



Grant Application Guidelines

Urban Forest Fund 2022

Key dates

Applications open	5pm, Thursday 13 January 2022
Applications close	5pm, Friday 11 March 2022
Assessment period	March – June 2022
Council meeting	June 2022
Notification of outcome	July 2022

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Introduction

The Urban Forest Fund provides financial support to new greening projects on private property, such as gardens, tree planting, vertical greening or green roofs.

The Urban Forest Fund provides matched funding grants for greening projects, where we will match successful applicant's investment dollar-for-dollar. In 2022, we are offering grants from \$10,000 to \$300,000.

The Urban Forest Fund will support a wide range of projects, including:

- tree planting
- green roofs, walls and facades
- creation of new green spaces
- vegetation cover to increase biodiversity
- Water Sensitive Urban Design
- improvements to below-ground soil conditions to support healthy vegetation.

Further information is available on the [Urban Forest Fund website](#)¹.

Why do we want to support greening projects on private property?

Trees, plants and green open spaces are essential infrastructure in our city, helping to cool the environment, reduce pollution, support biodiversity, boost the economy and improve health and wellbeing.

The City of Melbourne has a number of strategies and programs in place to increase the quantity and quality of green space in our city. We are working to double our tree canopy cover, increase the amount of open space, green our iconic laneways, improve biodiversity and enhance our urban ecosystems.

While these programs are making an impact on Melbourne's public realm, widespread greening across all areas of the city will lead to much better environmental, social and economic outcomes. In particular, private green spaces can help to create connect habitat for biodiversity to move through the urban landscape.

Approximately 75 per cent of the land within the City of Melbourne municipal area is privately owned or managed, so there is huge potential for the private realm to contribute more towards greening our city. We want to help people create beautiful, cool green spaces on their own properties.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the grant requirements, please contact the team on (03) 9658 9658 or email urbanforestfund@melbourne.vic.gov.au.

¹ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/urbanforestfund>

Eligibility checklist

Before you continue, please ensure your project meets the following requirements. Applications that do not meet the requirements or do not provide the correct supporting documentation will not be considered.

Check box: (Mark Y/N)	Your project must:	More information:
	Be located within the City of Melbourne municipal area	To find out if your project location is within the City of Melbourne, head to City of Melbourne municipality map ² .
	Be primarily focused on creating new green infrastructure	The overall greening outcome must be more green cover than prior to the project commencing.
	Be completed no later than 31 May 2023.	“Completion” means that that greening component of your project is complete and able to be accessed by the intended users.
	Have demonstrated community benefits	See Assessment Criteria on page 10.
	Have demonstrated environmental benefits	See Assessment Criteria on page 9.
	Be visible from the public realm or be able to be regularly accessed by a large number of people	The ‘public realm’ refers to any area that is able to be freely accessed by anyone.
	Have a clear plan for long-term maintenance	A maintenance plan should include types of maintenance activities, who will carry them out and how the maintenance will be funded.
	Have determined if a planning permit is required, and if so, a permit application must have been submitted.	For more information visit the Do I Need a Permit ³ page on the City of Melbourne website. Please note there may be a small cost associated with obtaining written advice.
	Be located on land owned by the applicant or, where greening is to take place on private property that is not owned by the applicant, a secured lease is required for at least five years and written consent must be provided by the building owner.	You’ll be required to submit evidence, as detailed below.

² <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-melbourne/melbourne-profile/Pages/city-maps.aspx#boundary>

³ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/building-and-development/planning-and-building-services/planning-applications/Pages/melbourne-planning-scheme-need-permit.aspx>

Required documentation

The Urban Forest Fund supports projects that are well-resolved and demonstrate commitment to delivery. Depending on the project, you will need to prepare some, or all, of the following documentation for your application:

- Concept designs, including detail about irrigation, growing medium and plant details (these don't have to be final construction drawings, but the more detail you provide the easier it will be for the assessment panel to understand your project).
- Information about how the project will provide benefits for people and the environment.
- Estimates of plant and canopy cover in square metres, before and after the project.
- A project timeline.
- A formal quote or itemised costing from a licensed Quantity Surveyor.
- Formal written advice from the City of Melbourne Planning Department that either:
 - a planning permit is not required;
 - an application for a planning permit has been submitted; or
 - a planning permit has been issued (see the [Do I Need a Permit](#)³ page on the City of Melbourne website).
- Formal written advice from a licensed Building Surveyor detailing whether a building permit will be required for the project and including specific advice with regards to structural capacity (for projects that rely on existing buildings or structures).
- Evidence of either ownership or lease agreement for the property where the project will take place.
- Written permission from the property owner for the project (where the applicant is not the owner).
- Maintenance plan.
- Detailed project costs, either a formal quote from a suitably qualified practitioner or a licensed quantity surveyor.

