

## LOUISIANA TREESILIENCE PROGRAM

### The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana Urban & Community Forest Restoration Program

#### 2024-2025 NATURAL DISASTER AND RECOVERY TREESILIENCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The following is an overview of the program guidelines to help you prepare your project. For an outline of the application questions to prepare your answers in advance, please see the [APPLICATION QUESTION GUIDE](#). Please submit your application online via the form found at [LINK](#)

#### I. TREESILIENCE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

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- Increase urban tree canopy cover and resilience in response to 2020/2021 Hurricanes in Southeast & Southwest Louisiana by promoting quality tree removal, tree planting and urban forest management projects.
- To diversify, enhance, and promote the proper stewardship of Louisiana's urban forest resources.
- To build climate change resilience into urban and community forests and green infrastructure.
- Promote green infrastructure that will improve storm water management.
- To improve air quality through urban forest management practices.
- To increase canopy and improve green infrastructure in disadvantaged communities.
- Promote diversity, equity, inclusion, in tree canopy improvement efforts.

In its current form, Treesilience works by allowing towns, cities, parishes, or non-profit partners to put forth applications for the categories below. If funded, The Nature Conservancy, TNC hereafter, will work with a contractor to oversee the work to completion:

- **Tree planting** (reforestation of public trees such as urban forest buffers, street trees and open space plantings) **and/or**
- **Tree care and maintenance** (Restorative and storm-readiness pruning of trees and risk related and hazard tree removals [tree removals **MUST** be combined with a 2:1 planting\*]) **and/or**
- **Tree planning and management** (professionally developed resource assessments, inventory, data reconciliation, technology development/integration, and/or planning and materials that will expedite storm response and recovery relative to community forests and which expand the capacity to manage and maintain resilient urban forests such as management and maintenance plans)

#### II. PROGRAM RULES

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##### APPLICANT AND LOCATION

1. Eligible projects must be performed on public lands within the community or semi-public/private lands with a public nexus\*. Public lands are lands owned by state, parish, tribes, or local governments along with lands classified as public open space within Homeowners Associations (HOA's), Maintenance Corporations (MC's), etc. Public lands include parks, green-ways, recreation areas, and public rights-of-way\*\* or easements.

\* These are areas which are privately owned but are open to the public for free or at very low cost, such as arboreta, schools, museums, or Church grounds/cemeteries open to the public (these project types will be heavily scrutinized).

\*\* Please refer to community development plans to note if a tree planting project falls within a right-of-way. If so, please contact the proper authority to receive approval before submitting this application. Failure to do so may result in application not being ranked and disqualified.

2. Projects may be put forth by public entities (see above) or non-governmental organization (NGO) partners who have written legal authority from the entity whose lands the project occurs which is found acceptable

to TNC. Project applications will NOT be accepted if submitted by property management companies or contractors on behalf of the community.

Examples of Eligible Applicants:

- Municipal Governments
- Other local units of government
- Public elementary, secondary, and higher learning institutions
- NGOs or Community groups working in coordination with one of the above. Please note, written legal authority from the entity whose lands the project occurs which is found acceptable to TNC will be required.

3. The official **Request for Applications** is currently open. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and funds allocated on a **first come, first serve** basis for projects that qualify and pass committee review. Funding for the current cycle is limited and projects must be completed before **January 1, 2026\*** to be considered. Typical projects should take between 2 weeks and 6 months.

\* Priority will be given to applications received early enough to complete project work by the deadline. Ideally all funding will be awarded no later than December 2024. Please submit your application as soon as possible to increase your chances of full project funding.

**All** applicants are **required** to set up a site visit with Treesilience staff within 30 days of submitting your application. Site visits may be scheduled prior to submitting your application. This allows the applicant to present their project to Treesilience staff, answer Treesilience staff questions and get answers to any questions the applicant may have about the application process.

- Site visits **must** be scheduled a minimum of a week in advance.
- Appointments will be made on a first-come, first-served basis.

4. All applications **must** be submitted via the **online form** found at [LINK](#)

- Please use the **Application Question Guide** to prepare your answers in advance. You may copy and paste your answers into the online form. Please read instructions carefully before submitting your application.

5. Your application will require the submittal of several required documents including the list below. See Funding and Contract section for additional information about required quote.

- **Project Map** which shows locations relative to your community and what activities will take place where.
- **Quote/Bid** for full project scope.

