Accreditation Manual

First Edition
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Contents

The Urban and Community Forestry Society reserves the right, at any time, to evolve and improve the practices outlined in this Program Manual.

Introduction

About The Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS)

The Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS), has been a sound and steady presence since 1964, helping urban and community foresters build the competence, confidence, and camaraderie needed to grow urban forestry programs across the globe. UCFS is dedicated to supporting the people who make or support daily tree planting and care decisions and our organization is committed to education and professional development for urban and community foresters and advocacy for the urban forestry profession.

The members and supporters of this international community of urban forestry professionals:
- Grow healthy trees in the communities where people live
- Understand that trees can save the world by building community and a sense of belonging
- Implement smart, innovative, practical ideas and solutions to improve their community's tree canopy.

Overall, UCFS brings together the premier urban foresters who are the boots on the ground decisionmakers who decide who, what, where, when, and how trees are planted and cared for. The decisions and actions UCFS members take grow our global community's tree canopy and ensure we meet the ambitious goals to create more livable communities for all.

The Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) Accreditation Program is a peer-reviewed framework of standards that formally recognizes urban and community forestry programs that are actively implementing best practices in urban forestry management.

About UCFS Accreditation

The UCFS Accreditation standards push urban and community forestry programs to achieve higher standards. This Accreditation program incorporates industry standards that are critical to growing, expanding, managing and providing long-term care for sustainable and resilient urban and community tree canopies.

UCFS's Accreditation standards have been developed to offer two levels of recognition – Steward and Champion – for urban forestry program advancement based on the following standards for best practices:
1. Urban Forestry Leadership
2. Urban Forest Governance and Planning
3. Urban Forest Management
4. Community Engagement

UCFS Accreditation is a voluntary process of organizational development that results in the international recognition of an accredited program after evaluating an organization's compliance with broadly accepted industry standards.

While accreditation is an endorsement of an organization by an authority, this endorsement has limits. Accreditation is a finding by UCFS that an organization appears to have met specific requirements or standards by a certain date. It does not purport to evaluate or forecast continuing compliance. It is important to note that these standards are not intended to impose upon an organization or practitioner a legal duty of care that does not otherwise exist. UCFS does not have the authority to make changes to an accredited program that does not continue to meet accreditation standards, only to deny or withdraw accredited status.

Procedures for reporting significant program changes and compliance with standards are the organization's responsibility, and such changes are reported annually to the Accreditation Council of UCFS. The authority to grant or deny accreditation rests with this officially sanctioned, impartial group.

Benefit, Purpose, Goals of UCFS Accreditation

The UCFS Accreditation program officially acknowledges municipalities that are dedicated to the growth, maintenance, and expansion of their urban forests. Accreditation provides an evaluation against industry standards and can be a catalyst for urban forestry stewardship, development of resources, and civic pride.

Accreditation strengthens the field's reputation by elevating its practices, promoting self-governance, advocating for its members, and providing avenues for continuing education and professional development. The public benefits from having an objective, independent source of information about the quality of urban forestry programs in their communities.

The primary goals of the UCFS Accreditation Program are to:
- Set standards of practice,
- Provide education in furtherance of its purpose, and
- Assess urban and community forestry programs for quality assurance

The UCFS Accreditation Program focuses on the evaluation and education of organizations, using standards developed by leading professionals in urban and community forestry. Accreditation standards state criteria to assess compliance with current industry standards and provide guidance to improve practice. Compliance with standards is determined by peers who work in the field and serve as volunteer accreditation reviewers.

By achieving UCFS Accreditation, urban and community forestry programs may realize the following benefits for their communities:

- UCFS Accreditation signifies an urban forest management program's commitment to its local community and the environment, delivering measurable results that can inspire pride among residents and the public.
- Accredited programs are recognized for their efforts to continuously improve operations, ensuring professional excellence in managing and caring for urban and community trees.
- Accreditation serves as a valuable asset for administrators and elected officials, offering public relations opportunities to promote their achievements.
- Accreditation celebrates the dedication of team members who manage and care for urban trees, fostering a sense of pride in their vital role.
- Displaying the UCFS Accreditation logo and utilizing promotional materials is a powerful way to highlight the high standards of your program, showcasing recognition by professional peers and industry leaders.

Limitations of UCFS Accreditation

The UCFS Accreditation Program is voluntary and is employed as a means for the field to have a mechanism for self-regulation. Accreditation does not apply to activities within organizations that are not reviewed as part of the accreditation process. Neither UCFS nor the Accreditation Council has the authority to make changes within an accredited organization if it does not continue to meet its accreditation criteria. The UCFS Accreditation Council may only deny or remove accredited status.

