



MONTANA URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

‘Continuum of Tree Care’ Small Grants Announcement

The Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association (MUCFA) Small Grants Program, funded through the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) under the Montana Forest Action Plan, supports small, rural Montana communities in strengthening the health and resilience of their urban forests. This program aligns with key objectives of the Montana Forest Action Plan:

- 1. Increase the health and resilience of urban trees**
- 2. Expand urban tree canopy**
- 3. Mitigate the financial impact of emerald ash borer (EAB)** by supporting proactive management strategies.

Our grant program aims to meet each community where they are at in a continuum of community tree care. Our grants provide funding for essential tree management practices such as:

- Establishing or rejuvenating a tree board
- Writing or updating a tree ordinance
- Conducting a tree inventory or updating existing inventory
- Keeping the inventory up to date
- Using the inventory to develop a tree care and maintenance plan
- Help implementing the plan
- Large tree pruning
- Hazard tree removals and replacement

Communities are required to provide matching funds unless they demonstrate a compelling need for an exception. Additionally, the program helps build local capacity through training and workforce development for municipal staff, tree board members, and community volunteers to ensure continued urban forest management.

Grant Management

MUCFA will directly manage grant funds by covering contractor and operational expenses on behalf of awarded communities. Funds will not be distributed to communities; instead, MUCFA will handle payments to reduce the administrative and financial burden on communities. However, communities are encouraged to contribute matching funds, including personnel time or volunteer labor, to enhance project impact and demonstrate local investment in its success

Grant Timeline

April 22: Call for Applications

May 31: Application Deadline

June 1 - June 15: Review Committee Evaluation

June 15: Award Notification & Grant Agreements

June 15, 2025 – June 15, 2026: Grant Implementation

July 31, 2026: Final Reporting

Eligibility

- Communities with populations under 3,500
- Eligible entities:
 - Montana cities, towns, counties including incorporated and unincorporated towns
 - Community-based organizations, public/state institutions of higher education
 - Nonprofits, tribal governments, conservation districts
- Preference for communities east of the Continental Divide
- Preference for communities demonstrating the desire to further their tree continuum of care and to use the grant to increase capacity for managing community trees on their own
- Preference for communities with high percentage of ash trees (>20%) rated as “large tree -immediate” and that are in “poor” or “dead and dying” condition
- Applicants must become MUCFA members before or after award acceptance

Funding & Match Requirements

- **Grant Amounts:** \$2,000 - \$10,000
- **Fund Management:** MUCFA will directly manage grant funds, covering contractor and operational expenses. Communities will not receive direct disbursements.

- **Matching Funds:** Communities are required to provide a match unless they demonstrate a compelling need for an exception. Match contributions can include cash, in-kind services, personnel time, or volunteer labor.

We encourage a tiered approach to matching funds, where communities with larger populations contribute a higher percentage. However, we recognize that each community has unique circumstances, and we will consider flexibility in match requirements based on demonstrated financial need.

Suggested match contributions by population size:

- Above 3,000: 60% match
- 2,000 – 3,000: 40% match
- Under 2,000: 25% match

Application Process

Submission: Applications can be submitted online or via email to MUCFA.web@gmail.com

Technical Grant Writing Assistance: Applicants may receive up to three 1-hour coaching sessions for grant writing and project planning. Please make requests to MUCFA.info@gmail.com

MONTANA URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

‘Continuum of Tree Care’ Small Grants Application

Application Deadline: May 31, 2025

Submission Instructions: Submit completed applications via email to mucfa.web@gmail.com with the subject line: "CTC Small Grant Application – [Community Name]"

Response Guidelines: Please provide clear and concise responses to the following open ended questions. Each response should be between 1-3 paragraphs in length.

1. Applicant Information

Community/Organization Name: Browning Public Schools

Primary Contact Person: Abigail (Biga) Klauk

Title: Groundskeeper (Maintenance Technician)

Mailing Address: 129 1st Ave NE, Browning, MT 59417

Phone Number: (319) 930-1242

Email Address: abigailm@bps.k12.mt.us

Tax ID or EIN (if applicable): 81-6000470

Secondary Contact Person: Reid Reagan

Title: BPS Head of Maintenance Department

Phone Number: (406) 450-8520

Email Address: reidr@bps.k12.mt.us

2. What activities will you undertake with this grant? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Tree Board revival or establishment
- ☐ Ordinance development or updating
- ☐ Conducting a Tree Inventory or updating an existing inventory (must provide personnel to help do inventory and update it)

X Keeping inventory up to date

X Use inventory data to develop a Tree Care & Maintenance Plan

X Help implement the plan

- ☐ Large tree pruning
- ☐ Hazard tree removal and replacement

3. Describe your project and how it will address urban forestry needs in your community.

Browning Public Schools (BPS) is a public education institution serving a community of ~1,000 people, as well as students from more rural communities in the surrounding area. Browning is just east of the Continental Divide and situated at the intersection of mountain and prairie ecosystems. Due to harsh conditions and dense housing there are currently relatively few urban trees in the town of Browning, and those that do exist can pose significant hazards during increasingly frequent high wind events.

BPS buildings are located throughout the town of Browning and, in addition to the educational mission, serve as community gathering spaces for frequent public events. BPS landscaping includes a number of mature trees and shrubs but has historically been focused on large grassy areas that require significant maintenance throughout the year. Recently, there have been efforts to convert parts of these grassy areas to trees and shrubs in order to support education on culturally-important native species, beautify the school grounds and potentially provide much-needed wind and snow drift protection. In 2022 Browning High School was supported by DNRC's Community and Urban Forestry and Tree-Plenish in planting over 200 trees and shrubs on school grounds. In 2024 a group of BPS Staff including Administrators, Educators, Food Service and Maintenance staff started the "Miinii Project", a partnership effort with Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger Inc. (MT PECH), to introduce traditional Miinii (berry) onto the landscape and into the diet of BPS youth. The Miinii Project kick-off in Fall 2024 included planting over 300 serviceberry trees with high school students along with transferring the knowledge and rights for preparing berry soup, a traditional recipe that is part of Blackfeet ceremony, as well as interdisciplinary education in Science, Culinary Arts, VoEd and Blackfeet Native American Studies classes.

The Miinii Project group hopes to continue and expand work in the 2025/2026 school year with tree plantings and education for students across the District (K-12). We still need to complete a tree inventory of BPS trees and will need to update the inventory with these new plantings. The BPS Maintenance Department lacks the staff and financial resources to solely care for these trees, and we hope to address this by developing a maintenance plan that includes the support of teachers and students. The development of this plan requires the support of local knowledge holders as well as urban forestry experts from MUCFA, DNRC or other outside organizations. We are also in need of materials to support the training of BPS students and teachers in tree care and maintenance. Developing the BPS tree care and maintenance plan will help us plan for additional tree planting and educational approaches and activities for engaging teachers, students, and their families in expanding the urban tree canopy. Our educational approach to BPS tree care and management can benefit the health and resilience of urban trees throughout Browning.

4. How will you sustain this work beyond the grant period?

A central goal of the Miinii Project is to educate younger generations on the importance and practice of tree care and maintenance. There is a long and ongoing tradition of tree stewardship on the Blackfeet Reservation and being in relation with the landscape is a central cultural value. However, the community currently relies on outside experts to conduct tree inventories. We hope to build local capacity by offering Professional Development for BPS teachers and maintenance staff, who will help share this knowledge with students in a progressive curriculum for all grade levels.

5. Describe any partners that will be involved in the project and how they will play a role in the project.

The Miinii Project group includes stakeholders from across the school district.

Students participate in tree planting and support tree maintenance efforts by monitoring trees and helping to clearly mark planting areas. **Teachers** provide education through lessons and activities both outside, working directly with BPS trees, as well as in the classroom.

Maintenance staff are primarily responsible for providing routine tree care and maintenance.

Building Administrators guide efforts with knowledge of building safety concerns. **Food Service** staff incorporate traditional foods from trees as part of student meals.

The Miinii Project also involves collaboration with organizations and individuals outside of the District. **Local knowledge holders** provide critical cultural information and knowledge of local weather conditions, soil and tree species. Experts from the **Blackfeet Environmental Office** support planting efforts and student education around trees, and connect formal education efforts with informal education at community events. The **DNRC Community and Urban Forestry Department** provides important knowledge on urban tree maintenance and inventory, as well as tree seedlings and equipment for planting and maintenance that add to limited funds available through BPS and grants/donations from **The Center for Native Plants, Tree-Plenish** and **MT PECH**.

6. Provide a project timeline. Outline key activities for your project between June 2025 and June 2026.

- **Summer 2025:** Initial planning meeting with BPS key stakeholders, MUCFA and DNRC Community Forestry staff for development of the BPS tree care and maintenance plan
- **August 2025:** Professional Development (possibly a half-day workshop) for teachers, which will include developing the BPS tree care and maintenance plan and accompanying K-12 curriculum, providing tree care training for BPS staff, and planning for school and community events such as the Miinii Project berry festival and Arbor Day in Spring 2026.
- **September 2025:** Miinii Project “Berry Festival” (harvesting trips, new tree plantings, and monitoring/inventory of existing trees)

- **October 2025-March 2026:** Continued classroom lessons and maintenance by students and teachers, development and Board Approval of maintenance plan including District expenses associated with tree care and maintenance
- **April 2025:** Start of planning for new plantings/replanting of existing trees, including possible Arbor Day/Earth Day event.

7. Provide a budget overview:

MUCFA's funds must be used for operational expenses and contracted professional services. Personnel costs may be provided as an in-kind match.

Use the tables below to outline your project budget. Describe how funds will be allocated and any matching contributions your community or organization will provide.

MUCFA-Funded Expenses (Operations & Contracted Professional Services)

Expense Category	Description	Amount Requested
Operational Costs	<i>(e.g., man-lift, bucket truck, or rental equipment for tree pruning, pruning tools, tablet for conducting tree inventory, tree purchases for replacement)</i>	
	Educational Materials for 5 schools [20 gallons of acrylic paint (\$45.50/gallon), 200 foam brushes (\$3/20-pack), 12 metal meter/yard sticks (\$80/6-pack), 60 clip boards (\$35/12-pack), 60 metric/standard rulers (\$30/4-pack), 5 50-meter fiberglass measuring tapes (\$50/ea)]	\$1,281
	Signage and fencing/wind protection for tree planting locations [5 large interpretive signs (\$200/ea), 350 1' wooden stakes (\$22/bundle of 50), 100 6' T-posts (\$920 total) and 740 ft of 4' galvanized chain link fencing (\$94/50-ft roll)]	\$3,484
	Pruning tools (10 hand pruners and sheaths, 5 folding hand saws)	\$975
Contracted Professional Services	<i>(e.g., Tree Board and Ordinance writing contractor, tree inventory and management plan consultant, arborist and their equipment, hazard tree removal services, stump grinding contractor, etc.)</i>	
	Tree inventory and management plan	\$2,000

	consultants	
	Cultural and local knowledge consultants	\$2,260
		\$
Total		\$10,000

Matching Funds (Personnel, Operations, Contractual, Volunteer Time)

Expense Category	Description	Matching Amount
Personnel (In-Kind)	<i>(e.g., municipal employees)</i> 50 hours @ \$24/hr for Maintenance Technician	\$1,200
Operational Costs	<i>(e.g., use of city equipment, tree planting materials donated by the community)</i> MT PECH grant funding for trees and shrubs, stakes, meals for volunteers and Professional Development/travel expenses for BPS staff	\$8,694
Contractual Services	<i>(e.g., contribution towards consultant costs)</i>	\$
Volunteer Labor	<i>(e.g., estimated hours at volunteer rate)</i> 50 hours in planting, care and monitoring by BPS students and teachers @ \$34.79/hr	\$1,739.50
Total		\$11,633.50

- If you are unable to provide matching funds, please explain your financial constraints or barriers.
 - If applicable, please list any local contractors you recommend for hire?
8. If your community lacks capacity, how can MUCFA assist. *(check all that apply)*
- ☐ Help establishing a Tree Board
 - ☐ Revising or developing an ordinance
 - ☐ Completing a new inventory
 - ☒ Maintaining and updating existing tree inventory
 - ☒ Developing a Tree Care & Maintenance Plan

X Help preparing a draft tree care budget from plan for submittal to city council

X Engaging volunteers

X Trainings on small tree pruning **Especially for wind resilience

X Trainings on medium to large tree pruning **Including sustainable and culturally-appropriate harvesting practices of tree products

X Training on tree planting

X Other needs? Please explain

We are hoping to facilitate youth and elder interaction around tree stewardship as a way of sharing knowledge and carrying on the longstanding tradition of valuing trees and tree products in this community. Transportation costs, aligning community and public school timelines and limited elder mobility can be barriers to accomplishing this in field locations, and having trees on BPS grounds can help support this goal.

9. Attachments (optional)

- ☐ Maps or photos of project area
- ☐ Other supporting documents

Certification & Signature

By signing below, I certify that the information provided in this application is accurate and that our organization/community is committed to implementing this project if awarded funding.

X_____

Thank you for applying to the MUCFA Small Grants Program!

MUCFA will review applications and notify awardees by June 15, 2025.

For questions, please contact Kelly Franklin at mucfa.info@gmail.com