

State Governments and Urban Forestry

2024

Overview

State governments play a critical role in the formulation and implementation of urban forestry initiatives. Most states have a department of forestry, that is distinct or a part of another agency, that provides funding, technical assistance, policymaking expertise, and regulation of public and private forests. Most also have a State Forester, who serves as the chief executive of the organization or agency. Often, there will be a department within that specializes in urban forestry. The states also provide a key touchpoint between local organizations and governments and the federal government, and often administer federal money and resources to cities and counties in their respective states.

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The following is a general overview of the types of local government departments and agencies usually involved in urban forestry and planning. While there is a significant amount of variation across the country, this guide can provide a brief overview and example for each department and how it can align with urban forestry initiatives.

Funding

- Many states administer funding for urban forestry initiatives through a variety of different programs. Some funding originates from the federal government, while some is funded by the respective state's revenue. Funding can support technical assistance, planning, tree planting, maintenance, invasive species management, and more. State funding is often key to supporting and matching local funding for urban forestry initiatives.
 - [Virginia Department of Forestry Financial Assistance Programs](#): This directory for communities, landowners, loggers, and other organizations in Virginia provides a clear list of eligible applicants, areas, and category of funding.
 - [Vermont Department of Forests Grants](#): Vermont provides a variety of grants to support both forestry and recreation initiatives. Urban forestry-relevant grants include a *Communities Caring for Canopy* grant, which offers funds for canopy maintenance and restoration.

Technical Assistance

- In addition to funding, many state forestry departments provide technical assistance for a variety of natural and urban forestry initiatives. Most technical assistance assists localities, communities, and organizations with building programming, managing trees, and providing education opportunities. Depending on the state, technical assistance can be accessed through applying for funds or through contacting staff.
 - [Pennsylvania Urban and Community Forestry Program](#): This program helps communities plan, plant, and care for trees through a variety of technical assistance programs.

Policymaking and Regulation

- State forestry departments are often tasked with implementing the state legislature’s laws and regulations concerning natural and urban forests. The legislature often relies on the agency and its staff to implement and execute the laws and regulations.
 - [Oregon Department of Forestry Laws and Rules](#): The list of laws and rules assigned to the agency to implement and execute.

Key Statewide Staff

State Forester: State Foresters are the directors of forestry agencies in the United States. They oversee all forestry (natural and urban) initiatives in their respective state. They are a critical part of any state’s strategy towards urban forestry and organizations should engage with them and their offices to better access funding and technical assistance.

[List of State Foresters from the National Association of State Foresters \(NASF\)](#)

State Urban Forestry Coordinators: State Urban Forestry Coordinators are specialists that can provide support and expertise to localities and organizations to plan and care for urban tree canopies.

[List of State Urban Forest Coordinators from the Arbor Day Foundation](#)

State Urban Forestry Advisory Councils

Many states commission urban and community forestry advisory councils, which usually supplement the experience and expertise of state agency staff and ensure that diverse voices from across the state are represented and leveraged during policy creation and implementation. Often, the advisory council will be comprised of state staff, academics, arborists, community organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. A list of examples can be found below for large, medium, and small state advisory councils.

Large State Advisory Councils:

- [California](#)
- [New York](#)
- [Florida](#)

Mid-Size State Advisory Councils:

- [Virginia](#)
- [Wisconsin](#)
- [Connecticut](#)

Small State Advisory Councils:

- [Rhode Island](#)
- [Delaware](#)
- [Hawai’i](#)

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