Additional factors further limit the scope of the UCFS Accreditation Program. Given the time available to conduct reviews, the availability of volunteer reviewers, the nature of the standards, and reasonable time constraints, it is impossible to evaluate every aspect of an organization directly and completely. The Accreditation Council cannot be intimately familiar with every detail of a community's operations, nor is it realistic to expect UCFS Accreditation Program reviewers to be privy to all activities, operations, and management areas during the accreditation review.

An informed conclusion will be reached concerning all of the applicable standards. A community's compliance with standards is assessed through various methods, including review of written documentation, information gathered from interviews, and reasonable inference. The UCFS Accreditation Program examines the administrative processes and policies and a representative sampling of activities and practices, drawing a reasonable conclusion that if these elements are adequate, then sound programming is in place at the time the organization or program was reviewed.

UCFS Accreditation attests that an organization has appropriate, clearly defined objectives, can reasonably expect to achieve them, and shows evidence of achieving them. Accreditation indicates that the organization has voluntarily allowed its practices to be evaluated according to UCFS accreditation standards and that those practices appear to be acceptable.

Eligibility and Pre-Qualification

Any representative from an urban forestry program at the municipal, campus, or county level (or equivalent) may apply. To meet pre-qualifications for UCFS Accreditation, all accredited urban forestry programs be able to answer "yes" to each of the following:

1. The community has an **existing urban forestry program** that outlines the responsibility for oversight of urban and community forestry activities and directs the use of best management practices for the establishment, preservation, and maintenance of public trees and conservation and management of forests and other natural areas.
2. The community has a **full or partial public tree inventory** or a system of knowledge of the trees in the tree management area.
3. That organizational **tree care and safety standards** align with ANSI Z and A standards and are included in team operations and awarded contracts. If outside the United States or Canada, program meets industry standards appropriate for the region.

A determination that the organization is eligible to apply for UCFS Accreditation in no way expresses or implies that the organization will meet the requirements for accreditation.

Overview of the UCFS Accreditation Process

The UCFS Accreditation standards are designed to be applicable to a wide variety of urban forestry programs that maintain trees in communities. Standards address leadership, governance, planning, management, community engagement, and public relations.

UCFS standards were designed and selected to help communities identify key criteria for evaluating their urban forestry programs overall quality and effectiveness. The standards apply to a vast majority of urban and community forestry programs. The criteria contained in the standards are considered to be elements of effective and professional operations.

UCFS standards are statements of acceptable practice defined by experienced and recognized professionals. Standards are neither minimal, such as compliance with the law, nor maximal, such as "best practices." Standards indicate the level at which responsible and prudent organizations and professionals operate in the field of urban forestry.

UCFS standards are applicable to different types of organizations; therefore, they are situational. The standards are interpreted according to the unique programmatic context of the community under review. The application of standards varies, as the context in which they are applied varies.

An appropriate or adequate response to a given standard will vary according to the community addressing the standard. Providing more specificity in the manual of accreditation standards would require an attempt to anticipate each and every case a community might present, which is neither possible nor productive. UCFS Accreditation reviewers, the Accreditation Council, and the Council

Liaison will provide an initial determination regarding whether the organization is in compliance with a given standard. The Accreditation Council has the final authority to determine whether a standard is met because this group is charged with standard development, application, and interpretation.

While standards remain relatively stable over time, they are not absolute or fixed. Standards logically evolve according to various factors, including advancements in science and practice in this field and public attitudes. UCFS standards are reviewed regularly and revised periodically by the Accreditation Council, with input from outside experts.

Special circumstances might require our accredited programs to adhere to specific new standards as determined by the Accreditation Council before their next re-accreditation. Programs will be notified when this is the case.

Steps in the Accreditation Process

The accreditation process is designed and managed by UCFS staff and the Accreditation Council. It includes the following steps:

Application	Community Self-Assessment	Evaluation by Accreditation Council	Virtual Meeting and Review	UCFS Accreditation Decision	Maintenance

1. Application by an organization seeking accreditation
2. Self-assessment by an organization seeking accreditation
3. Review and approval of self-assessment by Council Liaison
4. Virtual meeting and review of materials by accreditation program reviewers
5. Evaluation by Accreditation Council
6. Accreditation decision
7. Maintenance of accreditation by an accredited organization

Application for Accreditation

Communities interested in applying for accreditation will first complete an application and pay a small application fee. The application contains a series of questions to determine if the community meets minimum requirements as well as a series of questions to understand the urban forestry program that is applying. This application will be reviewed by UCFS staff within 30 days of submission. If all necessary information is provided, and the community appears to be a good candidate for UCFS Accreditation, the applicant will move on to the next step.

