

# COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING GRANT ADMINISTRATION GUIDE

August 2025



# Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to support you in the administration of your Community Tree Planting Grant from the Metropolitan Council. In the pages that follow, this guide will provide an overview of your responsibilities as a grantee, and outline how to set up your grant, receive timely reimbursements, and meet the grant requirements throughout the life of your grant.

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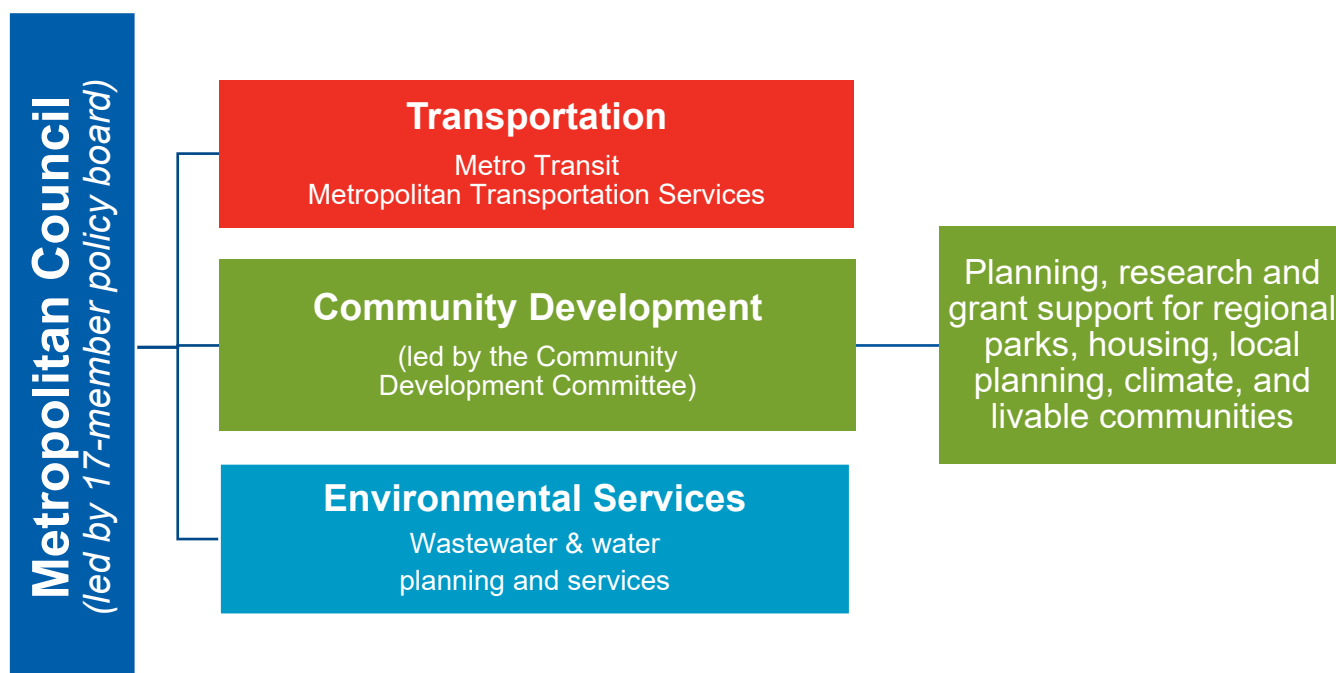
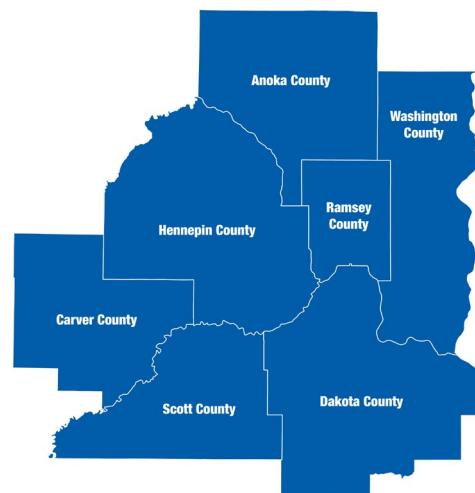
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## About the Metropolitan Council

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Met Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

The Council provides these essential services and infrastructure through its divisions: Metro Transit, Metropolitan Transportation Services, Community Development, and Environmental Services.



