the Applicant and The Morton Arboretum.
2. The Applicant can expect payment 45-60 days after The Morton Arboretum has received and approved the fully completed reimbursement report containing valid invoices and canceled checks.
3. The Applicant shall review the reimbursement materials and all reporting requirements to ensure that all materials are ready for reimbursement by the deadline – including all payments and proof of payment.
4. Once final payment is made the grant project is considered complete.
5. To receive payment, the Applicant must submit an invoice along with a report of what expenses were incurred including receipts and/or canceled checks.