Self-Assessment by Organization Seeking Accreditation

This self-assessment review process helps an organization to know itself better, evaluate its operations systematically, and make necessary improvements to meet accreditation standards. It is perhaps the most important element in the accreditation process because it is such a strong tool for organizational development. The involvement and education of all levels of staff throughout the process and the improvements an organization makes as standards are interpreted, applied, and implemented provide a valuable opportunity for organizational and programmatic development.

A central purpose of the Self-Assessment process is to demonstrate compliance with applicable UCFS accreditation standards. Evidence of compliance should clearly indicate how each standard is met. The self-assessment tool is used by UCFS staff and the Accreditation Council as a tool to help them assess an organization's compliance with UCFS accreditation standards, and the self-assessment is only approved as ready for use when deemed a tool that can be effectively utilized for this purpose.

Prepare the Self-Assessment

The self-assessment is a major undertaking. It is important that the completed assessment be accurate, complete, and reflective of operations at the time of submission. Sufficient time and resources must be allocated to the development of the self-assessment. Instructions for completing the assessment are provided within the electronic assessment form provide on the UCFS website. The self-assessment must be submitted via the online portal.

In Appendix 1 below, a full listing of the UCFS Standards and individual criteria can be reviewed. The following provides a high-level overview and the number of possible points available.

1. **Urban Forestry Leadership** (16 base points + 0-9 for credentialed staff for a total of 16-25 possible)
   1.1. Designated Urban Forestry Leadership Position
   1.2. Urban Forestry Professionals on Staff
   1.3. Workplace Management
2. **Urban Forest Governance and Planning** (33 points possible)
   2.1. Public Tree Ordinance
   2.2. Urban Forest Strategic Planning
   2.3. Data and Systems Management
   2.4. Urban Forest Funding
3. **Urban Forest Management** (22 points possible)
   3.1. Urban Forest Retention and Growth
   3.2. Enforcement, Preservation, and Protection
   3.3. Urban Forest Safety and Monitoring
4. **Community Engagement** (19 points possible)
   4.1. Community Outreach Programs
   4.2. Partnership and Collaboration
   4.3. Public Relations

The applicant ranks their communities score on accreditation standard, scored **0 or 1**, based on implementation status:

- **0** = No activity or implementation
- **1** = Fully implemented; consistent, documented, and monitored

Assistance

There are several types and levels of assistance available to communities in the process of seeking accreditation. The UCFS Executive Director is available to answer questions about the process and specific requirements at each step or provide direction to an appropriate resource. A Council Liaison is assigned upon acceptance of the organization's application and is available throughout the process for consultation and support. Accreditation webinars, normally offered annually, provide an overview of the accreditation process and may provide guidance regarding the interpretation and application of standards.

Evaluation by UCFS Accreditation Council Review

Once the self-assessment is ready, it will be submitted electronically, where UCFS staff will review.

Within 60 days of receiving the final self-assessment, UCFS staff and Council Liaison reviews the assessment and determines if the community is prepared to progress to the virtual review. Approval of the self-assessment indicates that all documentation appears to be complete, submitted in the proper format, and is a useful tool for the virtual review. Approval of these materials in no way expresses or implies that all standards are met or that the organization will be granted accreditation.

Virtual Review with UCFS Accreditation Council

The virtual review is an essential element of the accreditation program. It provides information to the Accreditation Council on how the organization complies with the accreditation standards of the UCFS Accreditation Program. The virtual review meeting provides the Accreditation Council with a clear understanding of the organization and its level of compliance with UCFS standards at the time of the visit. During this meeting, the community seeking to obtain UCFS Accreditation will answer Accreditation Council questions and provide nuances of their urban forestry program that may have been difficult to explain in the self-assessment.

The virtual review meeting will be set within 90 days of the self-assessment materials being approved. This gives the Accreditation Council enough time to review the materials provide, determine gaps in meeting the standards, and prepare questions that the community submitting needs to respond to. An initial report of questions and perceived gaps will be provided prior to the meeting in order to provide the community with time to gather the information for response.

With the initial report, the community can address the review team's findings by offering corrective actions for unmet standards, with supporting evidence, a timeline for completion, and/or additional

relevant information. Occasionally a program may disagree with one or more of the review team's findings and are invited to address these disagreements during the review meeting.

The purpose of the virtual review meeting is to verify standards compliance. It is not intended to result in recommendations for improvement. That is left in the hands of the program being visited as they work to comply with any unmet standards that are found during the review meeting.