### Community Development Division

The Community Development Division is responsible for the Council's regional growth strategy, planning and technical assistance to local communities, and parks and open space. This division also includes the Metropolitan Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA) and the Livable Communities program.

The Community Tree Planting Grant program is managed within the Community Development Division with support coming from its Finance and Administration Department to support grantees and ensure efficient financial and technical management of grants.

## Program Overview

In the 2024 session, the Minnesota Legislature enabled a new Metropolitan Council program in Minnesota Statute 473.355 for community tree planting grants. The Legislature also appropriated \$2.5 million for these grants in the first year.

In 2025, the Council grants to communities in the 7-county Metro region to improve tree canopies on public land. These grants support projects planting trees for environmental benefits, removing and replacing ash trees, and increasing canopy diversity and resilience. The program prioritizes funding for projects that will plant trees in areas with an elevated measure of community vulnerability and will remove ash trees.

## Compliance Requirements

Once funded, grantees must continue to meet the following requirements.

### Project Compliance

- Ensure that grant-supported tree planting and removal takes place in the Census Block Groups identified in your application and your grant agreement.
- Planting requirements:
  - Planting trees may take place without tree removal.
  - Tree removals conducted on streets and in manicured parks must meet a minimum of one tree planted for each tree removed.
  - Removals conducted in park woodlands must incorporate replanting at a meaningful rate.
    - Removals need to be considered a necessary component of replanting.
    - Removals in woodlands need to be mitigating a public safety concern or to address degraded ecosystems.
    - Removals must meet a minimum of one tree planted for five trees removed.
- Removals of ash trees must follow emerald ash borer best management practices set by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.
- Complying with all Federal and State laws and regulations related to the completion of projects as stated in the grant agreement.
- Follow your maintenance plan as included in your grant agreement, even after the grant activity period.

### Grant Administration Compliance

- Submit reimbursement claims at least twice annually, and as frequently as monthly.
- Submit semi-annual reports in January and July.
- Communicate any changes in project activities, budget or outcomes in advance with Council staff.
- Meet grant objectives.
- Submit a final report and have a closeout call within 120 days after grant expiration.
- Provide limited photo documentation of the project's results. Documentation of all trees removed and planted must be catalogued by Census Block Group (or mapped) and submitted to the Council.

## Eligible and Ineligible Expenses

### Eligible Expenses

Eligible project expenses are those incurred through project activities that are directly related and necessary to produce the outcomes described in the project summary. Grant funds can be used for, but will not be limited to:

- Contract labor or grantee staff qualified for site preparation, tree planting, removal, and maintenance.
- Professional contracts for project implementation by individuals or organizations not a part of the local government unit
- Site preparation and planting materials including mulch, watering bags, staking materials, and tree wrap or guards
- Equipment purchases less than \$5,000 that are used to complete the project
- Purchasing of trees for climate-adapted, diverse tree canopies
- Trees on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Climate Adapted Urban Trees are automatically eligible. Any tree species selected for planting that is not on this list must be accompanied by an explanation of its climate-adapted qualities.
- Maintenance and establishment costs during the grant period for trees planted using grant funding

### Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Costs incurred prior to the start or after the end of the project activity period on the first page of the grant agreement
- Stored materials (trees and other materials are only reimbursable after planting/installation)
- Agency administrative time (labor *other than* planting, removing and maintaining trees)
- Sales Tax paid by grantee
- Purchase of trees listed on the Minnesota Noxious Weed List or the DNR's Invasive Terrestrial Plants list
- Purchase of trees specifically prohibited in the grant agreement Attachment A
- Purchase of balled and burlapped trees, containerized trees larger than #20, and bareroot trees greater than 2" caliper diameter
- Purchase of chemicals for insecticide treatment
- Purchasing of plants such as shrubs, living ground covers, sod, grass seed, and flowers
- Purchasing of land or easements
- Major soil and grade changes or construction
- Capital expenditures (items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more), such as motor vehicles, equipment, buildings, or other permanent structures
- Planting or removing trees on private property (other than right-of-way boulevards)

## Roles and Responsibilities

### What is the grantee's role?

- Understand all the requirements in the grant agreement and ensure contractors comply with any requirements that flow through to them.
- Monitor the project to ensure grant deliverables are met and that the grantee remains in [compliance with the grant agreement \(summarized on page 2\)](#).
- Notify the Council Authorized Representative of any changes to the project's location, budget or activities. The Council must be notified if any changes reduce planting priority areas or reduce ash removal, for which the award was competitively scored.
- Remain current in all required reporting (including claims, semi-annual reports and closeout reporting).
- Submit payment requests according to the approved budget.

