

# Tree Care Industry Supports Standards for Inflation Reduction Act Grants for Urban & Community Forestry



*Effective and safe standards for tree maintenance, in addition to robust federal funding, are essential for the prosperity of our country's urban forests.*

The Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) represents approximately 1,400 businesses nationwide that engage in commercial tree care, providing services to residential communities, state and local governments, commercial businesses, and utilities. Collectively, TCIA members employ more than 150,000 people, representing an estimated 75% of all tree care workers in the country.

The tree care industry is responsible for maintaining America's current and expanding 141 million acres of urban trees and forests, which are vital to creating and maintaining healthy, livable communities of all sizes. According to an Arbor Day Foundation report, urban trees contribute \$73 billion in community-wide environmental benefits each year. The urban forestry sector contributes \$35 billion annually to the U.S. economy, and more than 500,000 people are employed as a result of urban forestry activity. Alongside these remarkable benefits, however, is the fact that urban trees exist in an inherently stressful growing environment and face increasing and devastating threats from invasive diseases and pests.

As part of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the federal government invested significant funds for expanding and sustaining urban and community forests. Tree planting and care, however, is skilled and often dangerous work and to protect its sizable investments, the federal government should ensure IRA implementation is efficient and effective. With respect to investments in urban and community forests, the government should ensure grantees are creating plans not only to plant appropriate tree species in climates and locations conducive to survival. Grant resources should also be allocated for experts to care for those trees – keeping them fertilized, protected from diseases and pests, and pruned and maintained in a manner that is safe for both the community and the tree care workers. To this end, the federal government should require that arborists working on these government-funded projects adhere to the ANSI A300 and ANSI Z133 consensus standards to ensure the safest and most effective tree maintenance is achieved. The government should also consider an annual budget for expanding and maintaining urban and community forests as part of its ongoing effort to mitigate the effects of climate change and support good-paying, sustainable jobs in urban communities.

## **The Need for Safe and Effective Tree Maintenance for Projects Funded by the Inflation Reduction Act**

In August 2022, President Biden signed the IRA into law, which allocated \$1.5 billion for the Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) Program within the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). This funding provided multi-year competitive grants to State or local government entities, government entities of Washington, D.C., government entities of an insular area, federally-recognized tribal organizations, and non-profit organizations. The USFS completed the competitive grant process

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in September 2023 and awarded more than \$1 billion of the allotted IRA funding to nearly 400 projects in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and several U.S. Territories and Tribal Nations.

These grants were awarded to projects not only focused on tree planting in urban settings but also the maintenance and care for trees in the long term. These projects can only realize their intended beneficial impact if the trees and other plantings in the urban forest survive and flourish. To achieve this result, TCIA urges the federal government to require grantees to partner with tree care professionals who adhere to the ANSI A300 standard. The ANSI A300 standard was developed by a diverse group of industry experts, including TCIA, government representatives, worker advocates, and other stakeholders. It outlines science-based, sound practices for managing trees, shrubs, and other plants. Requiring compliance with the ANSI A300 standard would ensure grantees are abiding by the most efficient and effective practices in the industry.

Additionally, tree maintenance must be done by trained professionals who are well-versed in the industry's safety standards to ensure such work is done safely. An analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reveals that tree care workers face a fatality rate that is approximately 30 times higher than the all-industry average, making it one of the most hazardous industries in the country. While OSHA does not have an industry-specific standard addressing tree care hazards, TCIA and other stakeholders have created the ANSI Z133 consensus standard promote accepted, safe practices. When completing work under their IRA grants, the surest way for grantees to guarantee safe work is to ensure that tree care work is compliant with the ANSI Z133 standard.

### **Robust Funding for Urban and Community Forestry Is Needed in Annual Appropriations**

During the submission process, the U&CF Program received over 800 applications from communities nationwide. These applications totaled more than \$6 billion in funding necessary to meet their collective urban forestry needs. This gap between financial need versus available funding under the IRA demonstrates how critical it is to increase funding for U&CF.

The U&CF and U&CF Research Programs require more funding than previously appropriated to help maintain urban trees for the nearly 203 million people living in urban areas. These programs help to establish research benchmarks on important topics like urban heat reduction, public health, and climate resilience, but only through increased funding can we ensure the vital work of planting and maintaining urban trees in all communities is achieved. TCIA strongly urges Congress to continue to appropriate robust funding for these crucial programs.

### **Conclusion**

Tree maintenance must be a vital element of the nation's priority to plant and protect urban and community forests. Without proactive maintenance – spearheaded by well-trained workers employed by organizations that have been recognized for prioritizing safety and best practices – and robust annual funding to the U&CF Program, we will lose out on the enormous benefits of a strong and resilient urban and community forest canopy.

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