You will be able to submit up to ten additional documents with your application. This might include visualisations or renders, or any other evidence to support your application.

Submitting your application

Grant applications must be submitted online via the SmartyGrants system. The link to SmartyGrants is provided on the [Urban Forest Fund website](#)¹. In order to access the system, you will need to create an applicant profile. This will allow you to save your application and return to it again.

Visit the [SmartyGrants website](#)⁴ for more information.

Deadlines

Applications must be submitted no later than 5pm on Friday 11 March 2022. The online application system (SmartyGrants) will close at this time, preventing late submissions. To ensure fairness for all applicants, no extensions will be granted beyond this time. We strongly encourage you to submit your application well before the cut off time to allow extra time for any submission complications.

Please note that late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.

⁴ <https://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/help-guide-for-applicants/>

Assessment process

The assessment process will take place from March to June 2022 and includes the following stages:

Eligibility screening

All submitted applications will undergo preliminary screening to ensure that:

- All required documentation has been submitted
- All mandatory application questions are answered
- All eligibility requirements are met.

Panel assessment

All eligible applications will progress to the assessment stage. Each application will be scored against the assessment criteria and ranked by an assessment panel. The assessment panel is made up of community members and experts in green infrastructure, arboriculture and ecology.

Formal endorsement

The Assessment Panel will provide funding recommendations to the Urban Forest Fund Steering Group. These recommendations will be submitted to Council via the formal process for consideration and endorsement.

Note that the endorsement process can take up to eight weeks, and may extend longer if amendments are requested by Council prior to endorsement.

Notification of outcomes

After Council have formally endorsed the provisional allocation of funding, all applicants will be notified of the status of their application.

Applicants should note that Council endorsement grants the applicant to progress to the next stage: establishment of a formal funding agreement.

Funds will not be committed until a formal funding agreement is in place, and an agreement will not be signed until all required conditions are met.

Public announcement

Applicants should note that the City of Melbourne will make a public announcement of the winners at the conclusion of the assessment process from July 2022 onwards. Information submitted in your application may be included in this announcement.

Funding

How much funding can I ask for?

The Urban Forest Fund provides matched funding grants for greening projects, where we will match successful applicant's investment dollar-for-dollar. In 2022, we are offering grants from \$10,000 to \$300,000. This means the minimum total project value must be at least \$20,000, with \$10,000 contributed by the applicant and \$10,000 committed by the Urban Forest Fund.

The maximum grant amount available is \$300,000, which would require a minimum investment of \$300,000 by the applicant. If the total project cost is greater than \$600,000, the Urban Forest Fund will offer no more than \$300,000 and the remainder must be funded by the applicant.

For example:

A green roof project is taking place as part of the construction of a new building. The entire project will cost \$10 million, but the green roof and associated works (such as waterproofing) are costed at \$1.4 million. The applicant may seek to cover the cost of the green roof component, up to a maximum value of \$300,000. In this example, the applicant could ask for \$300,000.

For example:

An Owners Corporation plans to install a new garden area at the front of their building. The project has been costed at \$150,000. The Owners Corporation can apply for a grant of \$75,000 from the Urban Forest Fund.

For example:

An Owners Corporation plans to reinstate some old garden beds in their common property area with trees and indigenous understorey plants. The project has been costed at \$20,000. The Owners Corporation can apply for a grant of \$10,000 from the Urban Forest Fund. They must provide the remaining \$10,000.

What can I seek funding for?

The Urban Forest Fund grants will co-fund the cost of greening and associated necessary works. You are required to submit either a formal itemised quote or costing from a licensed Quantity Surveyor as part of the application. Projects costs that do not directly relate to the greening project must not be included in the request for funds. Some associated projects costs may be included, such as design and project management, but this should not exceed more than 15 percent of the total project cost.

The majority of the funding request should be allocated towards greening outcomes. Applications will be considered with respect to 'value for money', so projects that deliver maximum quantity of vegetation for the cost will be more likely to score well.

