

Key Issue #7: Building Effective Leadership to Champion and Community Urban Forestry

Most thought leaders felt that urban and community forestry is still vastly underutilized as a source of solutions to issues communities face, primarily because it has lacked vocal and visible champions in the past. While this tide has started to turn, strong national leadership is needed to bring attention to the ability of urban forests to offer cost-effective solutions to critical community environmental and human psycho-social issues, from stormwater management to nature deficit disorder. Working through public and private partnerships, expanding the capacity of existing nonprofit organizations, and clarifying the purpose and function of existing groups (such as NUCFAC or the Sustainable Urban Forest Coalition) was discussed as an urgent need in the next decade to foster greater collaboration, communication, and public awareness around UCF. Developing a strong national voice would help mature the field, foster effective collaboration and dialogue, elevate public awareness of urban forestry, and advance the use of urban forests as a core go-to solution for community problems, of equal importance to housing and transportation.

IDEAS FOR ACTION - Gaps, Needs, Opportunities

- Develop effective leadership, collaboration and coordination of the variety of local, state and federal partnerships, in addition to nonprofit and industry partners. Utilize and maintain the existing network of partnerships and agencies that exists to build a national voice for UCF.
- Develop methods for national UCF leaders to understand and connect to UCF needs at the grassroots level in communities on an ongoing basis for issues such as increased funding for UCF maintenance, protocols for data management, and opportunities to share best practices at the city and regional scale.
- Build on the leadership work of SUFC, in collaboration with SUFC and NUCFAC.
- Expand and clarify NUCFAC's role and identity to continue to advance UCF nationally.
 - Align research goals and agendas between The National Research Advisory Council (NRAS) and NUCFAC.
 - Advance and communicate the Vibrant Cities Task Force recommendations – this could be a possibility for NUCFAC or NUCFAC and SUFC working in partnership.
 - Increase the representation of nonprofits in NUCFAC.
- Work in a coordinated manner with a national leader to highlight the importance of UCF in the political arena; clear leadership at a national level will help increase funding opportunities and create partnerships with elected officials for UCF.
- Build nonprofit leadership to increase outreach and networking efforts.
- Enlist constituent groups to lobby for improved and expanded UCF programs.

- Enlist a national UCF leader to engage health advocates, educators, youth, and community groups, going beyond those already engaged to broaden the base of allies in UCF.
- Bring federal agencies together to collaborate and communicate to better understand what each agency does and how agencies can work together to meet cross-agency objectives by shared means. Strengthen the role that USFS plays in this regard, increasing convening, leadership and facilitation opportunities by USFS with other federal agencies.