### What is the Council's role?

- Provide technical assistance to grantees, including answering questions about cost eligibility and other program requirements.
- Process payment requests upon receipt and work with grantees to resolve any payment questions.
- Monitor project progress.
- Process amendment requests.
- Remind grantees of impending grant expiration three months in advance of the grant expiration date.
- Work with grantees as necessary after the final grant payment to close out the grant.

## Council Authorized Representative

You can direct any grant-related questions to the Council's Authorized Representative listed in your grant agreement. Unless otherwise stated in the agreement, contact information for the Council Authorized Representative is below:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Erin Brueggemann</b>
<b>Title:</b>	Senior Grants Administrator
<b>Phone:</b>	651-602-1112
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:erin.brueggemann@metc.state.mn.us">erin.brueggemann@metc.state.mn.us</a>

## Initial Grant Set-up

### Needed Prior to Releasing Payment

Several requirements need to be checked off before payment will be released.

- Grant agreement needs to be fully executed
- Designation of Signing Authority form needs to be provided

### Designation of Signing Authority (DSA)

To ensure requests are made by authorized personnel from your agency, all grantees must complete a [Designation of Signing Authority](#) (DSA) form to indicate who may submit reimbursement claims for this grant.

### Grant Agreement

- A grant agreement will be provided to you electronically.
- Read the entire agreement and project summary (Attachments A, B and C) carefully. Contact the Council Authorized Representative if you have any questions about the terms of the agreement or about the details in the project summary.
- Route the agreement for signature according to your internal guidelines. Consider routing the Designation of Signing Authority form for signature around the same time.
- The Council accepts electronic signatures. Otherwise, scan and send the partially executed agreement to the Council Authorized Representative via email. Include the Designation of Signing Authority form (if available).
- A fully executed version of the agreement will be sent to you via email once signed by all parties.

### Orientation

After the grant agreement is executed, the Council Authorized Representative will reach out to provide your team with an orientation to the program, walking through this guide and ensuring you have access to everything needed to manage your grant.

Anyone from your team is welcome to attend, but at a minimum this should include all individuals involved in managing the activities of the grant or submitting financial reports or payment requests.

## Payment Request Overview

All payments are made on a reimbursement basis for grant-eligible expenses incurred during the project activity period. Eligible expenses will only be paid after a grant agreement is executed and any additional materials required by the Council have been submitted.

For every line item claimed, you must supply adequate supporting documentation to substantiate it and must clearly tie that documentation to the line item. This guide provides instructions for completing the request successfully. Lack of clear information and supporting documentation may delay payment processing or cause the payment request to be returned for further clarification.

### Submitting a Payment Request

**How frequently?** At least twice a year, and as often as monthly. Requests can become overcomplicated if you wait too long. Requests may be made at your discretion, but we prefer frequent, small requests rather than large, complicated requests.

**Where to submit?** All payment requests must be uploaded via the Council's online grant management system (currently [WebGrants](#)).

**What to submit?** A complete payment request must include these three elements:

1. Signed, official payment request form
2. Proof of payment for each expense claimed
3. Expense invoice and/or other documentation proving eligibility of expense

### Payment Process and Timeline

The Council will make payments within 35 days after a complete request is submitted. The Council will notify you within 10 days if it finds substantive errors in the payment request that prevent Council approval. After notification of any errors, the 35-day period restarts the day the claim is resubmitted.



### Final Payment

The Council may withhold up to 10% of the grant until you have: (a) completed the grant deliverables; and (b) met all reporting requirements, including a final report and closeout call. If this is not completed within 120 days after the grant's expiration, the Council shall have no obligation to disburse the withheld 10% and the withheld funds may revert to the Council's Community Tree Planting Account for redistribution through future funding cycles or as otherwise permitted by law.



# How to Submit a Payment Request

This section offers detailed instructions on how to submit your payment request.

## Three Required Elements for a Payment Request

### Payment Request Form

Grantees must submit a complete and signed official **payment request form** for each payment request. Please do not substitute other reporting formats for any portion of the payment request form, and do not alter the form except to complete the required areas.

The Council will not accept a payment request that is unsigned or that has been signed by anyone other than the grantee's authorized signatory, as documented by the [Designation of Signing Authority](#) form.

