

COMMUNITY & WATERSHED FORESTRY GRANT PROGRAM FAQ - 2024

FUNDING DETAILS

What is the total amount of funding available for this program?

Typically, the funding range is between \$500,000 to \$1 million; but varies each year.

Is there a minimum or maximum grant amount?

The **minimum grant amount is \$50,000**. There is NOT a maximum grant amount.

Can an applicant pursue or receive funding from multiple grant awards?

Yes. There is no restriction on the number of applications an entity can submit, partner on, or receive. However, to simplify application review and grant management, DCNR encourages partners to collaborate on ONE application identifying the total funding needed to support all proposed projects of all partners. Furthermore, the Community & Watershed Forestry grant opportunity offers applicants support for three different project types—riparian forest buffers, lawn conversions, and TreeVitalize tree planting. An applicant may apply for funding to support one or more project types in one application.

Can funding be allocated from the grantee to other partner organizations through mini-grants or sub awards?

Yes. Grantees can share grant funding with other partner organizations by awarding funding through a competitive mini-grant program or allocating funding directly to specific partners and projects through sub award agreements. However, additional requirements, restrictions and documentation applies to the redistribution of grant funds. Please discuss your proposal with a BRC regional advisor before applying for the grant to ensure that you understand and can accommodate these additional requirements.

Does this Program establish priority watersheds and/or watershed setting conditions?

No. This program is a statewide program and all Pennsylvania watersheds are equally eligible and considered. The program is funded by a variety of funding sources, some of which have geographic restrictions; thus, applicants may be asked to clarify their targeted geography to accurately match their proposal with the most appropriate funding source.

Various tools exist to assist partners in identifying impactful locations to install these forestry practices. Please consider using these tools as part of your project strategy. DCNR and WeConservePA partnered to create the [Pennsylvania Streamside Tree Planting Prioritization](#) tool, which helps users find places to plant trees along streams. The TreeVitalize [Open Tree Map](#) tool helps communities to better manage and grow urban forests.

The USDA Forest Service's Urban & Community Forestry Program awarded funds to state agencies to support sub-grants that support disadvantaged communities through equitable access to trees and the benefits they provide. The funding was made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act. Projects must take place in or directly serve “disadvantaged communities”, which are census tracts included in either the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) or the [Pennsylvania EnviroScreen](#). For more information on Urban & Community Forestry (formerly TreeVitalize) contact: Ned Brockmeyer, c-jobrockm@pa.gov, Phone: 717.772.8298

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ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND EXPENSES

Can grant funding be used to support staff time?

Staff hours dedicated to the performance of the grant scope of work are eligible grant expenses (*e.g. . landowner outreach, planting plan development, labor for site prep and planting, volunteer recruitment etc.*). Additionally, up to 5% of the grant amount can be used to support administrative staff time such as accounting and legal costs.

Can DCNR staff time, such as that provided by a Service Forester, be used as Match?

No. DCNR staff are available to provide technical assistance to program applicants and grantees. Their assistance is encouraged and can be identified in your application but cannot be claimed as match.

Can the funding be used to add acreage to current practices or is this program only for establishing practices where they do not currently exist?

Yes. Adding acreage to current buffers, meadows, or other established community & watershed forestry practices is an eligible expense. However, to be most competitive, NEW acreage should be included at as many sites as possible.

Would the purchase of equipment (e.g. brush mower) for site preparation and long-term management be considered an eligible expense?

No. For this program, equipment purchases are not eligible expenses.

Is community & watershed forestry practice maintenance an eligible activity?

No. This funding cannot be used for maintenance activities. However, DCNR views post-planting establishment (PPE) activities as essential aspects of establishing a viable buffer, meadow, or tree (*e.g. herbicide application, tree tube straightening, seasonal mowing and watering*). Therefore, PPE activities for practices installed within the previous 5 years would be eligible for DCNR funding. All eligible PPE activities need to be completed within the DCNR grant agreement timeline. Up to 20% of the project costs may be dedicated to supporting PPE for previously planting practices.

Can this funding be used for materials other than tree/shrub species (e.g. deer protection, mulch, tree tubes)?

Grant funds, and match, can be used for any materials or services required to design the practice, prepare the site, plant the practice, and complete standard post planting establishment activities. Items such as deer protection, mulch, tree tubes etc. are eligible expenses since they are necessary for the survival of the practice. If you are unsure about the eligibility of any specific items, please discuss this with your [Regional Advisor](#).

Can grant funds be used to purchase herbicide to address noxious weeds that may impact long term establishment?

