

Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition **Process for Submitting Project Ideas within the Coalition**

BACKGROUND: The Coalition has the option to submit funding requests for continuing the convener function, hosting an annual meeting, and implementing Coalition projects for 2005. Any proposals to federal agencies need to be submitted by June 15, 2005 if we are to obtain funding this year. The following have been developed to guide the selection process for Coalition projects: (1) criteria to evaluate Coalition project ideas, (2) format for submitting ideas to the Coalition for consideration, (3) process for vetting ideas, (4) prioritization process for identifying ideas to be developed into Coalition proposals, and (5) timeline. Ideas will be reviewed during the IC call scheduled for May 5. A general coalition call will be scheduled for the week of May 9-13 for the full Coalition to discuss project ideas and begin prioritization.

The Coalition will use this process to select ideas and submit Coalition project proposals to all funders, including the Forest Service; the Forest Service has not and will not develop a special process for the Coalition to follow. As with most federal agencies, the Forest Service has both formal grant programs such as that sponsored by NUCFAC, and discretionary funds for which unsolicited proposals will be considered. The Coalition may submit both unsolicited proposals and proposals in response to formal programs sponsored through the Forest Service and other agencies and organizations. *This process was approved by the SUFC Interim Committee (IC) 4/4/2005.*

(1) Criteria for evaluating coalition proposals ideas: Project ideas must

- ◆ Be drawn from the 2005 tasks and on-going work approved by the Coalition membership 3/2005;
- ◆ Align with funder criteria, e.g., for the Forest Service, this would include the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Blueprint for the Future and FY 2005 Program Direction Focus Areas; AND
- ◆ Involve multiple Coalition members. (NOTE: Involvement by a single Coalition member or any non-Coalition members in a Coalition proposal must be justified.)

(2) Format for submitting ideas. Any Coalition member can propose a project idea to the IC by submitting a project summary of up to 500 words describing:

- ◆ The basics of the project – what will happen and when
- ◆ The need that justifies the project – why it should happen
- ◆ Fit with the three criteria above, including who will be involved. NOTE: Outside groups will not be eligible for funding through the Coalition unless they join with a coalition member on a prioritized proposal that has been approved by the whole coalition.
- ◆ Approximate cost and distribution of funds – who gets how much, and why

(3) Process for vetting ideas.

- ◆ Project ideas will be shared with all Coalition members.
- ◆ The IC will review the projects, and develop a preliminary ranking, based on the project fit with criteria. Each project will receive a score of 1-5 in each of the three criteria categories, based on how well they align with each criteria.
- ◆ The IC assessment of each project will be shared with the Coalition members in advance of a discussion on a general Coalition conference call.

(4) Prioritization process for identifying ideas to be developed into proposals.

- ◆ Projects are discussed during a general Coalition conference call.
- ◆ Each member will then be asked to rank their top three projects in priority order. Scores will be weighted: 3 pts for 1st, 2 pts for 2nd, 1 pt for 3rd choice. Scores can be submitted verbally during the conference call, by email, or by fax.
- ◆ Projects will be prioritized based on scores.

2005 Timeline for submissions to Federal Agencies:

April 5-30: Members develop and submit project ideas to Michelle Harvey at MHarvey@NationalTreeTrust.org; Michelle forwards ideas to IC.

May 5: IC reviews project ideas, and provides initial ranking

May 9/13: Members receive project ideas and IC recommendations; a general Coalition call occurs this week where the Coalition discusses and ranks projects

May 19: IC confirms projects to be submitted; decisions are relayed to partners, who draft proposals

June 10: Proposals are submitted to IC

June 15: Proposals are approved by IC and submitted on behalf of the Coalition to federal agencies for funding consideration.

NOTE: The Interim Committee also agreed to form a Development Committee to focus on fundraising tasks such as identifying prospective funders, assessing each prospective funders timeline and process, etc. This Committee will revise and update this process as appropriate.