

## **Key Issue #8: Increasing Funding for Urban and Community Forestry**

Increasing funding at all levels – from federal agencies, foundations and municipalities – was discussed by almost all thought leaders as a strong need to advance urban forestry in the next Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan. If community forests are to provide the infrastructure support needed to create sustainable and resilient communities, then forests need to be maintained properly, canopies need to be expanded, and emerging uses and functions for these forests need to be understood and utilized. Funding for urban forestry has been cut significantly in many localities throughout the nation, and sometimes even eliminated, since 2008. Interviewees noted that federal funding for urban forestry has not increased substantially in the past decade. If this community asset is to fulfill its potential, more funding is strongly needed, both from federal sources as well as more public-private partnerships. Thought leaders noted the need to look to new funding sources for UCF, to look to public-private partnerships for new opportunities, as well as connecting the benefits and needs of UCF with non-traditional sources of UCF funding. For example, interviewees noted the new policies around carbon in California have become a significant source of funding for UCF organizations and agencies. Other new sources of funding could include the health community and other federal agency programs such as EPA's stormwater program.

### **IDEAS FOR ACTIONS - Gaps, Needs, Opportunities**

- Use funding to guide and reward appropriate ecosystem management, including proper maintenance.
- Invest in the human component of UCF (human energy, intelligence, systems), using community engagement and facilitation.
- Use "seed funding" for support resources and staff, to encourage cities and states to support UCF programs.
- Increase funding and grants for planting and, more importantly, maintenance of trees and urban forests; trees are often maintained in a reactive rather than proactive basis which can be detrimental to tree life and UCF health.
- Maintain a dedicated source of UCF funding at the USFS. UCF funds should not be directed toward fire control. The USFS UCF program needs to be viewed as having a greater level of importance by state foresters and USFS leadership to retain and expand funding levels.
- Foster collaboration around funding resources between municipal forestry institutions and nonprofits, and among nonprofits – “a rising tide lifts all ships.”
- Increase public awareness about the benefits and needs of UCF so they are more likely to support increased funding for UCF at the community, state and federal level. *(Related to Key Issue 9 as well.)*
- Revise the current USFS cost-share program grant structure for how funding is distributed. Currently all funds go through state foresters, but the USFS frequently

isn't aware of how effective that funding is or where it is having the greatest impact. State foresters may not want to direct funding toward cities, potentially preferring to fund non-urban projects. Develop more opportunities for federal funding to go to NGOs and municipalities. (*Related to Key Issue 14 as well.*)

- Increase federal funding for UCF to support developing state and local programs (especially those that were most severely cut during the economic downturn). An increase of the current budget by tenfold was mentioned as an important target. Develop a sustainable long-term source of funding to support new higher program dollar amounts. Sustainability of this funding is important, including for continuity of the program itself.
- Develop new innovative sources of funding for UCF from private foundations, a small tax on gas/fuel, carbon sequestration legislation, redirecting a portion of the existing gas tax from gray infrastructure to focus on green infrastructure, or utility businesses. Look for funding opportunities that have overlap with UCF but are not strictly focused on UCF. Examples of these funding opportunities might include:
  - Projects related to city infrastructure requirements.
  - Linking tree work to stormwater management fees, regulatory processes, and permitting processes.
  - Funding from Climate Change grants or programs, taking advantage of the use of trees as carbon sinks. Thirty percent of the *States National Assessment* respondents also suggested utilizing UCF for climate change mitigation and carbon market trading.
  - Air quality funding offers other sources of new funding for UCF, to implement Federal legislation such as the EPA Clean Air Act. For example, in California, the UCF program received \$17 M from the state's Greenhouse Gas Initiative for cap and trade (the nationwide budget was \$25M). Also, California approved the use of Urban Forestry as a mitigation measure to improve clean air, and in Sacramento urban forestry is used as a common method to comply with the new air quality laws.
  - Connect federal agencies to share cross-agency funding and connect program goals.
  - Look for funding opportunities to go beyond existing partnerships to organizations and fields in which trees and urban forests play an integral (but perhaps under-recognized role) regarding funding. For example, the nonprofit Trees Pacific partners with the NFL pro-bowl in Hawaii who does fundraising for them as a way to offset the environmental impact of games. They also partner with utility companies, who have a vested interest in the management of urban trees.
  - Seek funding from private foundations such as Kresge Foundation, whose grant program gives \$100,000 to five cities to advance resiliency.

- Apply a carbon tax as a funding resource under the premise of paying for what we take from the environment.
  - Dedicate 1/100th of a cent from every gasoline sale to fund UCF.
- Develop standards for and require Best Management and Design Practices (such as the Sustainable Sites Initiative<sup>1</sup>) for urban forestry in federal infrastructure programs. Federal infrastructure programs should require UCF where applicable and as standard practice.
- Refocus and refine NUCFAC's ability to fund new and innovative ideas in the grant program.
  - Conduct UCF cost-benefit analyses by broadly-focused multi-disciplinary groups (not only advocacy groups) to increase credibility of the analyses.
- Connect UCF to top wildlife issues such as the need for additional habitat and food for pollinators. For example, Trees Forever did a strong public relations campaign that connected the role of trees with pollinators which was very successful.
- The National Forest Foundation could serve as a fiduciary body for Forest Service Research and Development as it does for the National Forest. (*Related to Key Issue 14 as well.*)
- Implement the model of how Jim Lyons' USFS Urban Resources Program, which could appropriate resources to help leverage additional funding; this program captures dollars from different fields (i.e. stormwater management), combines them in a large pot, and redirects them to where they are needed and can make the most difference—i.e. trees—in UCF funding opportunities across the field.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.sustainablesites.org](http://www.sustainablesites.org) for more information.