



# Tree Equity Handbook

## A Practical Guide to Closing the Canopy Gap Between Neighborhoods

ACTIVITY 6.2

→ Funding Mechanisms and Priorities

Toolkit 6:  
Fund Your Program

Issued November 2025



## Activity Map

→ [Tree Equity Funding Needs Assessment](#)

Funding Mechanisms and Priorities

→ [Funder Inventory and Engagement Strategy](#)

# Activity 6.2: Funding Mechanisms and Priorities

Toolkit 6

## Fund Your Program

You know what your Tree Equity goals are, who will be involved, and how your coalition aims to pursue those goals. Now it's time to place one of the most important pieces of the puzzle: Where your funding will come from.

Building or expanding an urban forestry program to include Tree Equity objectives usually comes with added expenses — from specialized staff who engage with community partners to additional tree stock and planting resources. These new expenses, however, can create opportunities for new funding mechanisms. Use this toolkit to assess your Tree Equity funding needs, identify potential new sources of support, and develop effective strategies to make your case to funders.

# Funding Mechanisms and Priorities



## Overview & Basic Steps

With your Tree Equity funding gaps identified, use the following activity to consider every potential funding source to close those gaps and scale your equity-forward initiatives. Remember that most urban forestry programs are supported by a tapestry of funding sources. An equity focus creates numerous intersections between your Tree Equity goals and the priorities of other organizations and funders, opening more opportunities that may not have been available to you previously — or that you may not have considered in the first place.

**Suggested Time:** 1–2 weeks

**Level of Difficulty:** Moderate

**Participants:** Select Tree Equity Coalition members and staff or collaborators with financing and fundraising experience

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### Before starting this activity, you might need:

- Funding Needs Worksheet → [Activity 6.1](#)

## Instructions

- 1** Use the **Funding Opportunities Assessment Worksheet** ([page 5](#)) to understand your current funding sources and identify additional sources for current or future funding needs.
- 2** Use the **Funding Priorities Ranking Worksheet** ([page 9](#)) to identify five high-priority funding sources that are timely and achievable and will bring momentum to your Tree Equity initiative.

## After you complete this activity:

- Develop a funder inventory and engagement strategy → [Activity 6.3](#)

## TOOLKIT 6: Fund Your Program | Activity 2 – WORKSHEET 1

# Funding Opportunities Assessment Worksheet



Use this exercise to build a comprehensive assessment of the funding mechanisms available to you, establishing the current funding status (if applicable) and identifying future funding needs from each source.

This worksheet is broken into four columns:

- 1. Funding Mechanism:** This column provides common forms of urban forestry program funding, divided into regulatory and market-based sources. Fill out only the rows that are applicable to your program and feel free to add your own mechanisms in the blank rows.
- 2. Current Status:** Use this column to include either the dollar amount of funds received for your program if you have that information or simply identify each funding source as “Active,” “Inactive,” “In Process,” or “Not Available” for you locally.
- 3. End/Renewal Date:** If a certain funding mechanism is already active for your program, use this column to indicate when that source of funding will end or renew. This will help you understand timing and set priorities for future fundraising efforts.
- 4. Future Funding Needs:** Using your Coalition Action Plan priorities identified in Toolkit 3, Activity 4, describe in this column how you would like to use each available funding source. Specific budget numbers will be included in a later worksheet. At this point you are simply connecting programmatic needs to possible funding opportunities.



### Tips for Articulating Gaps/Needs

Generally, most funding for urban forestry programs comes from government allocations or regulatory programs. Market-based sources are used to supplement specific projects or initiatives that can sustain themselves on earned revenue. Make sure to look for opportunities to incorporate tree canopy expenses into broader funding for streetscape projects, new developments, park renovations and other initiatives where tree infrastructure could be considered an eligible expense within a broader budget. Use the **Government/Regulatory Sources** section to focus on your core programmatic needs and the **Market-Based Financing** section to supplement those needs, perhaps on a longer timeline.

## Sample Worksheet

Funding Mechanism	Current Status	End/Renewal Date	New Funding Could Support
<b>Municipal General Fund</b>	Active \$3,500,000	Renew Oct. 1st	Staffing, 7-year tree maintenance cycle, office, equipment...
<b>State Grants</b>	In process ~\$500,000	End June 30th	Planting in 3 low Tree Equity Score neighborhoods
<b>Federal Grants</b>	Inactive	N/A	Replace tree canopy lost in rapidly developing areas
<b>Community Development Block Grants</b>	Not Available	N/A	N/A

## Funding Opportunities Assessment Worksheet

Government/Regulatory Sources			
Funding Mechanism	Current Status	End/Renewal Date	New Funding Could Support
<b>Municipal General Fund</b>			
<b>State Grants</b>			
<b>Federal Grants</b>			
<b>Community Development Block Grants</b>			
<b>Stormwater Fees</b>			
<b>Road Use Fees</b>			
<b>Development/Permit Fees</b>			
<b>Environmental Impact Bond</b>			



Worksheet continues on next page



<b>Government/Regulatory Sources</b>			
<b>Funding Mechanism</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>End/Renewal Date</b>	<b>New Funding Could Support</b>
<b>Frontage Tax</b>			
<b>Mill Levy</b>			
<b>Assessment District</b>			
<b>Service Fees</b>			
<b>Vehicle/Gas Tax</b>			
<b>Hazard Mitigation</b>			
<b>Tree Removal Mitigation Fees or Fines</b>			
<b>Revenue Sharing</b>			
<b>Urban Forests Quantified as Asset Class for Return on Investment</b>			
<b>Memorials</b>			
<b>Other:</b>			

Worksheet continues on next page



<b>Market-Based Financing</b>			
<b>Funding Mechanism</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>End/Renewal Date</b>	<b>New Funding Could Support</b>
<b>Municipal Donations</b>			
<b>Endowment</b>			
<b>Wood Sales</b>			
<b>Job Corps Contracts</b>			
<b>Carbon Credits</b>			
<b>Social Impact Financing (public health, prison recidivism, job creation, etc.)</b>			
<b>Other:</b>			

**TOOLKIT 6: Fund Your Program | Activity 2 – WORKSHEET 2**

## Funding Priorities Ranking Worksheet

Once you’ve completed your **Funding Opportunities Assessment** ([page 5](#)), you may have what feels like an overwhelming to-do list! Use the following exercise to narrow this list down to just **five top priorities** that you want to pursue first. Rank these priorities in numerical order, working with coalition members to determine which funding sources you should pursue first.

When setting your funding priorities, consider not just the importance of each funding opportunity to your program, but also:

- **Time:** Can this funding source be secured quickly? Does it address an urgent need? How soon do you need to take action in order to secure this funding?
- **Achievability:** Can you reasonably expect to secure this source of funding quickly? Does your coalition have the resources to apply for this opportunity?
- **Momentum:** Will this funding source lend forward motion to your program and bring you closer to your Tree Equity goals?

### Sample Worksheet

Priority Rank	Funding Opportunity	Target / Deadline Date	Next Steps
#1	State grant	Proposals due 4/30	Contact State U&CF Coordinator Draft project scope for Committee review

See next page for the fillable worksheet

## Funding Priorities Ranking Worksheet

Priority Rank	Funding Opportunity	Target / Deadline Date	Next Steps
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			



## **Activity 6.2: Funding Mechanisms and Priorities**

Toolkit 6: Fund Your Program

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