Expanding urban forests: The Urban Tree Challenge Fund

Planting trees for people in our towns and cities
What is the fund?
The Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF) has been developed in response to the government’s commitment to provide £10 million for planting both large and small trees in and around towns and cities in England.

This two year fund will support a number of objectives in Defra’s 25 Year Environment Plan, and also contribute towards meeting the government’s commitment to plant one million urban trees by 2022.

The fund is being delivered by the Forestry Commission, as part of their work to expand woodlands and tree cover across England.

What support is on offer?
The UTCF provides capital funding to plant and establish large and small trees in urban and peri-urban areas. The fund will provide three years of establishment payments following planting of the trees. Establishment payments will contribute to the cost of weeding, watering and checking trees.

The fund will provide up to 50% of published standard costs for planting large and small trees and their establishment costs. The remaining funding must be met through match funding, either in the form of money or labour.

The UTCF is a competitive fund and applications will score higher for delivering the greatest social and environmental benefits to urban and peri-urban areas. Value for money of an application will also be taken into consideration.
What are the benefits?

Urban trees offer a range of benefits, including temperature moderation, flood risk mitigation, and improved wellbeing – particularly when in close proximity to large populations. The UTCF will contribute to delivering these benefits through the targeted planting of large and small trees in urban and peri-urban areas.

Am I eligible?

The UTCF is open to anyone who wants to plant trees in an urban or peri-urban area.

You must:

- have full management control or consent to use the land for the duration of your agreement;
- have no existing land management grant scheme on the land; and
- be able to provide at least 50% match funding for your project through either money or labour.

Applications for block bids (see How do I apply? for more details) must have a minimum value of £500,000 to apply.

Individual applications will be required to meet a minimum value threshold*. For applications including large trees the minimum value will be £5,000. For applications with only small trees, the minimum value will be £1,150.

How do I apply?

The UTCF will run for two years. In year one, the fund is open for applications for block bids only. Individual applications may submit an ‘Expression of Interest’ in year one for individual sites. In year two, the fund will be open for individual applications, and dependent on budget allocation, block bids too.

Block bids are defined as applications with a value of at least £500,000, made up of multiple smaller projects, which may be geographically dispersed across England or focused in a single area.

Individual applications are expected to be much smaller, single planting projects.

The application window in year one runs until midnight on the 28th July 2019. Applications must be received by this deadline.

The documents and forms you need to apply for the Urban Tree Challenge Fund are available now – see More information.

*minimum value subject to change.
More information
For more information on how to apply to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, please visit www.gov.uk/guidance/urban-tree-challenge-fund
If you have any queries about the fund, please contact: UTCF@forestrycommission.gov.uk