Please note that the cost of ongoing maintenance is not covered by the grants. The applicant must be prepared to maintain the green asset to a high standard for at least five years following completion.

Can I seek funding from other sources?

The Urban Forest Fund offers matched funding grants, meaning that applicants must have their own funds available to invest in the project. Applicants may source their portion of the investment from other sources at their discretion.

How will funds be allocated to successful applicants?

Funding will be provided to successful applicants via a formal funding agreement that stipulates milestone payments. Milestone dates and amounts may be negotiable, but are typically set with an initial up-front payment and a second payment upon formal project completion.

Successful applicants will be established in the City of Melbourne's accounting system as providers and will be required to invoice for grant payments, as stipulated in the funding agreement.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be scored against assessment criteria that correlate with information provided on the application form. The assessment criteria are outlined below.

What is the total green cover amount achieved by the project (including horizontal and vertical surfaces)?

Please provide an estimate of the total green coverage in square metres expected to be achieved through the project. This should be a combination of any horizontal surface coverage (such as garden bed area, tree canopy cover) and vertical surface coverage (from green walls or green facades). If you are planting trees as part of your project, you will also be asked in your grant submission to also provide an estimated breakdown of tree canopy cover. When calculating tree canopy coverage, please estimate the size of the tree canopy at maturity.

Is the project in an area with low tree canopy cover?

This criterion will be assessed based on the location of the project and the City of Melbourne's existing tree canopy cover data. To identify if your project is located in an area of low canopy cover, access the local [Urban Forest Precinct Plan](#)⁵ for your area on the City of Melbourne website and head to the 'Prioritising tree planting in streets' section.

Is the project in an area with low open space?

This criterion will be assessed based on the location of the project and open space data presented in the City of Melbourne's [Open Space Strategy background paper \(PDF 12.6 MB\)](#)⁶.

Will the project contribute replacement greening in an area where significant tree loss has occurred from development?

This criterion will be assessed based on the location of the project and the spatial distribution of City of Melbourne tree removals and revenue from tree removals.

Does the project provide specific and substantial biodiversity benefits?

While any greening project will provide some level of benefits for wildlife in the city, locally indigenous plants provide the most benefit to local wildlife in the city. Where it's not possible to plant indigenous plants, native plants are a good substitute. This question is an opportunity for applicants to tell the panel about any parts of their design or project that are specifically designed to:

⁵ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/parks-open-spaces/urban-forest/pages/urban-forest-precinct-plans.aspx>

⁶ [https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/meeting-archive/meetingagendaitemattachments/579/9974/5.3%20open%20space%20strategy%20\(pages%2041%20to%20332\).pdf](https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/meeting-archive/meetingagendaitemattachments/579/9974/5.3%20open%20space%20strategy%20(pages%2041%20to%20332).pdf)

- Include a range of indigenous and native plants that provide food for native animals
- A variety of plant and tree sizes to create structural diversity
- Support the movement of wildlife across the landscape (for example, forming part of a corridor for particular species)
- Reduce threats to biodiversity (for example, passively excluding stray cats or dogs, preventing weed invasion into adjacent habitat, reducing artificial light at night).

For the purpose of these grants, we consider ‘indigenous plants’ as those that are locally indigenous to the greater Melbourne area. This includes any plants listed in either the Victorian Volcanic Plain (‘Basalt Plains’) and Gippsland Plain (‘Tertiary Sands and Coast’) bioregions, as detailed in the book ‘Flora of Melbourne: A Guide to the Indigenous Plants of the Greater Melbourne Area’. This book is available in libraries or the information can be accessed online via the [VICFLORA website](https://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au/)⁷. We encourage the use of the Flora of Melbourne, as it is an excellent resource for plant information.

Is the project innovative?

This question is an opportunity to tell the panel any aspects of your project that are innovative. This might include (but is not limited to):

- New approaches to design to deliver better greening outcomes
- Innovative approaches to retrofitting green infrastructure to existing structures
- Innovative research integrated into the project
- New ideas or technology that progresses the greening industry in Australia.

Innovative projects should include an approach for sharing the information with the industry.

Has suitable expertise been engaged for the project?

Green infrastructure projects can be complex so it’s important to engage the right expertise. Each project is unique and will require different expertise, but some experts to consider for your project might be:

- Architect
- Landscape architect
- Green infrastructure construction specialist
- Maintenance contractor
- Town planner
- Building surveyor

To what extent does the project provide benefit to the community?

