Notice of Competitive Funding Opportunity

Urban and Community Forestry Program
South Carolina Forestry Commission

Funding Information and Application Package
FY26 Technical Assistance to Communities:
Community Forest Capacity Assessment and Strategic Planning

Application Deadline: Friday, November 13, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

Submit to:

Urban and Community SCFC Program
South Carolina Forestry Commission
5500 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212
Electronic submissions are encouraged and accepted. Please send to
fwaite@scfc.gov

This Notice of Funding Opportunity is incorporated into any cooperative agreement administered by the South Carolina Forestry Commission under the Urban and Community Forestry Program. Please retain a copy for your records to reference for all aspects of your cooperative agreement, activities, reimbursements, and reporting.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Overview 3
Program Authority
Program Eligibility

II. Available Funds, Matching Contribution Requirements, and Timeline 5

III. Application Requirements and Application Review Information 6
Project Categories

IV. Proposal Format 7

V. Administrative Matters 9

VI. Contact Information and Submissions 10

I. OVERVIEW

The mission of the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) is to protect, promote, enhance, and nurture the forest lands of South Carolina in a manner consistent with achieving the greatest good for its citizens. Responsibilities extend to all forest lands, both rural and urban, and to all associated forest values and amenities including, but not limited to, timber, wildlife, water quality, air quality, soil protection, recreation, and aesthetics.

The thirteen priority issues identified in South Carolina's 2020-2030 Forest Action Plan are water quality and quantity, stormwater management, prescribed burning, emerging markets, wildfire risk, forest regulation, forest health threats, air quality, fragmentation and parcelization, population growth, public perceptions about forestry, and community forests in South Carolina. Urban Forestry is incorporated to some extent in these priority areas.

As part of the South Carolina Forestry Commission 2020-2030 Strategic Plan, SCFC established the goal of providing technical, educational, and financial assistance in urban and community forestry to local governments and organized groups living and working within established developing and populated areas. To further this goal during this funding period, SCFC will use this funding to competitively select a qualified nonprofit organization or educational institution to provide technical assistance to South Carolina communities (counties and municipalities). This assistance will help communities assess their capacity to manage their community forests, gather the data they need to make informed decisions, and set realistic, achievable goals for their tree canopy and public trees.

Program Authority

Federal support to the South Carolina Urban and Community Forestry Program is authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, Public Law 95-313, Section 9, as amended (16 U.S.C. 2101 et seq.), including amendments by Public Law 113-79 and Public Law 115-334. The program operates as a cooperative partnership between SCFC and the USDA Forest Service, Southern Region.

Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity are limited to IRS-approved non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations and educational institutions (public or private colleges and universities, including cooperative extension programs) with demonstrated experience in urban and community forestry. Units of local government are the intended beneficiaries of this technical assistance and are not eligible to apply under this funding opportunity; communities may apply to SCFC for direct assistance under separate SCFC funding opportunities.

Eligible Projects for this Funding Opportunity

The intent of this funding is to increase the capacity of South Carolina communities to manage their community forests effectively. Many communities agree that their community forests need to be managed, but they often do not understand what data are needed to make informed decisions or set realistic goals. For example, communities often set canopy goals without knowing how much canopy they have or where new canopy could be planted to achieve their goal. Spatially based, realistic maps are needed showing locations for existing and potential new canopy. Similarly, communities request to conduct tree inventories without first considering the most strategic inventory locations to meet specific goals, such as storm readiness or using trees as green stormwater infrastructure. SCFC will make one subaward to a qualified nonprofit organization or educational institution to carry out the following activities:

1. **Community Capacity Assessments –** The selected subrecipient will perform capacity assessments of South Carolina communities to determine which communities most need help managing their community forests. The assessment methodology must be developed in coordination with SCFC and should consider, at a minimum:

- Existing urban forestry staff and their professional training and credentials (for example, ISA Certified Arborist)
- Existing tree inventories, urban forest management plans, and tree ordinances or policies
- Participation in Tree City USA and involvement of tree boards or advocacy/advisory organizations
- Community needs and priorities, such as storm readiness, public safety, and green stormwater infrastructure
- Current status as a Developing or Managing community, as reported by SCFC to the USDA Forest Service

The results of the capacity assessments will be used, in consultation with SCFC, to select the communities that will receive strategic planning assistance under Activity #2.

2. **Strategic Planning Assistance –** For communities selected through the capacity assessments, the subrecipient will provide strategic planning assistance to help each community understand its existing community forest resource and set realistic, data-driven goals. Applicants may propose to provide any or all of the following Capacity Building Options:

    - **A. Canopy and Plantable Areas Maps:** Remote sensing analysis to develop Canopy Maps and Plantable Areas maps, including help to establish a canopy goal. Note that tools such as i-Tree Canopy are not location-specific, so remote sensing data are needed.
    - **B. Ecosystem Services:** Evaluation of the benefits provided by the canopy to the community using available tools.
    - **C. Tree Inventory and Tree Care Recommendations:** Recommendations for where a tree inventory would be most beneficial to meet specific community goals (such as storm readiness or green stormwater infrastructure), and recommended tree care strategies.