### Proof of Payment

Must submit proof of payment for each expense. This typically consists of:

- a canceled check
- P-Card statement
- internal accounting reports showing the transaction as paid

### Proof of Eligibility

To prove the eligibility of an expense, grantees must provide documentation that includes details such as:

- date(s) incurred
- description and location(s) of work done
- species of trees planted
- quantity, price per, etc.

Supporting documents include (but are not limited to): quotes, purchase order, invoices, contracts, payroll reports, contractor pay applications, receipts.

**NOTE:** The grantee is responsible for identifying expenses for reimbursement and for excluding ineligible expenses. Lack of clear information and supporting documentation may delay payment processing or cause the payment request to be returned to the grantee for further clarification. See below for examples.

### General tips

- Be sure your claim form is signed by someone named on a submitted DSA.
- You can include supporting documentation as separate PDFs or as one combined PDF. If combining, please add invoices in the order listed on the payment request form.
- Scanned PDFs can turn into large files that slow our review process. Please reduce the file size as much as possible. If you can compress the scanned PDF, please do so.

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*An easily understood payment request  
is a quickly paid payment request.*

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## Completing the Payment Request Form

The Payment Request Form is an Excel spreadsheet you will submit to provide the necessary documentation for payment requests. The spreadsheet allows:

- Council staff to understand the costs associated with your project
- You to track and document your progress against the final deliverables

You must complete the areas marked below in green. Everything else will either be provided for you or will calculate automatically.

## Section A: Grant Details

Select your community name from the drop-down list and enter the name of the person completing this payment request.

## Section B: Reimbursement Details

- Identify which number payment this is (sequential, 1, 2, 3, etc.).
- Enter the start and end dates for this reimbursement period.
- Select whether this is your final payment request for this grant.
- Enter the current claim's expense totals (from below) in each of the five budget categories.
- Review previous claims to enter the total of previously reimbursed expenses.

## Section C: Project Reporting

- Enter a brief narrative description of the activities that took place during this reimbursement period.

Grant Deliverable Tracker	#Trees planted				#Ash Removed				#Other Hazard Removed			
	Plan	Current	Past	To-date	Plan	Current	Past	To-date	Plan	Current	Past	To-date
Census Block Group #				0				0				0
Census Block Group #				0				0				0
Census Block Group #				0				0				0
Census Block Group #				0				0				0
Census Block Group #				0				0				0
Census Block Group #				0				0				0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>0</b>

- Enter your **originally planned numbers** for planting and removing trees by each Census Block Group identified in your grant agreement Attachments A-B.
- Enter numbers of trees planted and removed **during this reimbursement period**, by Census Block Group.
- Review any previous payment requests to report trees planted and removed **in previous reimbursement periods**, by Census Block Group.
- Check to ensure that the totals are accurate (through all activities paid for by this reimbursement request). If you have removals/planting that you haven't yet received invoices and are not claiming on this request, do not include those numbers here.

## Section D: Itemized Expense Detail

This section is where you will provide detailed information about what you are claiming.

Itemized Expenses Listed by Vendor	Deliverable: (select)	Invoice #	Invoice Date	Pmt Ref # / Check #	Check Amount	Requested Amount	Notes
Materials: Trees	Remove Plant Maintain						

### Specific instructions:

1. Choose the correct budget category section of the form (Materials, Internal Labor, etc.).
2. Enter a line for each invoice from prime contractors (in other words, entities to whom you made direct payments, not subcontractors).
3. List the vendors' name to adequately distinguish each vendor.
4. Deliverable: Select whether this expense was for the planting, removal and/or maintenance of trees.
5. Enter the invoice number and date to help us match it to your documentation.
6. Enter any payment reference number, check number or date paid.
7. List the payment amount you made toward this invoice. This will help us match your supporting documentation showing the expense as paid (cancelled check, disbursement report, etc.).
8. For each invoice, enter the amount you are requesting as a grant eligible expense.
9. If needed, enter a note to clarify, including any ineligible expenses that were removed.

## Section E: Certification

Only an authorized employee of the grantee may sign the payment request form. The grantee's signature certifies for audit purposes that the information presented is true and correct and that the funds are being spent on appropriate activities. Each grantee will be provided with a blank Designation of Signature Authority Form (DSA) through which one or two people may be authorized to certify the payment request for each grant.