6. Projects which include tree plantings will be asked to write out your **Maintenance Plan**. This plan should address both short-term (1-2 years of establishment immediately after planting) and long-term maintenance. If you do not have the ability to provide short term or long-term maintenance internally than your plan should address these concerns by including it in your project scope and/or including this in your future budget to contract out the work or develop an internal system for managing your new trees.

- Projects which include short term maintenance as part of the project scope must indicate the scope of expected maintenance and understand that it must end at the end of the grant cycle and project term, December 31, 2025.
- For guidance see the [U.S. Forest Service's Tree Owner's Manual](#) or International Society of Arboriculture Best Management Practice (ANSI Z60.1 and A300).
- Try to touch on the following:
  - Who will be responsible for tree maintenance?
  - Mulching regime
  - Watering regime

- Monitoring program
  - Warranty or maintenance contract
  - Pruning and hazard assessment
7. Applications will be weighed against each other and chosen projects will be awarded funding based on an internal committee review of parameters including but not limited to the communities need, project impact and fulfillment of award criteria. See a list of evaluation criteria below. Funding amount is at the discretion of TNC and may not include full requested amount.
8. Chosen projects will be managed through a **Cooperative Agreement for Assistance** with TNC and the applicant.
- An example CAA will be provided to candidates to review with their organization. The CAA will require your agency/municipality to indemnify TNC for work completed by a contractor on public property under your authority. See Section IV. Chosen Project for more information on the indemnification requirements.
9. The Treesilience Program is a TNC-led program funded by a United State Forest Service Disaster Recovery Grant. Accepted Projects will be executed by a TNC chosen contractor, working with TNC’s Treesilience coordinator in regular communication with applicant’s field representative(s).
- Please note that this is not a pass-through award or sub-award. If your project is chosen, TNC will utilize your project scope to find a contractor to complete the work and contract directly with them to complete the project to your needs and specifications. It is important that you have a well-developed project scope and a project liaison that can work with TNC and the chosen contractor to ensure the project is completed to your desired guidelines.

## FUNDING AND CONTRACT

- Applicants may submit **no more** than one (1) project for this grant cycle. However, you may include a variety of tasks (planting, pruning, planning) within your scope. Although we encourage you to include multi-dimensional projects that address your communities’ highest needs, we suggest you phase your projects to allow us to accommodate your project based on the funding available.
- Treesilience grants **are not** intended to provide ongoing funding. This is a competitive grant process; we encourage applicants to formulate ways to include a line in their municipality budget that aids in the improvement of your urban forest and shows a commitment to **long-term management**.
- TNC will conduct an ultimate assessment of cost if the project is awarded. However, project applications **MUST** provide an estimate of cost by providing a well-developed budget and budget narrative to be eligible. **Budgets that do not include the following will NOT be considered:**
  - a) Provide **a line-item, detailed budget** that provides a list of anticipated tasks and their associated expenditures along with an overall project cost. We suggest using the **Budget and Budget Narrative Template**.
    - Planting projects must have correct species, size, type (container, ball and burlap, etc) and the count of species being planted. Based on your research for cost, break down cost by line item in which you estimated your cost (# trees in certain size categories is most common). You can include a separate species list with your application and just mention the number of species, type and size to be planted with a generalization of species type (native canopy trees, citrus fruit trees, etc.) and reference your species list in your budget narrative.
    - If you do not have an internal maintenance plan for planted trees, your quote should include a warranty and/or watering/maintenance in the quoted scope through the end of the grant period (December 31, 2025).
    - Site prep should be included as a separate line-item in your budget if it necessary for your project.
    - Removal and/or pruning and maintenance projects should have count and size of specimens and/or a descriptive task list for the section of roadway or neighborhood and approximate number of trees

or miles or roadway covered in the scope.