    Communities that receive strategic planning assistance may then apply to SCFC for funding for targeted tree inventories, tree risk assessments, education campaigns, or help with management planning. Recommendations should be written to help communities prepare for these next steps.

3. **Project Requirements and Deliverables** - All work must be coordinated with the SCFC Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator and the SCFC Regional Community Foresters serving the participating communities. At a minimum, the selected subrecipient will:

    - Submit the capacity assessment methodology to SCFC for approval before beginning community assessments.
    - Provide SCFC with a summary of the capacity assessment results, including a ranked list of communities recommended for strategic planning assistance.
    - Deliver to each participating community a written report and maps, in both print-ready PDF and GIS-compatible formats, presenting the results of the Capacity Building Options provided.
    - Present the results to each participating community's staff and/or elected officials, in person or virtually, with SCFC staff invited to attend.
    - Provide SCFC with copies of all data, maps, and reports produced under the subaward.
    - Track and report the number of communities assessed and the number of communities receiving technical assistance, to support SCFC's accomplishment reporting to the USDA Forest Service.

II. AVAILABLE FUNDS, MATCHING CONTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS, AND TIMELINE

Available Funds

SCFC has approximately $175,000 available to fund this project. **Projects will be awarded through subaward grant agreements.** SCFC anticipates making one (1) subaward under this funding opportunity. SCFC will fund the project based on the criteria in this announcement. Funding is for programs, projects, or activities not currently being funded and cannot be used to substitute for existing funds. Funds may be used within existing programs to initiate new program development or program expansion. **Entertainment, food and beverages, computers, tree maintenance, or construction and landscape supplies/equipment are unallowable costs under the SCFC program.**

Matching Contributions

No non-federal cost share (match) is required for this funding opportunity. Applicants may describe other resources or partnerships that will support the project in the proposal narrative.

Ownership of Equipment and Supplies Purchased with Program

Unless otherwise specified, title and ownership of all equipment and supplies vests with the subrecipient throughout their useful life span, to be used *exclusively* for activities related to the project or for other activities consistent with the goals and objectives of the Urban and Community Forestry Program. If these conditions cannot be met, the subrecipient must contact SCFC to discuss options on use (subrecipients may be approved to use equipment or supplies on other Federally-funded projects in compliance with 2 CFR 200.313, or reimburse SCFC the fair market value equivalent to SCFC percentage contribution to the project).

Ineligible Expenses for Reimbursement

All costs and activities funded under this program must be allowable, allocable, reasonable, and necessary as guided by 2 CFR 200, Subpart E (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E?toc=1). SCFC will make the final determination on the allowability of all costs included in your budget.

Unallowable costs for this program include, but are not limited to:

- Expenses incurred *before or after* the agreement period.
- Any expense that is not part of an *approved* budget.
- Food, drinks, and refreshments for meetings, volunteers, etc.
- Costs associated with *preparing* the application.
- Salaries for staff time not spent directly on approved project activities (personnel costs for time spent directly on project activities are allowable when supported by time and effort documentation)
- Expenses not supported by proper documentation (such as paid receipts, invoices, etc.).
- Purchase of computers.

Timeline

SCFC subrecipients will be given **18 months** to complete their project. Approved projects may begin only after agreement forms are signed and submitted by the subrecipient and a fully executed agreement is returned to the subrecipient by SCFC.

Application Deadline. Proposals must be **received** at SCFC's office, 5500 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC, 29212 **or** via email to fwaite@scfc.gov , **by November 13, 2026. Email is the preferred submission method.**

Approximate Notification Date – December 15, 2026. All applicants will be formally notified of the outcome of their application. Following notification, agreements will be developed and sent to those organizations selected for funding. Agreements are to be signed and returned **within 20 days**.

Project Commencement – January 15, 2027 (approximate). Agreement Period scheduled to begin.

Reporting Schedule. Reports cover agreement activities from the beginning of subrecipient award period through project completion.

- 1st Quarter (10/1-12/31, due 1/30)
- 2nd Quarter (1/1-3/31, due 4/30)
- 3rd Quarter (4/1-6/30, due 7/30)
- 4th Quarter (7/1-9/30, due 10/30)

End Project - all projects will have an end date no later than 6/14/2028. The period of performance ends at the date specified in the agreement. No further work can be carried out on the project unless a time extension has been approved. Submissions of the Final Accomplishment Report and the Final Request for Reimbursement are due **within 60 days** of the agreement end date, or approved time extension deadline.

III. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION, and Proposal Format

Project applications must have clearly stated goals, realistic budgets and a clear narrative. When you are developing your project narrative, budget, and budget narrative, please be sure to present accurate, realistic estimates for all other budget line items. This is not meant for you to be conservative in your estimates, but for you to review your request for inclusion of sufficient resource allocations for your project to be successful.

The proposal includes 4 parts: 1. Application Form, 2. Budget Proposal, 3. Project Schedule, and 4. Proposal Narrative; plus, any additional supplements required.

1. **Application Form** Complete the Application Form and be sure that the application is signed by an Authorized Official (electronic signatures are accepted). Also be sure to fill in your organization's federal Employer Identification Number (EIN), your organization's Fiscal Year End date (month and day), and your organization's Unique Entity Identifier number.

2. **Budget Proposal** Provide an itemized budget of all SCFC expenditures requested. Each major project component from the proposal narrative **must** have a corresponding budget component. Budget estimates must be reasonable and related to accomplishing the project objective. All expenditures must occur within the period of performance and should be represented in the timeline. Indirect costs may be included in compliance with 2 CFR 200.414.

3. **Project Schedule/Timeline** Provide a project outline, with the project steps: list activities to be completed by month for the duration of the project, who will do it, and accomplishments upon

completion of each step (such as significant events, deadlines, responsible parties, and measurement of success). All activities listed must occur within the period of performance and should be represented in the budget.

4. **Proposal Narrative** The narrative section is limited to **a maximum of six typewritten, double-spaced pages**, not including supplements and additional information required in this Notice of Funding Opportunity. The narrative should be specific and to the point.

   Background: Briefly describe your project and the needs that the project addresses.

   Objectives: Briefly describe what you plan to accomplish. List the objectives in order of priority. Objectives should be realistic, measurable, and attainable within the agreement period.

   Technical Approach and Methodology: Describe how you will (1) design and conduct the community capacity assessments, including the criteria and data sources you will use; (2) select communities for strategic planning assistance in coordination with SCFC; and (3) deliver each Capacity Building Option you propose (A, B, and/or C), including remote sensing data sources, analysis methods, and tools (such as i-Tree). Estimate the number of communities you expect to assess and the number you expect to serve with strategic planning assistance.

   Organizational Qualifications and Experience: Describe your organization's experience providing urban and community forestry technical assistance, remote sensing and GIS analysis, canopy and plantable area assessments, and ecosystem services analysis, particularly for local governments in South Carolina or the Southeast.

   Project Coordinators, Partners and Cooperators: Provide a primary contact (name, title, and brief description of qualifications), for each individual responsible for: (1) overall project coordination, (2) financial matters, and (3) technical matters.

   Final Products and Accomplishments: Provide a bulleted list of measurable accomplishments and/or final products which will result from completion of this project, and which will be submitted in the final report. This section must also describe how communities will be able to use the products after the project ends.

Supplements: ***Does not count toward six-page narrative limit***

Key Personnel and Prior Work: Include resumes or brief biographies of key personnel and up to two examples of similar canopy assessment, plantable area, or community forestry planning products your organization has completed.

Scoring: Applications will be scored and ranked in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth in this NOFO. However, SCFC reserves the right to make funding decisions consistent with programmatic limitations and statutory funding caps.

Applicants will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria:

Criteria	Possible Points
Clear, measurable, and achievable goals and objectives that align with SCFC agency and program priorities. SCFC requires applicants to include in their project measurable outcomes and impact. Applicants must provide specific metrics and targets for success and a plan for tracking and reporting progress.	10
Budget and Financial Sustainability: Applicants will be assessed on the feasibility of their budget and financial plans. Reviewers will look for a clear and realistic budget.	20
Technical Approach and Methodology: Applicants must describe a sound, well-organized approach for conducting community capacity assessments and delivering strategic planning assistance, including location-specific remote sensing analysis for canopy and plantable area mapping, ecosystem services analysis, and tree inventory and tree care recommendations. Approaches that clearly connect the data to realistic community goals will score highest.	25
Organizational Qualifications and Capacity: Applicants must demonstrate the experience and qualifications of the organization and key personnel in urban forestry, GIS and remote sensing, available tools, and providing technical assistance to local governments, as well as the capacity to complete the project within the period of performance.	20
Statewide Reach and Community Impact: Applicants must demonstrate the number of communities to be assessed and served, how they will reach communities with limited urban forestry capacity across all regions of the state, and how the products will position communities to manage their community forests and pursue future assistance.	15
Project Schedule and Readiness: Applicants will be evaluated on a realistic timeline with key milestones for the capacity assessments, community selection, and delivery of products; availability of qualified personnel; and readiness to begin work upon award.	10
Total Possible Points	**100**

Funds will be allocated on a competitive basis, using the points system described above. Proposals will be evaluated by a panel of SCFC and industry professionals. At least three reviewers will review and score each application. Proposals with the highest mean scores will be recommended for awards until funding is exhausted. Applications must reach an average score of 60 points to be considered fundable.

