



Legacy Tree Fund Grant Request for Proposals Deadline: June 1, 2026

Purpose

The purpose of the North Carolina Urban Forest Council (NCUFC) Legacy Tree Fund Grant is to provide funding to North Carolina local governments, community groups, and schools for tree planting projects that conserve energy, improve air quality, and protect water quality. The Legacy Tree Fund program emphasizes strategic tree planting and a holistic approach to urban forest planning that will create healthier and better-managed urban forests.

The NCUFC Legacy Tree Fund Grant projects are as much about education and awareness as they are tree planting. Projects that incorporate community involvement and education will receive highest funding priority.

Qualifying projects include street tree plantings, natural area plantings, school planting events, storm water management projects, Arbor Day planting events, and storm recovery projects (ice, hurricane, flood event).

The NCUFC will also offer to host a tree care workshop or volunteer training for all grant recipients. NCUFC will tailor tree care workshops to fit the educational needs of your group.

Eligibility

Any local government (city, town, or county), non-profit community group, or public school may apply for grant funding. NCUFC member projects will get priority during the review process. Public-private partnerships are always encouraged; however, the grant recipient cannot be a private entity. Tree planting projects on public property are highly encouraged. At the discretion of the review committee, planting projects on private property where there is a public benefit may be eligible.

Funding

The maximum grant request for each project is \$5,000. **Funds are to be used only for the purchase of trees.** Grant awards must be equally matched with cash or in-kind services. Design work and planting plans, site preparation, mulch, and staking are examples of what could be used as in-kind match. Matching contributions could also include the purchase and installation of irrigation systems, time spent planning for the planting project, and volunteer or staff time spent attending the workshop and tree planting. Calculate the monetary value of each adult volunteer at \$33.49 per hour (current rate calculated by Independent Sector - a coalition of nonprofit organizations, foundations and corporate giving programs in the United States). Monetary value of staff time may be calculated at their normal hourly wage.

Reporting Requirements

NCUFC Legacy Tree Fund Grant recipients will be required to submit both a mid-year report, which details the status of the project, including any potential delays, and a final report, which provides numbers of trees planted, volunteers involved, and any other accomplishments. NCUFC will provide all necessary forms to grant recipients. A report verifying that the trees have met industry standard rates for tree survival at the end of the 3-year maintenance period will also be required.

Application Details

Applications (see page 7) for funding must be completed and submitted to the NCUFC **no later than June 1, 2026.**

Approved projects must start by September 1, 2026 and be completed by May 31, 2027. Tree planting events will generally occur during the fall of each year but can be adjusted to meet your area's planting season.

We encourage you to contact the NCUFC if you have any questions or need assistance with this application.

In addition to the application form, the following items must be submitted before the deadline:

- Project Narrative
- Species List
- Planting Plan
- Budget Description
- Project Timeline
- Follow up Maintenance Plan
- Letters of Support

The **Project Narrative** must address the following 6 questions or statements and should not exceed more than three pages.