- Ensure that the Project Description in your application (which is essentially your project scope), your budget narrative and the line items in your budget all match so that all of your project expectations are accounted for in cost (i.e. mulching and staking, stump grinding, site prep, etc.). We should be able to send your budget to a contractor to be able to use as a basis for a cost estimate.
- b) Provide a **budget narrative** that includes a detailed explanation or justification for each of the items included in a budget proposal. It provides context and reasoning behind the anticipated expenditures presented in the budget and allows you to be descriptive in your project expectations. Make sure to clearly identify the basis of the cost estimate (i.e., how the budget number was determined to be fair and reasonable) for each line item as well.
  - Be sure to answer the questions “why is this line item included?” and “how did you estimate the cost?” for each item. Feel free to provide additional details that you feel might be needed.
- Use the **EXAMPLE Budget** tab to see a short example of a budget with line items and budget narrative.
- Management/Inventory Bids - see \*Important Notes section below.
- **Please note** that contractors who assist in project development and consult to develop your project scope, species lists, etc. **will not be eligible to quote/bid the project** when TNC solicits for the work to be completed. We do suggest that you base your budget on quotes or estimates from professionals in the industry. Receiving a quote or cost estimate from a contractor will not preclude them from being contracted for the project. However, using them as a consultant and/or to assist with project development, will.
- If your project is chosen, we will work with you to receive quotes/bids from contractors that you know and trust but cannot guarantee that they will be chosen. All federal procurement procedures will be followed when selecting contractors to complete projects.
- Total project amount must be a **minimum of \$30,000.00**. There is no upward limit to funding but in order to equitably spread the funds around the grant service area, we anticipate not funding projects in excess of \$100,000.00. If you are requesting a larger amount, we suggest you phase your project to allow us to accommodate based on the funding available.

## **MATCHING FUNDS**

1. 100% of the match requirement has been waived for this funding.
2. Match is not required; however, match will be one variable (of many) in project evaluation criteria.
3. Match will be “in-kind” only for this program.

### **Qualifications for Match:**

- **In-kind service** is the time that staff and volunteers donate to the project, the use of equipment to complete project scope. Examples of “in-kind” services that can be used are planting of the trees, watering and maintenance of the trees, public outreach, and meetings about the project. Additionally, supplies or trees used to broaden the scope of the project can also be considered in-kind match.
- Planning and Tree Board meetings must not exceed 25% of in-kind match.
- Match must take place **during** the grant cycle: Cooperative Agreement of Assistance signature date, to January 1, 2026.
- Match must be directly part of the tree planting or maintenance project – no mowing, playground equipment, etc.
- Grantees must use the In-Kind Tracker sheet when submitting in-kind match at the end of the project. **No other** match sheets will be accepted.
- Visit the Independent Sector for information on the value of volunteer hours. The 2023 volunteer labor rate for Louisiana is **\$27.39** per hour. (Total volunteer hours x \$27.39 = In-kind match)

## \*IMPORTANT NOTES

- No work will be performed until the Grantee signs a **Cooperative Agreement for Assistance** with The Nature Conservancy. The agreement will be with the landowner – i.e., the Municipality or other entity on whose property the project will occur. The agreement will allow for TNC’s third-party landscape contractor to enter the site and perform work, in coordination with applicant and landowner. The CAA will require the property owner to indemnify TNC to complete the work via contractor.
- **Any** alterations or changes after the CAA is signed **must first be approved** by The Nature Conservancy and may not be accepted depending on agreed upon project scope.
- Following work, TNC and Awardee will inspect the work (separately or together). TNC will provide the awardee with a brief report (‘Summary Report Form’) with photos documenting completion. Awardee must sign this document to confirm completion to be eligible for future projects.
- NGOs which assist a landowner with project development **will not be eligible** to act as a contractor due to federal procurement policies. NGOs will be eligible to quote/bid as a contractor if they have not provided consultation on a project. NGOs are encouraged to apply for funding directly in partnership with a landowner.
- Signage or materials educating the public about tree maintenance, storm readiness and the urban tree canopy, and how your project relates to these topics can be included in your project scope but should not be the majority of funds.
- Public lands reforestation will require **at least two trees of native species** planted in the project area or district **for every one tree removed** (2:1) as part of the project.
- Trees/Shrubs from the TNC-Treesilience’s **Recommended Species List** (which can be found on the Louisiana Treesilience Webpage) are strongly recommended if you are applying for a tree planting grant. The metrics for proposal evaluation, weight the inclusion of such species.
  - Other species may be used; however, they should be non-invasive and site-appropriate according to Arbor Day Foundation’s [“Right Tree, Right Place”](#) guidelines. A significant percentage of tree species planted should be native.
  - Species diversity is encouraged by the LA Dept. of Agriculture & Forestry and TNC: planting all trees of one species is not recommended.
  - To increase biodiversity, we suggest that you follow the 10-20-30 biodiversity rule whenever possible which includes:
    - Plant no more than 30% from one family.
    - Plant no more than 20% from one genus.
    - Plant no more than 10% from one species.
    - An example of an appropriate spread of species if planting 20 trees would include (2 Live Oak, 2 American Beech, 2 Willow Oak, 2 American Elm, 2-Winged Elm, 2 Tulip Poplars, 2 Bald Cypress, 2 southern magnolia, 2 Green Ash, 2 Black Cherry.
    - For more information visit [Urban Forests Diversity Rule](#).
- **Tree Management Projects:** This is a special category of project intended to facilitate greater knowledge and management of existing and potential urban canopy extent and health in relation to Treesilience program goals (see page 1). TNC should work closely with the applicant prior to application submission to ensure alignment with such goals. Once submitted, TNC will evaluate the application. If selected, TNC will solicit bids from third-party firms capable of implementing this work. Potential project types include (but are not limited to):
  - Tree Canopy Assessment via imagery and development of a webmap tool
  - Tree inventory for inclusion in a long-term management plan
  - Urban Forest Management Plan development

