

# Urban & Community Forestry - Pathways to the Future Program

Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative  
Board of Directors Meeting

February 23, 2024



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# URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY GRANTS

The Forest Service awarded more than \$1 billion to community and faith-based organizations, Tribes, cities, towns, and other partners to increase equitable access to trees and nature, and all the benefits they provide.

PARTNER	PROJECT	CATEGORIES	FUNDING
Arkansas Human Development Corporation	<a href="#"><u>Pathways to the Future Program Proposal (UCF-PTF)</u></a> : a pilot program in eastern Arkansas with a scalable strategy designed to foster individuals, groups, and organizations in disadvantaged communities to become engaged participants in urban forest planning, planting, and management.	Workforce Development	\$1,563,071

# Overview

**Title:** UCF Pathways to the Future Program (UCF-PTF)

**Goal:** Build a diverse pipeline of talent for the future of work within the field of urban forestry.

**Primary target populations:** Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) youth and young adults (ages 16 - 18) in socioeconomic disadvantaged communities eastern Arkansas. These populations will be reached by leveraging relationships within the following organizations in disadvantaged communities in the state: City of Forrest City, Forrest City Area Chamber of Commerce, St. Francis County Business Community, Forrest City School District, Palestine-Wheatley School District, Marianna School District, Clarendon School District, Brinkley School District, Helena-West Helena School District, St. Francis County Government, City of Marianna, Lee County Government, Lee County Business Community, Lee County Community Clinic, City of Haynes, City of Hughes, City of Brinkley, City of Widener, City of Holly Grove, and the City of Clarendon.

# Overview (cont.)

**Objectives:** The UCF-PTF program is an educational pathway program working to:

- (a) introduce youth ages 16 - 18 to career opportunities related to urban forestry through curriculum-driven experiential learning and career exploration,
- (b) provide work-based learning opportunities (e.g. internships or apprenticeships) to eligible youth ages 16 - 18 to combine paid on-the-job training with classroom instruction to prepare students for urban forestry careers and beyond,
- (c) support enrollment in credential trainings at certified post secondary institutions, and
- (d) connect employers (public & private sector) to highly-skilled talent to address industry needs.

**Strategy:** To accomplish the objectives outlined above, our team will execute a strategy across three programmatic elements. The UCF-PTF **Workforce Advisory Board**, **Youth Summer Preparation program**, and **Youth Summer Work program**, in distinct ways, will accomplish the shared purpose of fostering individuals, groups, and organizations in disadvantaged communities to become engaged participants in urban forest planning, planting, and management.



# Programming

The **Workforce Advisory Board** will include employers, ISDs, and training providers (e.g. institutions of higher education and non-college training providers) who will work to ensure curriculum and strategies continue to align with urban forestry workforce needs. Each participating stakeholder will commit by a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperatively work to ensure a healthy pipeline of skilled talent poised to meet current employer talents needs and building a healthy pipeline for tomorrow.

The **Summer Preparation (SP) program** will be a 16-week program for high school students to get them ready to apply for the Youth Summer Work program. Each week will consist of different subjects around educating them on the program, professional development, and job education/exposure in the urban forestry and conservation space. The last two weeks of the program will be reserved to help interested youth fine tune and apply for the summer program. After submission the chosen candidates will be paired with summer work/internship/apprenticeship in the urban forestry and conservation space.

The **Youth Summer Work (YSW) program** will be a 10-week program for high school students in North East Arkansas. Activities will include trail construction/maintenance, tree planting/removal, corridor clearing, preservation of commemorative resources, habitat restoration, educational outings, and additional professional development. The program will conclude with a closing ceremony that will provide the opportunity to highlight students and student accomplishments, and more broadly expose students to career and educational opportunities in urban forestry during a Workforce Career Expo and keynote presentation.



# Approach



## Identify Stakeholders

- Communities
  - Forrest City
  - Helena-West Helena
  - Haynes
  - Brinkley
  - Hughes
  - Widener
  - Holly Grove
  - Clarendon
  - Marianna
- ISDs
- IHEs (targeting HBCUs)
- Employers



## Program Development

- Facilitate partner and stakeholder meetings to:
  - Align secondary curriculum to urban forestry workforce needs.
  - Identify OTJ training and learning opportunities.
  - Increase access and awareness of degree and credential programs.



## Outreach & Education

- Recruit program participants via various communication channels throughout Central and Eastern Arkansas.
- Convene urban forestry workforce advisory board.



## Implementation

- Launch UCF-PTF summer work program in all targeted communities.
- Conduct program pulse surveys with participants to gauge increase in education or awareness levels, overall satisfaction of program, and additional feedback.
- Create continuous improvement plan for future UCF-PTF program implementation.



# Q&A