Yes. The cost of herbicides and their application, when used sparingly and strategically to assist in establishment and management, is an expense eligible for DCNR funds and/or match. The herbicide must be used for post planting establishment activities during the grant agreement period.

Can grant funds be used to purchase hand tools, herbicide application equipment and other minor project items that may be used on multiple project sites or by the grantee for other projects?

No. DCNR grant funds cannot be used to purchase hand tools or other items that will not be retained on the site as part of the project. However, these types of necessary tools and supplies can be valued as match.

Could we request funding for educational signs to accompany the project site?

Yes. Educational signs are an eligible expense. However, to be most competitive, the costs of the signs should be minimal in comparison to the budget established for practice design, installation, and establishment.

Can grant funds or match be used for education and outreach or training events/programs/materials?

The majority of the project scope and budget should directly relate to practice design, installation, and establishment. Landowner outreach, education, and engagement activities are eligible for funding or match if those activities are targeted and strategic to engage priority landowners. General community & watershed forestry education, training workshops etc. are typically not eligible for this funding, and not competitive since they do not directly result in adding practices to the landscape.

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LANDOWNER AGREEMENTS

Can the funding be used to install community & watershed forestry practices on private property?

Yes. Practices can be installed on sites owned by public or private entities. A landowner agreement is required for planting on all sites, even those owned/controlled by the grantee. The agreement must ensure the grantee's ability to install and establish the practice, as well as the landowner's commitment that the practice will remain on the property at least 25 years. A sample landowner agreement is available [here](#) and also within the online grant application portal. Grantees can also develop their own landowner agreement but would need to send a copy to DCNR for approval prior to executing the agreement.

Do all landowner agreements need to be executed and submitted with the grant application?

No. The applicant should provide as much detail as possible related to the target location of the practice installation (e.g. watershed, county, land use zone) in the application, but specific project locations can be identified at any time during the grant period. Applications often include both specific sites with accompanying documentation of landowner commitment and proposed sites that are not yet identified. Applications including executed landowner agreements will be most competitive. Once a grant is awarded, an executed landowner agreement is required prior to receiving DCNR approval to use DCNR funds or grantee match for a specific planting.

PROJECT DESIGN

Do you anticipate that grantees will use consultants for design, installation, and maintenance?

DCNR anticipates that each grantee will complete their projects differently. We encourage creative use of partnerships and available resources to leverage this funding and improve efficiencies. The grant scope of work is required to be completed by expert professionals, which may include consultants. If a grantee can document related education, experience, and expertise, DCNR may approve the grantee to complete all or part of the grant scope of work. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis.

Does DCNR have an approved list of species for plantings? Is there a requirement for native species?

No. DCNR does not have an official species list. Grantees are encouraged to use plant species native to Pennsylvania as much as possible and should plan to review their plant species selection with DCNR prior to purchasing materials. The [DCNR grant program webpage](#) includes links to common tree and plant species for use in community & watershed forestry practices. DEP also provides information about riparian buffer species, methodology, maintenance etc. in its [guidance manual](#). For additional technical assistance, contact your local [DCNR service forester](#).

Is flash grazing allowed in zones 2 and/or 3 of buffer plantings?

Yes. Flash grazing could be permitted if the operator is committed to intensive rotational grazing. The grantee would be required to submit a written plan to DCNR explaining how this would be accomplished, including details on tree species and size to ensure damage to trees is avoided.

Are orchard species allowed in zones 2 and/or 3 of buffer plantings?

Yes. Assuming fertilizer use follows the aforementioned guidelines and there is limited disturbance from harvesting equipment.

Is growing of nursery stock allowed in zones 2 and/or 3 of buffer plantings?

POSSIBLY, in zone 3 only. The grantee would be required to submit a plan to DCNR detailing how this proposal would be designed and managed. Two significant parameters need to be addressed: the amount of soil disturbance and the amount of canopy cover retained over time. Large gaps in canopy cover should be avoided. A pot-in-pot system could potentially be used to limit disturbance.

Is fertilizer use permitted in any zones of buffer plantings?

As a rule-of-thumb fertilizer should not be used in any of the 3 zones. In limited cases it could be permitted in zone 2 and/or 3 if it is determined to not compromise the efficacy of the buffer; fertilization in zone 1 is not permitted.

For example:

- If soil testing determines that fertilizer is needed for seedling establishment: a one-time application would be permitted.
- If soil testing determines that fertilizer is needed to support growth in zones 2 or 3 on a very limited basis and considers upland loading to not compromise the efficacy of the buffer: limited applications would be permitted.
- If soil testing determines that annual fertilization is needed in zones 2 or 3: this is not permitted, and alternative species should be considered