After the virtual review meeting, the Accreditation Council will complete a final report within 14 days.

UCFS Accreditation Decision

The accreditation program is structured a continuum of achievement while ensuring each tier is built on measurable best practices (scores). The levels provide communities with motivation to aim for advancement of urban forestry stewardship. The scores ensure each tier is earned by demonstrated practices—not just program size or budget.

Tier 1: Urban Forestry Steward (75-89% of Standards met)
- **Level**: Beginner
- **Focus**: Foundational practices, compliance, and early implementation of the four standards.
- **Description**: Recognizes programs that are establishing sustainable forestry practices and demonstrating commitment to growth in leadership, governance, management, and community engagement.

Tier 2: Urban Forestry Champion (90% or more of Standards met)
- **Level**: Advanced
- **Focus**: Strategic innovation, integration across departments, measurable impact, and leadership in forestry excellence.
- **Description**: Recognizes programs that exemplify best practices, leadership, innovation, and advancing the profession of urban forestry for long-term success.

When voting on initial accreditation, the Accreditation Council has three options to consider:

Grant Accreditation Status: Steward

The Accreditation Council may grant Steward-level Accreditation for a five-year period. This includes applicants who are in compliance with 75-89% all applicable standards with the required documentation and a successful review meeting that affirms all details provided by the community.

Grant Accreditation Status: Champion

The Accreditation Council may grant Champion-level Accreditation for a five-year period. This includes applicants who are in compliance with 75-89% all applicable standards with the required documentation and a successful review meeting that affirms all details provided by the community.

Deny Accreditation

The Accreditation Council may deny accreditation to applicants not in compliance with the standards and whose documentation and virtual review meeting includes unacceptable responses that cannot be revised in a reasonable amount of time. UCFS staff and the Accreditation Council communicates this decision to the organization. A denial indicates significant changes need to be made in order to achieve accreditation. Organizations that have been denied initial accreditation are welcome to re-apply in the future.

Appeals

An organization may appeal a decision of the Accreditation Council. See Appeals section below.

Cost of Accreditation

The cost of UCFS Accreditation follows the following fee schedule. The fee for one year of municipal/organizational membership to UCFS is included with the initial accreditation payment. The expiration date for the organization's membership in UCFS will be extended one year from the date the program achieves accredited status, and after the first year is the responsibility of the community to maintain.

- Application fee: $250
- Total Accreditation fee: $6,000 paid in one lump sum or paid annually at $1,400

Accreditation fees are reviewed annually and are subject to change without notice.

Maintaining UCFS Accreditation

Submit Accreditation Program Evaluation

When the Council confers accredited status, UCFS will send a certificate of accreditation and an invoice for accreditation fees to the organization. Upon approval of Accreditation, organizations become Accredited Organizational Members of UCFS.

The Council may give a warning to, or revoke accreditation from, any accredited organization if it is found to be out of compliance with standards, fails to meet a deadline, or has not paid accreditation fees.

Submit Annual Reports

Maintaining accreditation is contingent on satisfactory submission and acceptance of Annual Reports. Annual fees are determined according to the current fee schedule and are non-refundable. The fees will include the yearly accreditation renewal and UCFS organizational membership.

The Annual Report includes requests for information and documentation related to organizational changes and standards compliance. The Annual Report is reviewed by UCFS staff who presents the

report to the Accreditation Council. The council then determines if any follow-up actions are required on the part of the program.

Significant Events (serious accidents, significant leadership changes…)

If an accredited organization experiences an event that impacts its urban and community forestry program (i.e., budget reductions, reduction in or dissolution of departments, major reduction in staffing, etc.), an organizational representative must notify UCFS in writing. The Accreditation Council may request a written report or a meeting to review the information provided. Failure to respond may result in the withdrawal of accredited status.

Adhering to Updated Accreditation Standards

Approximately every three years, UCFS publishes new editions of its accreditation standards. Special circumstances might require our accredited organizations to adhere to specific new standards as determined by the Accreditation Council. Programs will be notified if this is the case. UCFS encourages accredited programs to review new editions of the accreditation standards so that they are familiar with the changes.

Apply for Continuing Accreditation

Approximately six months prior to the expiration of accreditation, UCFS contacts the accredited program regarding continuing accreditation. The program is expected to notify UCFS in writing of its intent to continue accreditation within thirty days of receipt of this notice.