## Supporting Documentation: Proof of Payment

Because this grant is reimbursement-based, claims must include evidence that the eligible expense has been paid by the grantee. This could be a copy of a check, a P-card statement, a payroll report, or other internal accounting disbursement reports that show the transaction as paid.

## Supporting Documentation: Proof of Eligibility

Every cost claimed must be documented to prove eligibility. For a list of eligible and ineligible expenses, [see page 3](#).

- Please render your documentation as succinctly as possible. Do not list or provide copies of any unclaimed costs (unless they are essential to understanding the context of claimed costs).

- Include copies of every invoice that you are claiming for reimbursement. If the invoice includes costs from subcontractors or other contributing factors, you must document every one of these by providing a copy of the related invoice. If your subcontractors have subcontractors, we will need copies of those invoices, too.
- **For external work:** We require an executed contract with external service providers that outlines scope of work (and any change orders that change this scope), location(s) and contract total. We also require detailed invoices or pay applications from these contractors showing the work done, dates, locations, hours, rates, etc.
- **For purchases of trees and other materials or equipment:** We require detailed invoices, proposals, bids or purchase orders showing quantities, species and size, and date of purchase that clearly shows seller and buyer.
- **For internal work:** We require a log of hours/dates worked, description of the work done during these hours, and the pay rate. This should match the payroll reports showing wages paid submitted as proof of payment.

## Invoice Annotation

Clear documentation helps us reimburse you quickly. Please mark up invoices and documentation as outlined below.

- On every invoice, note the amount claimed. If you are claiming the total, circle it. Otherwise, write the claimed amount near the "total amount due" portion of the invoice.
- You are responsible for excluding all ineligible items, clearly marking them as excluded, and deducting this total from the amount requested on the Payment Request Form. If you are uncertain about the eligibility of any item, please email the Council Authorized Representative.
- On subcontractor invoices, add the related prime contractor's invoice number or date.
- On every invoice for which you are claiming less than the total, you must demonstrate how you arrived at the amount claimed. For example, you could highlight it or strike it out. You must make clear which costs (if any) you are not claiming and then summarize them at the totals line on the invoice to show how you arrived at your claimed amount. If Council staff cannot determine which costs are claimed or how you arrived at your totals, we will ask you to correct the invoice package, which will delay your payment. *See an example on the right.*

**INVOICE**

Invoice Fax: E-MAIL INV  
Order #: 89303

**Kankakee NURSERY CO.**  
P.O. BOX 288 • AROMA PARK, IL 60910  
Amy 815-614-5568  
Amy@Kankakeenursery.com

INVOICE NUMBER 136988  
Pg. 1

PO#: 976804  
Job: 2025 TREES

home: [REDACTED]  
Cell: [REDACTED]  
Cont: [REDACTED]  
Phone: [REDACTED]

Invoice Date	Date Shipped	VIA	Terms	Sales Tax No.	Pricing Notes	Special Instructions	Customer N
4/17/25	04/17/25	SUNSET	NET 30	7329768			15912
Quantity	Q=Quoted	Description	Part No.	Unit Price	Amount		
3	Q	MALUS ADAMS CRAB 1	247021122	68.00	\$68	204.00	
154	Q	MALUS ROYAL RAINDROPS CRAB 2	248101122	64.00	\$128	9856.00	
88	Q	MALUS SPRING SNOW CRAB 2	248651122	66.00	\$132	5400.00	
1	Q	QUERCUS ELLIPSOIDALIS OAK (FDR) 1.5"br	269591122	96.00		96.00	
42747	Q	QUERCUS SWAMP WHITE OAK (FDR) 1.5"br	269751122	72.00		30744.00	
3	Q	CELTIS OCCIDENTALIS HACKBERRY 2"-#25	217201573	170.00		510.00	
2	Q	GLEDTISIA SKYLINE LOCUST 1.5"-#25	237701553	130.00		260.00	
1	Y	GYMNO.ESPRESSO KENTUCKY COFFEE 2"-#25	240151573	235.00		235.00	
1	Q	MALUS ROYAL RAINDROPS 1.5"-#20	248101433	115.00		115.00	
1	Q	MALUS SPRING SNOW CRAB 1.5"-#20	248651433	115.00		115.00	
2	Q	ULMUS TRIUMPH ELM 2"-#25	287751573	145.00		290.00	
					Subtotal	48333.00	
Eligible expenses for this project: \$3,712					Total	48333.00	



## Semi-Annual Reporting

Twice a year, you will be prompted by Council staff to submit a semi-annual report through our grant management system. The report consists of two sections:

### 1. Progress Report:

Summarize the activities completed during the reporting period, including the location and description of any tree removal, site prep, tree planting and/or tree care and maintenance.