SCFC may ask for clarification from the applicant and negotiate the scope or budget before offering the applicant an award.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Subaward Agreement Requirements

The awards are made with funding from SCFC's agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-313) as amended. Subrecipients must comply with all applicable state and federal regulations, including the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards – 2 CFR 200. Project records must: (1) comply with generally accepted accounting principles; (2) document allowable costs; (3) be supported by source documentation such as canceled checks, paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records, general ledgers, project ledgers, and contracts; and be **maintained for 3 years** following the end of the agreement period.

Each organization selected for funds will undergo a risk assessment evaluation. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.331, SCFC must determine the ability of the subrecipient to comply with federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the sub-award agreement. Some factors to be considered by SCFC during this risk assessment include:

1. SCFC prior experience with subrecipient (i.e., on-time reports, accurate invoicing, communication)
2. Results of previous site visits or audits
3. New or frequently changing personnel and/or substantially changed internal control systems.
4. Extent and results of any prior federal awarding agency monitoring, debarment, suspension, or delinquency on federal debt.

Organizations deemed at-risk by SCFC may still receive funding. However, SCFC is authorized to impose special conditions on high-risk sub-recipients as listed in 2 CFR 200.207. Examples of special conditions may include additional measures for project monitoring, requiring the recipient to obtain technical assistance, and/or more detailed or frequent financial reporting.

Unique Entity Identifier Requirement and SAM.gov Registration

All subrecipients are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier number to receive SCFC funds. Information on registration and obtaining this number can be obtained at https://www.sam.gov/SAM/.

Payment Process

SCFC payments are made on a **reimbursement basis**. Subrecipients must file a request for reimbursement. Subrecipients must submit reimbursement requests at least quarterly, but no more than monthly. SCFC will withhold payment until adequate documentation has been submitted to support all expenditures.

Publications
All publications, videos or CDs created for distribution to the public for informational or educational purposes must be submitted to SCFC for approval *prior* to reproducing (excluding announcement flyers) and include a statement of non-discrimination. Given that the funds provided are federally sourced, SCFC does not limit usage of materials or data by the Subrecipient in the post-award period. This includes and permits university faculty to publish scholarly works for publication in peer review journals and students to publish or defend a thesis or dissertation. However, all above materials produced because of this SCFC funding (including announcement flyers, scholarly works, and theses) ***must*** recognize the funding support of this program by including the following statement, or alternate acknowledgement **pre-approved** by SCFC:
"Funding for this project was provided in part through Urban & Community Forestry from the South Carolina Forestry Commission, in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, Southern Region."

Copyright
Subrecipients are permitted to copyright documents developed as part of a SCFC project, however, the USDA Forest Service and SCFC shall reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use, and to authorize others to use, the work for government purposes.

Acknowledgement Letters
All approved subrecipients will be required to compose and send a letter to their respective US Representative and both South Carolina Senators. The letter should acknowledge receipt of the SCFC funds as part of the Farm Bill from the US Forest Service, administered by SCFC, and stress the importance of the funds in helping local communities develop or expand their urban forestry programs and managing their urban forests in a sustainable, productive manner.

The names and addresses of current US Representatives can be found at the web site – http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/ and current Senators can be found at the web site – http://www.senate.gov/.

V. CONTACT INFORMATION AND SUBMISSIONS

For additional information about this program, contact:
Frances Waite
Urban Forestry Program Coordinator
South Carolina Forestry Commission
5500 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212
E-mail: fwaite@scfc.gov
Office Phone: 803-896-8894

SCFC staff can give general information about the process but cannot answer individual questions over the phone. All questions pertaining to the application or specific projects must be emailed to Frances Waite at fwaite@scfc.gov. All questions must be submitted by Friday, October 30, 2026. Answers to all questions submitted in writing will be published on the SCFC website (***https://www.scfc.gov/management/urban-forestry/urban-forestry-grants/***) by November 6, 2026. Any amendments to the process or application timeline will also be published by this date on the website.

Visit our website to obtain copies of this document and appropriate forms: *https://www.scfc.gov/management/urban-forestry/urban-forestry-grants/*

All applications should be signed by the authorized representative of the agency or organization applying. Applications may be submitted electronically to fwaite@scfc.gov. Electronic submission is encouraged. Paper applications are also accepted. Paper applications, one (1) original and five (5) copies of the complete proposal package, must be sent to:

Urban and Community Forestry Program
South Carolina Forestry Commission
5500 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

APPLICATION DEADLINE 5:00 pm, November 13, 2026

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternate means of communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-A, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.