

COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING GRANT PROGRAM: 2026 NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

June 2026



METROPOLITAN
C O U N C I L

The Met Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region.

Metropolitan Council Members

Robin Hutcheson	Chair	Diego Morales	District 9
Judy Johnson	District 1	Peter Lindstrom	District 10
Reva Chamblis	District 2	Gail Cederberg	District 11
Tyronne Carter	District 3	Mark Jenkins	District 12
Deb Barber	District 4	Chai Lee	District 13
John Pacheco Jr.	District 5	Toni Carter	District 14
Robert Lilligren	District 6	Victor Obisakin	District 15
Yassin Osman	District 7	Wendy Wulff	District 16
Anjuli Cameron	District 8		



The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Met Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

On request, this publication will be made available in alternative formats to people with disabilities. Call Metropolitan Council information at 651-602-1140 or TTY 651-291-0904.

2026 Notice of Funding Availability

This 2026 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) describes the Metropolitan Council’s intentions for the Community Tree Planting Grant Program in 2026. Specifically, this notice:

- Establishes the amount and type of funding available for the 2026 award year and the limits that apply to individual awards.
- Sets the schedule for application submittal, review, and award.
- Describes the criteria the Metropolitan Council will use in project selection.
- Defines who is eligible to apply.

Background and Purpose

In the 2024 session, the Minnesota Legislature enabled a new Metropolitan Council program in [Minnesota Statute 473.355](#) for community tree planting grants. The program purposes and priorities were set out in statute as follows:

Program Purposes	Program Priorities
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Removing and planting shade trees on public land to provide environmental benefits.2. Replacing trees lost to forest pests, disease or storms.3. Establishing a more diverse community forest better able to withstand disease and forest pests.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Projects removing and replacing ash trees that pose significant public safety concerns.2. Projects located in a census block group with a supplemental demographic index score in the 70th percentile or higher within the state of Minnesota.

The first grant cycle was run in 2025, distributing \$2.5 million in competitive funding to 14 communities. The Council received \$1 million from general obligation bonds and \$900,000 from general funds in the 2025 special session, and \$5 million from general obligation bonds in the 2026 special session.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be a city, county, township, or regional park implementing agency (Minn. Stat. 473.351, subd. 1(a)) within the 7-county metropolitan area (Minn. Stat. 473.121, subd. 2). Individuals or private and nonprofit organizations are not eligible applicants but are welcome to partner on projects with an eligible applicant.

Available Funds and Award Limits for 2026

The Council will award up to \$3.4 million in grants in the 2026 funding cycle. This funding includes \$2.5 million from general obligation bonds and \$900,000 from general funds. Selected projects may receive funds from bonding, general funds, or a mix thereof.

- The Council reserves the right to award less than the available funding.
- The Council reserves the right to award less than the amount requested and will negotiate any revisions in project scope prior to finalizing a grant agreement.

- The Council will only consider funding proposals that meet all the required eligibility criteria and receive at least 50 of the 100 potential points.
- No individual grant shall be less than \$10,000 or more than \$500,000.
- Grant funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis.
- No matching funds are required.

Program Requirements

Consistent with the authorizing statutes and the Council's goals in *Imagine 2050*, grant proposals must meet the criteria below to be considered for funding:

- Address one or more of the Program Purposes outlined above.
- Be located on publicly owned land.

Eligible Uses of Funds

Eligible project expenses are those incurred through project activities that are directly related and necessary to produce the outcomes described in the project application. Grant funds can be used for, but will not be limited to:

- Professional contracts for project implementation by individuals or organizations not a part of the local government unit
- Site preparation and planting materials including mulch, watering bags, staking materials, and tree wrap or guards
- Equipment rentals less than \$5,000 that are used to complete the project
- Purchasing of trees for climate-adapted, diverse tree canopies
 - Trees on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources [Climate Adapted Urban Trees](#) are automatically eligible. Any tree species selected for planting that is not on this list must be accompanied by an explanation of its climate-adapted qualities.

