



The Oregon Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program has been awarded \$26.6 million in Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grant funding to build statewide urban forestry management capacity and establish two distinct sub-award programs for overburdened and underserved communities. One funding opportunity is devoted specifically to the nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon, and the other is available to all eligible entities in qualifying geographies. Both sub-award programs aim to promote equity and environmental justice using a community-centered, whole systems approach. The aim is not just to get a lot of trees planted in the short-term but rather to initiate a cultural paradigm shift that helps build enduring programs and long-term urban sustainability. By focusing on comprehensive workforce development and diversification programs, Oregon is hoping to move "beyond the golden shovel" of traditional urban tree planting initiatives.

Although ODF's IRA sub-award programs are just getting started, Oregon is already seeing encouraging results from this historic funding opportunity. One of the most conspicuous of these early results is the rapid growth and capacity building of ODF's UCF team and its network of community partners. At ODF, the team has expanded from historically having only two permanent, full-time employees (FTE) to now having nine permanent FTE. This has made it possible to take on new work and projects previously impossible, such as working closely with Tribes, small rural communities, educational institutions, non-profits, trade organizations, and counties. Three of the seven new positions are being funded by IRA, two are being funded by the State of Oregon, and two others are being funded by a

BIL Cooperative Forest Health grant. This is a prime illustration of how taking advantage of one funding opportunity can build confidence in a program and help leverage/open up other funding opportunities.

One of the most noticeable and exciting effects of the IRA funding opportunity in Oregon has been the considerable uptick in the number of interdisciplinary, cross-sector conversations and collaborations that are occurring. These conversations and collaborations focus on tree equity and environmental justice and involve/elevate overburdened and underserved populations.

Thanks to the IRA, the ODF team's ability to partner with and provide support to non-municipal entities has been greatly enhanced. The team can now provide

technical, financial, and educational assistance to all areas of the state and deeply engage with local community partners. This will soon result in better planning, better implementation, and better follow-up care for trees in historically disadvantaged communities throughout the state.

While planting more urban trees throughout Oregon is an eventual goal, ODF will first focus on building sustainable systems. This will be achieved by expanding opportunities for urban forest planning and monitoring, education and engagement, network and relationship building, workforce development and diversification, expansion of nursery capacity, enhancing long-term tree maintenance, and facilitating adaptive management and storytelling/lesson sharing.



Header Left: Community volunteers in Corvallis help to plant a new street tree and demonstrate that many hands make light work and that community-based tree planting initiatives have distinct advantages over municipal/contractor-based initiatives. Photo: Jennifer Killian, ODF. **Header Right:** Eugene's Mayor, Lucy Vinis, works with UF Technician, Heidi Lakics, to plant and dedicate a new street tree at the Downtown Farmer's Market. Photo: Scott Altenhoff, ODF. **Left:** City of Salem Urban Forester, Milan Davis, and Urban Ashes Founder/CEO, Paul Hickman, tour the urban wood mill at the Marion County Juvenile Department's Alternative Program. Photo: Scott Altenhoff, ODF