

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Up to \$20,000 In Grants Available Now For Forestry Projects

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ST. CROIX – Up to \$20,000 in grant monies are now available through the V.I. Department of Agriculture's Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Program for projects that aim to improve urban forests within the territory.

Just about any organization or agency operating within the Virgin Islands can apply. That includes, but is not limited to, schools, churches, homeowners' associations, service clubs, environmental organizations, and the local government.

The U&CF Program won't fund strictly agricultural projects, however. All projects, according to a U&CF press release, must have a forestry component. Projects with a

focus in any of the following areas are acceptable:

- Educating the public about urban forests
- Preserving and publicizing heritage linked to “remarkable, big trees”
- Reducing health risks linked to invasive species
- Identifying and managing hazardous trees
- Collecting data on the role urban forests play during the life cycle of wild animals
- Planning for and planting urban trees
- Training to become arborists
- Developing and implementing management plans for developed areas with urban forests
- Writing tree guidelines for communities

Successful applicants who come out on top in the grant competition will receive funds based on a 1:1 matching ratio. Matches can be met through “in-kind donations and volunteer time,” according to the release.

The deadline for proposal submission for the latest, grant cycle is Monday, May 4. Proposals can be mailed or delivered to any of the DOA offices on St. Croix, St. Thomas or St. John. Email submissions are preferred.

The DOA’s website describes the big picture behind the U&CF Assistance program as a gateway to opportunities for V.I. residents to participate in preserving the territory’s urban forests – forests that “are invaluable in enhancing and improving the quality of life for our community,” according to Agriculture Commissioner Carlos Robles.

The forests here create a unique, “tropical look” that attracts tourists to the islands, play a large role in food production, and reduce vehicle pollution, according to the site. Green spaces, as forests are described on the site, can also contribute to reduced crime and improved physical and mental health for residents.

For more information about the forestry grants, those interested can visit the “Forestry” section on the DOA website – www.vifresh.com – or call Marilyn Chakroff, U&CF Program coordinator, at (340) 778-0997 ext. 233. Chakroff will be available to help with the writing of proposals and with identifying the types of projects that may be funded, according to the release. Proposals may be submitted to Chakroff via email at marilyn.chakroff@doa.vi.gov or marilyn.chakroff@gmail.com.

Feature Image: Frederiksted rainforest

Image Credit: Panoramio