- 1. Describe your project.** Be sure to explain any partnerships that will lead to the success of the project. Give some background for the project addressing why the trees are needed and the impact the project will have. Determine what type of planting project category your project falls into and describe the steps involved in carrying it out. Is the project related to the following: storm recovery, energy conservation, utility partnership, water or air quality improvement, underserved community outreach? Discuss how your project addresses environmental justice issues: is the project taking place in a neighborhood that historically has had less tree cover? Is the tree planting project focused in neighborhoods with limited resources? Are you focusing tree planting efforts in areas that have poor air and/or water quality? Are you engaging or working with community groups with diverse backgrounds, culturally and economically?
- 2. How will your project be maintained? Who will be responsible for the trees the first 3 years after planting?** This includes mulch replacement, pruning needs, and water needs. Explain how the new trees will be cared for over the short-term and long-term. Can the plan meet industry standard planted tree survival rates? The survival rate should be met by the end of the 3-year maintenance period. If possible, please describe your 3-year maintenance schedule, detailing when the trees will be pruned/watered/mulched and who will be responsible.
- 3. Who owns and manages the property where the trees will be planted?** If the organization that owns the property is not the same organization that will be hosting this project, please include a letter of intent/support with the signature and contact information of an authorized representative of the property owner(s). Describe the neighborhood or area in which the planting will take place; is it an underserved community; current trees on site?
- 4. Why do you want to do a tree planting project?** Explain the benefits you hope to achieve for your group/location/community by planting trees and hosting a tree care workshop. Why is this project important and what type of impact will it have on the community? If the project fits into a long-range plan, please highlight that effort.
- 5. How does your project promote volunteerism? How many volunteers and/or staff members do you expect to attend the tree care workshop and how many will participate in the tree planting? How will you recruit volunteers to plant the trees?** Typically, we suggest a minimum of 20 participants for a workshop. To complete a medium sized tree planting (10-12 trees) in one day, we recommend having at least two volunteers per tree (20-24 volunteers). We also recommend having trained staff and/or volunteers available at the planting event to be designated group leaders, ensuring trees are planted properly. It is recommended that you supply a letter of intent from any volunteer organization or group that will be participating in the project.
- 6. How will this project leave a “Tree Legacy” for future generations?** Highlight how this project and the trees planted will have a lasting impact on the community. Is there training and/or education involved that will help homeowners better understand proper tree care or the benefits of trees? Is there an environmental impact on the site? How will the project be publicized and highlighted within the community? Will policy makers (Mayor, City Council, etc.) be involved?

Planting Project Categories

1. **Storm Recovery Project** – a tree planting in a neighborhood or community that was impacted by a storm event (hurricane or ice storm event), where a large portion of the canopy was impacted by the storm.
2. **Street Tree Planting** - a planting project taking place within the right of way along a city-maintained street, either in a median or between the street and sidewalk area. This type of project should have the participation of homeowners living along the street where the planting is taking place.
3. **Natural Area Planting** – a planting project that creates a natural wooded area, demonstrating forest structure, providing habitat for wildlife, etc. The project could be along a creek or river to create or bolster a natural canopy. This is not an arboretum type planting.
4. **Neighborhood Planting** – this type of project would take place within a neighborhood, but not necessarily in the right of way. The trees could be planted on private property, in the front yards, but having a public benefit. This type of planting could also take place in a neighborhood park or public space.
5. **School Project** – a tree planting project taking place on public school property with the involvement of the student body.
6. **Arbor Day Event** – a tree planting in honor of Arbor Day. This should be part of a community NC Arbor Day celebration. Grant funds may not be used for a tree giveaway program.
7. **Storm Water Project** – a tree planting project that is part of a larger stormwater management effort, creating vegetated water catchment areas along a street or parking lot.

Required Attachments

- **Tree Species List:** Using both common and scientific names, list the species of trees, how many of each species, and what size your organization intends to plant. We encourage planting North Carolina native and locally adapted tree species. Keep in mind plant hardiness, desired mature size, and canopy shape of your trees, and their ability to adapt to your soil type and climatic patterns (e.g. how much rain, how hot, etc.). We can help you with your final species selection, but first, give some thought to the characteristics you would like in your trees. Projects that include known invasive species will be rejected.
- **Planting Plan.** Include a map or hand-drawn diagram of the site (with existing trees and proposed trees) on a sheet of paper no larger than 11” x 17”. Careful attention should be paid to site selection, the right tree for the right place, and potential encroachment on public right-of-way or utility easements. Overhead utility lines should be shown to demonstrate site-appropriate plant selection. If possible, supply an aerial image of the planting area. Professional planting design/plan is nice, but not required as long as the map/plan included can appropriately show tree placement. Pictures of planting site can also be included.

Required Attachments, continued

- **Project Timeline.** Provide a brief schedule of proposed activities associated with the project. Develop a schedule to keep track of activities to be completed before the planned tree care workshop and tree planting. Be sure to include time of year you wish to hold your Tree Care workshop, if included in project. It is also suggested that you get a proclamation from your local officials as a means of helping let the community know about the project. Exact dates are not necessary at the time of application, but if you desire a specific date or planting time, please indicate that here. All trees need to be planted in a timely fashion after procurement. The timeline should also list the time the trees will be on site prior to planting to minimize planting delays after delivery of trees to the site.
- **Budget Breakdown.** Provide a proposed budget spreadsheet that includes the amount of funding you are requesting from the NCUFC Legacy Tree Fund Grant, matching contributions, and the intended use of all funds. Funds from NCUFC Legacy Tree Fund Grant may only be used to cover cost of trees and delivery. The monetary value of matching contributions must be equal to or greater than the requested amount.
- **Maintenance Plan.** Include a maintenance plan for the first 3 years following planting. Indicate who will be responsible for supervising and implementing the maintenance plan and their qualifications. Standard care and maintenance include supplemental watering as needed, replenishing mulch, seasonal inspection of all trees, early corrective pruning if needed, insect and disease control as needed, and removal of any guys, stakes, wraps and supports no later than one year after planting. If trees die during this period, they must be replaced with comparable trees at the grantee's expense. No grant funds may be used to replace trees that have died.
- **Letters of Support.** Enclose any letter of support from a landowner adjacent to the planting site, city council, and/or volunteer/partner organizations indicating why they support your particular project and what role they will have within the project.

Payments

The NCUFC prefers to fund tree planting projects on a reimbursement basis. However, we understand that not all community groups have the financial resources for this initial installation. If your group is unable to purchase trees, NCUFC will provide half the funds upfront with the remainder to be reimbursed upon project completion and when we receive receipts with your final report. The NCUFC will also provide assistance as needed (i.e. locating a nursery, setting specifications for trees and coordinating payment for the trees). However, your organization would be responsible for ordering and receiving the trees. The North Carolina Urban Forest Council will fully-reimburse your organization after the project and reporting is completed and all other grant requirements are met.

Reports

Mid-Year reports must be submitted to the North Carolina Urban Forest Council at mid-point of project, and must include:

1. Name of your organization and contact person
2. Completion status of all proposed activities

Final Reports must be submitted to the North Carolina Urban Forest Council by end of contract period and must include:

- 1) Name of your group
- 2) Date(s) of the tree planting
- 3) Address or location description of the planting site(s), including town/city
- 4) List of tree species and number planted
- 5) List of matching contributions (please attach volunteer sign- in sheets)
- 6) Copies of bills/receipts for trees and mulch
- 7) Any photos, press clippings, or outreach materials related to the tree -planting project
- 8) Thank-you letter(s)

Proposal Review Criteria

All proposals will be reviewed by a committee of three to five members of the NCUFC Board of Directors. Each proposal will be judged on its own merits and compared to other proposals submitted, resulting in at least one project per year that best reflects the purpose of the Legacy Tree Fund and NCUFC.

Criteria to be judged include (but not limited to):

Partnerships- short & long-term maintenance; volunteerism; site owner(s) aware of proposed project.

Scope of Project- project size is appropriate for the identified resources and funding; environmental impact (two priority areas are energy conservation and water quality/efficiency).

Organization of Project- from the description given in the proposal, the applicant has shown an adequate amount of organization and capacity to complete a successful project within the provided timeline.

Educational Aspects- how the importance of trees and urban forestry is conveyed to participants and the public.

Alignment with NCUFC goals

Please direct any questions or requests for assistance to:

Kim Strazisar
NCUFC Executive Director
252-653-6277, ncufc1@gmail.com

North Carolina Urban Forest Council
Legacy Tree Fund Grant - 2026
Application Form

Name of Applicant (Group or Entity): _____

Project Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Name of Individual to Contact: _____

Phone Number: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Type of Organization (e.g. – municipality, school, non-profit organization):

Address of the Project Site: _____

- Project Type:**
- Storm Recovery Planting
 - Street Tree Planting
 - Natural Area Planting
 - Neighborhood Planting
 - School Project
 - Arbor Day Event
 - Storm Water Project
 - Other _____

Total Grant Amount Requested: \$ _____

Name of Authorized Representative: _____

Signature of Authorized Representative: _____

Date: _____

Return this application, project proposal narrative, and required attachments by June 1, 2026.

By Email (preferred): ncufc1@gmail.com Subject line – Legacy Tree Fund Grant Application

or

By Mail: NCUFC – Legacy Tree Fund Grant, PO Box 37416, Raleigh, NC 27627