Due to the positive environmental benefits provided by green infrastructure, such as pollution removal and cooling, greening projects will always have some level of benefit to the broader community. However, under this criterion the panel will assess the extent to which your project delivers additional benefit to the community, and how broadly the benefits are distributed.

Community benefits associated with greening projects might include (but are not limited to):

⁷ <https://vicflora.rbg.vic.gov.au/>

- **Giving back:** will your project be giving back to the community in some way?
 - Discounted or free services for not-for-profits
 - Donations of food or other goods
 - Spaces available for community use
- **Engagement opportunities:** Will your project engage with community groups or organisations to build capacity?
 - Volunteer or vocational opportunities
 - Partnership with not-for-profits
 - Social enterprise
- **Education:** Will your project contribute knowledge or provide research opportunities to further the green infrastructure industry?
 - Tours for schools and/or industry practitioners
 - Interpretive signage on site
 - Research partnerships with education institutions
 - Formal research integrated into the project (with publicly accessible results)

You should also consider which groups within the community will experience benefits from the project, such as residents, workers, visitors or vulnerable people.

Who can access and enjoy the project?

The Urban Forest Fund supports greening projects on private property and depending on the location, this will mean that people who have access to enjoy the green infrastructure will also vary.

Please use this question to describe the level of access that people will have to the project. In your answer, consider:

- Who will have access to the project? (for example, residents, staff, maintenance crews, members of the public)
- Roughly how many people can access the project? Everyone? Or a smaller number of people?
- When can people access the project? Is it freely open all of the time, or only during certain hours?

Does the project represent good value for money?

Value for money is a subjective assessment made by the panel based on the overall application, including:

- project cost
- scale of greening outcome
- environmental benefits, such as tree canopy cover, improvements to biodiversity, open space and stormwater reduction
- strategic benefit for the City of Melbourne
- community benefit
- amenity benefit for the public realm.

Projects which deliver high quality and quantity of vegetation and a range of other benefits will be scored more highly.

Further guidance for designing your project

Growing healthy, shady trees

Trees are critical infrastructure in our city, helping to cool the environment, provide shelter for people and wildlife and improve amenity. Nearby trees have also been shown to increase property values.

Trees need access to a sufficient volume of good quality soil and regular watering to enable good canopy growth. For this reason, in-ground planting typically leads to much better outcomes and allows the tree to reach its full potential with minimal maintenance.

Soil improvement

Good quality soil is critical for the success of any garden or landscape project. A landscaper can provide specific advice for your soil, but general principles to consider include:

- Volume – is there enough soil for the plants to grow?
- Nutrients – does the soil provide enough organic matter for plant survival?
- Moisture – does the soil have enough organic matter to retain water for plants, while allowing for drainage?
- Compaction – is the soil loose enough to allow root growth and access to oxygen?

Creating habitat

There are a number of things to think about when creating a green space that will attract and protect wildlife.

Indigenous and native plants

By planting native and ideally indigenous plant species, you will be more likely to attract local wildlife. Native animals have evolved alongside indigenous plants; consequently, many either depend on, or have become adapted to effectively utilising the resources from these plants. Integrating Indigenous and native plants into gardens therefore provide the best possible food and shelter opportunities for native wildlife. No matter how big or small your garden is, planting indigenous and native species in these spaces will form important stepping stones between isolated areas of habitat to help local wildlife move around the urban landscape.

Vegetation structure

A key to creating successful habitat areas is to establish structural diversity – this involves having a wide variety of plants at various heights and densities. Adding layers of complexity in the garden will increase the variety of resources (e.g. hollows, nectar, pollen and leaf litter) and make it possible for a greater diversity of animals to feed and shelter. For instance, native groundcover plants like Nodding Saltbush and Ruby Saltbush produce fruit loved by Blue-tongue Lizards, whilst small birds like Eastern Spinebills require thick, spikey shrubs to provide protection from larger, aggressive birds, as well as from cats and dogs. Where possible, aim to integrate a mix of groundcovers, grasses, shrubs, and trees.

Further resources

Growing Green Guide

The [Growing Green Guide](#)⁸: A guide to green roofs, walls and facades in Melbourne and Victoria has been developed with advice from industry experts and knowledge from academic research, to explain how to create high quality green roofs, walls and facades.

How to Grow an Urban Forest

[How to Grow an Urban Forest \(PDF 19.8 MB\)](#)⁹ is a 10-step guide to create urban forests and covers. It includes everything from decision-making tools, species selection, the briefing process, measurement, funding and maintenance.

Trees for Melbourne's Climate Future

The University of Melbourne and the City of Melbourne collaborated with industry experts to deliver a world-first research report: [Trees for Melbourne's Climate Future \(PDF 8.8 MB\)](#)¹⁰. This research explores the vulnerability of tree species currently planted in the City of Melbourne, and identifies some potential new species that may be more suitable for the city's climate future.

Rooftop Project

In 2014, the City of Melbourne [mapped all of the rooftops](#)¹¹ in the municipality to see if they have the potential to be turned into solar, cool or green roofs.

Green Factor Tool

[Green Factor](#)¹² is a green infrastructure assessment tool designed by City of Melbourne and developed to help with designing and constructing new environmentally-friendly buildings. This online tool is designed to help landscape designers, architects, planners and developers benchmark and improve their greening designs.

Green Factor is free and available for anyone to benchmark their greening designs. At present, its primary use is to help new developments in Melbourne to get the most benefits from their green designs. The tool is currently voluntary, but we are encouraging Urban Forest Fund grant applicants to submit a green factor scorecard if appropriate, aiming to achieve a target score of 0.55 or 0.25 for industrial. This will help developers to get familiar with the tool and understand future requirements.

Urban Nature Planting Guide

The [Urban Nature Planting Guide](#)¹³ provides information on over 100 suitable indigenous plants species for urban landscapes. The webpage includes plant selection filters to help choose suitable understorey species for urban plantings, including plants that attract different types of wildlife, like birds, bees, butterflies and lizards.

⁸ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/greening-the-city/green-infrastructure/Pages/growing-green-guide.aspx>

⁹ https://202020vision.com.au/media/53149/urban-forest-strategy-fa_lores_spreads.pdf

¹⁰ <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/handle/11343/122913/2016-CoM%20Future%20Urban%20Forest%20Final%20Report.pdf?sequence=1>

¹¹ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/building-and-development/sustainable-building/Pages/rooftop-project.aspx>

¹² <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/greening-the-city/green-infrastructure/Pages/green-factor-tool.aspx>

¹³ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/greening-the-city/urban-nature/Pages/urban-nature-planting-guide.aspx>

Frequently asked questions

If my application was unsuccessful in previous years, can I apply again in 2022?

Yes. You may resubmit the same project again in 2022; however it is strongly recommended that you contact the City of Melbourne to seek feedback on why your application was unsuccessful in past rounds.

You should also check the 2022 eligibility criteria to confirm that your project still qualifies for funding. You will need to complete a new application form because some of the questions have changed.

Does the Fund support projects that are commercial in nature?

Yes, provided that the primary objective of the project is to increase greening outcomes. For example, a green roof with a café on it is acceptable, but a rooftop café with a small amount of greening may not be.

Can the City of Melbourne provide advice on the viability of my green project?

The City of Melbourne cannot provide technical advice relating to the feasibility or design of your greening project. Independent advice should be sought from a relevant expert. Information about the types of expertise to consider for green roof and wall projects can be found on the [Growing Green Guide](#)⁸ website.

Can I include the cost of maintenance in my grant application?

No. Urban Forest Fund grants apply only to design and delivery of your greening project. Ongoing maintenance is the responsibility of the applicant.

Can I include the cost of project management in my funding application?

Project management fees can be included in the funding application, but must not exceed 15 per cent of the total project cost.

How can I find out if I need a planning permit?

If you are unsure if you require a planning permit, visit the [Do I Need a Permit](#)³ page on the City of Melbourne website. Please note there is a small cost associated with obtaining written advice.

Can I seek an extension on the deadline?

No. All applications must be submitted by the final submission date as specified under the application details. Please allow adequate time to submit your application prior to the deadline.

Why do I need written advice from a Building Surveyor?

When considering if a building permit is needed for your project, a Building Surveyor will assess what types of works will be required to deliver your project, including structural enhancements to existing structures. This information is useful for both applicants and the panel when considering the feasibility of a potential project.

Note that a Building permit is not required at the time of application, just advice as to whether one will be required if the project proceeds.

Contact us

We are here to help you craft a high quality application. Please get in touch with any questions or discuss your project idea.

Phone 03 9658 9658

Email: urbanforestfund@melbourne.vic.gov.au