- Stormwater/green infrastructure assessment
- Research related to tree survival, health, and ecosystem benefits within urban/community spaces.

## APPLICATION DEADLINE

Request for Applications is currently open. Applications will be accepted on an open, rolling basis until funding has been fully allocated. Projects that pass evaluation criteria will be chosen on a first come, first serve basis. It is anticipated that all projects will be chosen no later than December 31, 2024.

This is an **online** application that must be completed at **one time**. There is **no** opportunity to save the application and come back later. We suggest that you use the **Application Question Guide** to prepare your questions in advance prior to beginning your submission.

## III. EVALUATION CRITERIA

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All applications will be ranked internally by a committee of Treesilience Staff based on project criteria and how it relates to each section in the application. Some of the grant scoring criteria are listed here. In order to qualify for evaluation, the project must first meet the project eligibility criteria which are listed first.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Eligible applicant within project area
- Project is located within eligible 22 parish grant service area.
- Project is located on public property or qualifying semi-public property.
- Project timeline includes completion by December 31, 2025.
- Project application includes required budget and budget narrative.
- If project includes tree removal, required tree replacements are also included within qualifying area and timeline.
- Project request amount is \$30,000.00 or more.
- If project includes a tree planting, a minimum of 75% of species are from TNC's **Recommended Trees List**

### EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Other funds received recently by USFS for projects with similar scope.
- Project in a Disadvantaged Area (Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool).
- Project EPA EJ Screen ranking (Environmental Justice Screening Tool).
- Project Tree Equity Score Priority (American Forests Tree Equity Score).
- Project provides direct effect to community impacted by hurricane damage.
- Increases the resiliency of existing urban forest canopy.
  - Right tree, right place
  - Resilient native species
  - Species diversity
  - Increased environmental services and storm buffering.
  - Future storm preparedness
- Matching funds & Project cost.

## IV. CHOSEN PROJECTS

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- Will be notified within 60 days of receiving project application.
- Will sign a **Cooperative Agreement for Assistance** with The Nature Conservancy, stipulating that the project will be conducted by TNC through a third-party contractor, as specified in the grant application along

with any amendments.

- The CAA will require your agency/municipality to indemnify TNC for work completed by a contractor on public property under your authority. The following is an example of this potential language. If you foresee this being an obstacle to signing a CAA, please move forward with your application but contact Amanda Takacs at [Amanda.takacs@tnc.org](mailto:Amanda.takacs@tnc.org).
  - *Landowner agrees not to make any claim or institute any suit or action against the Protected Parties, or the USFS, and shall indemnify the Protected Parties and the USFS and hold them harmless against any loss or damage that may arise out of, or be in any way caused by, the work to be performed hereunder, except to the extent that any loss or damage is caused solely by the gross negligence of Conservancy*
- Press releases, articles, newsletters, signage, etc. will be required to mention TNC. Exact wording will be provided upon signature of the CAA. Awardees are not permitted to use the TNC logo unless provided expressed written consent in advance. There are additional USDA requirements for any printed, audiovisual materials or electronic media created as a result of this funding for public distribution.
- TNC or TNC contractor will provide a 48-hour notice prior to project start date. TNC will complete the project **and** submit a Summary Report form by **February 1, 2026**, which must be signed no later than **March 1, 2026**.

**Any questions regarding the 2024 grant application process should be directed to:**

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Treesilience Louisiana  
The Nature Conservancy of LA  
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