During this reporting period:

- What project activities occurred?
- Did any issues arise that kept you from performing project activities?
- Describe any staff changes related to this grant.
- Describe any changes within your organization that significantly impact this work.
- Describe any other changes outside your organization that have significantly impacted this work.
- Do you anticipate needing to make an amendment to your grant agreement due to significant changes to your project activities or your project budget?

### 2. Cash Flow Estimates

You will estimate future payment requests you will make for the remainder of your grant activity period, and enter actual claimed totals for past periods.

Period	Total Claims (expected or actual)
Jul 1 – Dec 31, 2025	
Jan 1 – Jun 30, 2026	
Jul 1 – Dec 31, 2026	
Jan 1 – Jun 30, 2027	
Jul 1 – Dec 31, 2027*	
TOTAL (should match total grant award)	

*\*Final claims only, no  
newly incurred expenses  
during this period.*

**Note:** Totals in each period are of *claims submitted*, not necessarily expenses incurred during that period. While you are encouraged to submit expenses incurred during the same claim period, there may be instances where you incur expenses late in a period and don't submit until early in the next period. For this reason, we include a final period during which you may submit claims for expenses incurred prior to June 30, 2027.

## Amendments

Project activities must remain consistent in scope, location, and budget with Attachments A and B of your grant agreement. The terms of the grant agreement may be adjusted under certain circumstances, as outlined below and in Section 9 of your grant agreement.

### Timeline and How to Request

Email the Council Authorized Representative as soon as you suspect you will need to make changes to your grant. Our team can work with you to identify the best path forward and to minimize surprises or delays in reimbursement.

- Amendment requests must be received three months prior to the expiration date.
- Amendments must be fully executed prior to the grant's expiration date.

### Activity and Location Changes

- You are required to notify the Council Authorized Representative if your project activities or location(s) will change. Failure to do so may compromise your funding.
- Changes to the project activities or location(s) trigger a review by the Council Authorized Representative. You may be asked to provide additional details and/or submit a formal amendment request. Significant changes may require approval by our Community Development Committee, and the Council reserves the right to reduce or rescind the grant and to recover grant funds already paid out.
- Significant changes are those that would have impacted your grant application's scoring in the competitive review process, particularly in relation to the program purpose and priorities.

### Budget Change

- Smaller adjustments to the budget (reallocating up to 20% of the grant budget among the funded line items found in Attachment A of your grant agreement). You must obtain the written permission of the Council in advance, but no formal amendment is necessary. A request to reallocate the budget may be submitted via email to the Council Authorized Representative.
- If you need a change of more than 20% of the total grant budget and the Council Authorized Representative determines this represents a significant change to your proposed project, you may be required to request a formal amendment to be reviewed and approved by the Council's Community Development Committee.
- The total grant amount cannot be increased.

### Extensions

Due to the nature of this funding, timeline extensions are not possible at this time. All project activities and eligible expenses MUST be incurred no later than June 30, 2027. Please plan accordingly with contingency plans for weather or other unexpected barriers. While expenses must be incurred by that date, you will have 120 days following this to submit final claims.

## Closing a Grant

Grants are closed when grant funds are completely drawn down or if the grantee cancels any balance on a grant. You have 120 days after the grant expiration date to submit your final payment requests. Any unspent funds will revert back to the Council. Prior to closing the grant, the following must be completed with the final payment request.

### Deliverables

For this grant program, your deliverables are the numbers of trees removed and planted, and the locations of these activities. Your expected deliverables can be found in Attachments A and B of your grant agreement.

You will collect and report this data through the life of the grant and will be expected to submit final numbers in a table (similar to the one below) that includes a list of each Census Block Group in which grant activities took place.

Census Block Group #	# Trees planted	# Ash removed	# Other hazard trees removed*
			<i>* Most projects do not include this activity.</i>

### Final Report and Closeout Call

To close out your grant, you must complete these two items:

1. A brief final report including the above deliverables, photos and/or maps, and several summary questions.
2. A 30-minute call with Council staff to learn more about your community's experience with this grant project.

Both must be completed and accepted by the Council Authorized Representative before the final payment will be approved for reimbursement.