Ineligible Uses of Funds

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Costs incurred prior to the start or after the end of the project activity period
- Local government staff time
- Purchase of trees listed on the [Minnesota Noxious Weed List](#) or the [DNR's Invasive Terrestrial Plants](#) list
- Purchase of balled and burlapped trees, containerized trees larger than #20, and bareroot trees greater than 2" caliper diameter
- Purchase of chemicals for insecticide treatment
- Purchasing of plants such as shrubs, living ground covers, sod, grass seed, and flowers
- Purchasing of land or easements
- Major soil and grade changes or construction
- Equipment purchases such as motor vehicles, buildings, or other permanent structures
- Maintenance and establishment costs during the grant period for trees planted using grant funding

Grantee Expectations

Once funded, grantees must continue to meet the following requirements through the grant period:

- Meet grant objectives and submit a final report by 90 days after the end of the grant term.
- Providing photo documentation of the project's progress at appropriate phases, and illustrations, diagrams, charts, graphs, and/or maps to show results. Documentation of all trees removed and planted must be mapped and submitted to the Council.
- Complying with all Federal and State laws and regulations related to the completion of projects as stated in the grant agreement.
- Planting requirements:
 - Planting trees may take place without tree removal.
 - Tree removals conducted on streets and in manicured parks must meet a minimum of one tree planted for each tree removed.
 - Replacement trees should be planted as close to the removed tree as feasible and must be within the same census block group.
 - Removals conducted in park woodlands must incorporate replanting at a meaningful rate.
 - Removals need to be considered a necessary component of replanting.
 - Removals in woodlands need to be mitigating a public safety concern or to address degraded ecosystems.
 - Removals must meet a minimum of one tree planted for five trees removed.
 - Removals of ash trees must follow [emerald ash borer best management practices](#) set by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Review Process

Council staff will conduct a preliminary review of all proposals to ensure completeness and eligibility. In the event of overwhelming interest, Council staff may conduct an initial review based on the evaluation criteria below. Council staff are available to answer applicant questions throughout the application process.

Evaluation Criteria

Complete proposals will be reviewed, scored, and ranked by a review team according to the scoring rubric that follows in Table 2.

First, each application will be placed into one of three tiers based on the degree to which the project meets the two program priorities (found on page 2). Tier 1 will be projects scoring 5 or 6 Priority Points. Tier 2 will be projects scoring 3 or 4 Priority Points. Tier 3 will be projects scoring 0, 1, or 2 Priority Point(s). Priority Points are distributed as outlines in Table 1.

Table 1. Priority Point Scoring

Priority Points	0	1	2	3
Ash Removals / Replacements	0 trees	1 – 14 trees	15 – 29 trees	30+ trees
Trees Planted in Priority Areas out of Total Trees Planted	0 – 24%	25 – 49%	50 – 74%	75 – 100%

Funding will be awarded in ranked order to applications in the first tier. As funds remain, awards may then be made to applications in the second tier in rank order, and finally to ranked applications in the third tier. No application receiving fewer than 50 points will be awarded funding, regardless of tier.

Table 2. Scoring Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Points		Subcomponents
Project Management	35	0 – 15	Application demonstrates project impact and community need for grant funding
		0 – 10	Application demonstrates expertise and capacity to achieve the desired outcomes
		0 – 10	Application demonstrates thoughtful planning to communicate with residents throughout project timeline
Tree Canopy Health and Resilience	25	0 – 10	Application describes if and how the project will address ash trees posing public safety concerns
		0 – 10	Application describes an effective maintenance plan to ensure healthy tree establishment beyond grant funded activities
		0 – 5	Application describes how the project will improve tree canopy health and resilience, and/or improve tree species diversity
Project serves vulnerable communities*	25	0 – 15	Application describes how project location(s) are targeted to serve vulnerable communities
		0 – 10	Application demonstrates clear and tangible impacts for vulnerable communities
Project addresses climate change impacts	15	0 – 10	Application describes how Project location(s) are targeted to address climate change impacts including but not limited to extreme heat and localized flooding
		0 – 5	Application demonstrates clear and tangible impacts for residents living in areas experiencing-disproportionate climate change impacts

**defined in statute as serving census block groups with a supplemental demographic index score in the 70th percentile or higher in the state of Minnesota*

Funding Schedule

Date	Milestone
June 24, 2026	Council authorization of Notice of Funding Availability
September 10, 2026	Application window opens
October 22, 2026	Application window closes
November 2026	Internal and panel review of applications
December 2026/January 2027	Council reviews and approves awards
Quarter 1 2027	Grant agreements executed

Grant Terms

Grants expire on June 30, 2029. All costs eligible for reimbursement must be incurred during the grant term, and all costs must be submitted within 90 days after the end of the grant term. Unspent grant funds will revert to the Council.

Program Evaluation

The Council will review the overall impact of funded projects and the efficacy of the Council's program application process with a focus on continual improvements.



390 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1805

651-602-1000
TTY 651-291-0904
public.info@metc.state.mn.us
metro council.org

Follow us on:
Bluesky: [@metcouncilmn.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/@metcouncilmn.bsky.social)
Facebook: Metropolitan Council
Instagram: [@metcouncilnews](https://www.instagram.com/metcouncilnews)
LinkedIn: Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities