

## **Community Forestry Assistance Programs**

A guide for Communities on Federal, State, and Local Government Cost-share Programs That Provide Assistance for Community Forestry Projects.

developed by the

## **LOWER ELKHORN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT**



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## INTRODUCTION:

Community forestry and urban conservation projects require careful planning and thought. Before undertaking any project consider these following steps carefully.

1. **Perform a needs assessment for your community.** A needs assessment will help you to identify what your community's long and short-term goals are. This process allows local residents to have an active role in determining the needs of the community and what types of projects can best meet those needs. Technical assistance for performing a needs assessment or developing long and short-term goals are available through your local Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D), the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NNEEDD), or the Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP)
2. **Identify specific projects that meet your long and short-term goals.** Based on the information collected from the needs assessment identify specific projects that meet your community's long and short-term goals. Technical assistance for evaluating the natural resources in your community is available through the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS), and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC).
3. **Decide which project best addresses the needs of your community at this time.** Base your decision on the information collected as part of the needs assessment, your community's goals and objectives, and your financial resources.
4. **Develop a plan for your project.** Most cost-share assistance programs will require that you develop a formal plan for your project. Contact the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS), or the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA) for technical assistance in developing a plan for your project. The Nebraska Forest Service recommends that your community seek professional help for all planting and maintenance projects. Both the Nebraska Association of Nurserymen and the Nebraska Arborists Association maintain a list of members in Nebraska.
5. **Find out which cost-share programs apply to your project.** Examine the list of cost-share programs in this guide and decide which program applies most directly to your project goals and financial needs.
6. **Contact the organization responsible for managing the program.** Most cost-share programs will require you to file an application including a description of the project and a budget worksheet. Be sure to find out about program restrictions including sign up periods, payment schedules, and application procedures.

7. **Begin work on your project.** Do not begin work on a project until you receive approval. Failure to follow this procedure may lead to your project being canceled. The notice of approval will state how much cost-share assistance for which your project qualified.
8. **Project completion.** Make sure you obtain receipts for all expenditures, including supplies, labor, and equipment. After the project is completed, contact the organization responsible for managing the program under which you applied. They will send out a representative who will inspect the site to certify that the project meets program standards and specifications. Once they have certified the project, they will issue a check for the portion of the project successfully completed. Be sure to keep copies of all project records for tax purposes.

## **COST-SHARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

### **LOWER ELKHORN NRD=S COMMUNITY FORESTRY INCENTIVES PROGRAM**

The Community Forestry Incentives Program is designed to provide cost-share assistance to communities within the LENRD for the establishment, improvement, or maintenance of urban forestry projects on public lands. The LENRD will accept applications from local government and private voluntary or non-governmental organizations. Community Forestry Incentives Program (CFIP) funds are available as 65/35 cost-share assistance with the LENRD bearing 65 percent of the approved cost of the project not to exceed a maximum of \$5,000.00. Contact John G. DuPlissis, NRD Forester, at (402) 371-7313 for more information regarding this program.

### **LOWER ELKHORN NRD=S OUTDOOR CLASSROOM GRANT PROGRAM**

The Outdoor Classroom Grant Program is designed to provide either cost-share assistance or one-time grants to communities within the LENRD for the establishment of outdoor classrooms. The LENRD will accept applications from interested schools or local organizations working in concert with a school. Grant money may only be used to purchase plant materials including trees, shrubs, and native grass seed. Cost-share assistance for Outdoor Classroom projects is available as 65/35 cost-share assistance with the LENRD bearing 65 percent of the approved cost of the project not to exceed a maximum of \$1,000.00. Grants may not exceed a maximum of \$650.00 per project. Contact either Julie Schmit, I & E Coordinator, or John G. DuPlissis, NRD Forester, at (402) 371-7313 for more information regarding this program.

### **LOWER ELKHORN NRD=S RECREATION AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

The Recreation Area Development Program is designed to assist municipalities with the acquisition of land and/or the development of recreation areas. This program provide cost-share assistance for the development of recreation area plans, land acquisition, landscaping and buildings and facilities. Cost-share assistance for recreation projects is available as 50/50 cost-share assistance with both parties bearing 50 percent of the approved cost of the project not to exceed a maximum of \$50,000.00. Contact Ken Berney, Assistant Manager, at (402) 371-7313 for more information regarding this program.

### **NATIONAL TREE TRUST**

The National Tree Trust is a private, nonprofit organization created to serve as a catalyst for local volunteer and community service groups in the growing, planting, and maintenance of trees in rural communities, urban areas and along our nations highways. The National Tree Trust was established as part of the AAmerica the Beautiful@ initiative designated by the President and endowed with a one-time grant from Congress. The National Tree Trust provides cost-share assistance under three separate programs. These are:

#### **AMERICA=S TREEWAYS**

The America=s Treeways program is a cooperative effort between the National Tree Trust, the U.S. Forest Service, the Federal Highway Administration, the National Association of State Foresters, and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. The America=s Treeways program fosters private-public partnerships by encouraging and assisting transportation agencies to work with local volunteers to plant trees along transportation corridors. The Tree Trust provides qualified organizations one-year-old seedlings of site-appropriate species for their roadside projects. Contact Jackie Bentz, Program Coordinator, at 1-800-846-8733, extension 26, for more information on the America=s Treeways program

#### **COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING**

The Community Tree Planting program is designed to encourage and assist local volunteer organization to plant trees on public lands, such as government offices, school grounds, wildlife refuges, and community parks. The National Tree Trust provides grants in the form of seedlings and can include donations of containers and a cash subsidy to purchase potting soil. Contact Scott Nye, Program Coordinator, extension 12, for more information on the Community Tree Planting program.

#### **GROWING TOGETHER**

The Growing Together program is designed to provide an educational experience for students by monitoring the growth of a tree from seed. The Growing Together program provides grow boxes in which students plant seeds, marker cards to measure and record tree growth, and administrative and technical support and referral services. The Tree Trust also provides a one time grant and per-student cash subsidy to help with local purchase of seed and soil. Contact Jennifer Hinrichs, Program Coordinator, at 1-800-846-8733, extension 13, for more information on the Growing Together program.

### **NEBRASKA COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

The Community Enhancement Program (CEP) is a cooperative effort between the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDR), the University of Nebraska's Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA). The NDR is responsible for the administration of Federal funding through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. This legislation provides in part for cooperation with local government to plant trees, shrubs, and other vegetation to enhance transportation corridors. The NFS, assisted by the NSA, will administer small funding requests by local government or other public entities for landscape installation on public land. Projects eligible for funding under this program must be located along a transportation corridor. The ISTEA defines a transportation corridor as public streets or highways, parking facilities, scenic easements, and scenic historic sites. Trails for pedestrians or bicycles may qualify if they are alternatives to motorized vehicular traffic. Loop and recreation trails do not qualify. Community Enhancement Program funds are available as 80/20 cost-share assistance with the CEP bearing 80 percent of the approved cost of the project not to exceed a maximum of \$20,000.00. Contact Dave Mooter, Community Forester with the Nebraska Forest Service, at (402) 444-7804 for more information regarding this program.

### **NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST**

The State Legislature established the Nebraska Environmental Trust for the purpose of conserving, enhancing, and restoring the natural physical and biological environment in Nebraska, including the air, land, ground water and surface water, flora and fauna, prairies and forests, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and natural areas of aesthetic or scenic value. There is no set maximum amount for grants available through the Environmental Trust Fund. The Trust encourages the use of matching funds, however, matching funds are not required in any amount or percentage. Contact the Nebraska Environmental Trust at (402) 471-5409 for more information regarding this program.

### **NEBRASKA GREEN SPACE STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE**

The Nebraska Green Space Initiative is a cooperative effort between the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA) and the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The primary purpose of this program is to encourage and assist Nebraska's communities to use sustainable, environmentally sound landscape practices in the planting and care of community green spaces. Nebraska Green Space Initiative program funds are available as 70/30 cost-share assistance with the Green Space Initiative bearing 70 percent of the approved cost of the project not to exceed a maximum of \$25,000.00. Contact Justin Evertson, Planning Specialist with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, at (402) 472-2971 for more information regarding this program.

### **NEBRASKA TREE RECOVERY PROGRAM**

The Nebraska Tree Recovery program was enacted into law to address issues of public safety and liability relating to the loss of trees on land owned by state or local government. The University of Nebraska-Nebraska Forest Service (UNL-NFS) administers the funds appropriated under this Act as the Tree Recovery Program. The purpose of this program is to provide matching grants, not to exceed \$20,000.00 for any one project, to local government for the removal, disposal, and replacement of trees on public property. The UNL-NFS will accept applications from all state and local units of government for tree removal and replacement projects on state or local government owned land. Contact Dave Mooter, Community Forester with the Nebraska Forest Service, at (402) 444-7804 for more information regarding this program.

Note: The Nebraska Legislature has funded the Tree Recovery Program as a two-year program through fiscal year 1999.

### **TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

The Nebraska Department of Roads= (NDOR) Transportation Enhancement Program provides funding to most state and local government agencies to construct and restore transportation facilities that are not eligible for funding through other programs. The federal government through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 provides funding for this program. Examples of projects that would be eligible include trails, development of scenic byways, restoration of historic transportation facilities, and other projects directly related to historic, current, or future transportation infrastructure. Transportation Enhancement Program funds are available as 80/20 cost-share assistance with the TEP bearing 80 percent of the approved cost of the project not to exceed a maximum of \$20,000.00. Contact Don Cook, District Engineer in district 3, at (402) 370-3470 for more information regarding this program.

### **WILD ACTION GRANTS**

WILD Action Grants is a program of Project Wild, an interdisciplinary, supplementary conservation and environmental education program emphasizing wildlife. Grants under this program will fund up to \$500.00 per school for action programs designed to develop wildlife habitat on school sites or development of indoor/outdoor education areas integrated with a habitat demonstration area. Contact Carl Wolfe, Project WILD Coordinator, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, at (402) 471-5581 for more information regarding this program.