The continuing accreditation process mirrors the initial accreditation process. It includes submission of the self-assessment, approval of the assessment, completion of a virtual review meeting, creation of the initial report, and a determination of continuing accreditation through a Council vote. The entire process should be completed prior to the accreditation expiration date. Organizations applying for continuing accreditation are not required to submit an annual report for the cycle in which the self-study is submitted. The Council may also defer or revoke accreditation of the organization or program based on their determination of the most appropriate action.

The Accreditation Council will determine whether a program is granted continuing accreditation and if the urban forestry program initial status is still applicable. For example, programs may move up to Champion level or be regranted at the Steward level if changes in program standards are found. The Accreditation Council may deny continuing accreditation for communities who are no longer in compliance with UCFS accreditation standards.

Consequences of expired accreditation:

- Removal from the list of accredited organizations on the UCFS website.
- The organization must remove any mention of being accredited from its marketing materials.

Corrective Actions

Organizations will be notified by UCFS staff of a corrective action asked for by the Accreditation Council. A follow-up letter or email will be sent by UCFS detailing the specific conditions of the warning.

Warning

The Accreditation Council may warn an organization at any time if:
- There is evidence that an accredited community is out of compliance with applicable standards or requirements for deferral or conditional accreditation that have not been met in a timely manner;
- An Annual Report or fees are late;
- A deadline set by the Accreditation Council for any other action is not met, or
- The organization does not disclose information about a significant event to UCFS in a timely manner.

Response to a Warning

The organization will respond to the specific context and conditions of a warning by providing evidence in writing that the required changes have been made within the specified period of time. The response must document compliance with terms and conditions set forth by the Council at the time of the warning and describe specific actions taken to address the warning. The format is similar to the Site Visit Response, addressing specific observations or concerns and unmet standards that are related to the warning. The response is sent to the Director and the Council Liaison for review and approval.

Withdrawal of UCFS Accreditation

An organization may withdraw from the accreditation process at any time. The organization must notify the UCFS of its decision in writing.

Change of Status of UCFS Accreditation

The Accreditation Council is responsible for safeguarding the integrity of the UCFS Accreditation Program. Therefore, the Council reserves the right to temporarily delay, suspend, or revoke the accreditation of any organization. If it appears that an incident, related circumstances, or any other issue affects the accreditation process or the organization under review in a negative manner, the Council will review the status of the organization and take appropriate action. This delay, suspension, or revocation can occur at any stage in the accreditation process. During suspension or following any revocation, the organization is not accredited and may not communicate to third parties that it is UCFS accredited.

UCFS may request an immediate response from the community, the submission of documents and other information, and/or information from external organizations and individuals. UCFS may also request a virtual meeting to review the issue at hand. Refusal to respond or unsatisfactory response to any UCFS

inquiry may result in modification of accreditation status. When a change in status is deemed warranted, UCFS will notify the community of this action.

Appeals

Organizations have the right to appeal any decision made by the Accreditation Council. The process for appealing a decision is as follows:

1. The organization submits a written intent to appeal to UCFS staff within 30 days of written notification of the decision.
2. The Executive Director of UCFS appoints an Appeals Panel whose members are acceptable to the organization and the Council within 30 days of written intent to appeal by the organization. The panel includes a member of the Accreditation Council and no fewer than two additional fair and impartial persons. The Executive Director of UCFS appoints a Chair of the panel. The Accreditation Council member may not be appointed as Chair. When the Appeals Panel is formed, UCFS will notify the organization.
3. The written appeal is sent to UCFS and the Appeals Panel members within 30 days of written notification of the formation of the panel. The written appeal must clearly indicate the specific focus of the appeal and provide relevant support documentation.
4. The Appeals Panel considers the written appeal within 60 days of receipt. The panel may ask for additional information or may ask to meet with the organization.
5. The Appeals Panel affirms the Council decision or makes a recommendation that alternative action be taken.
6. The Chair of the Appeals Panel sends a written report to UCFS and the Accreditation Council.
7. Council votes on the recommendations within 30 days of receipt of the report. The decision of the Council is final.
8. The Chair of the Accreditation Council submits the decision in writing to the organization and to UCFS.

Misrepresenting Accredited Status

Communities may not misrepresent their accredited status to the public or its clients. The Accreditation Council retains the right to release information or reports, when necessary, to correct or clarify inaccurate information released by an organization or other sources. The only information that shall be released regarding non-accredited programs is that the program is not UCFS-accredited. A list of accredited organizations is maintained on the UCFS website.

Appendix 1 – Accreditation Standards Overview and Definitions

Accreditation Standards

The UCFS Accreditation standards ensure accredited communities follow industry best practices for establishing, maintaining, and protecting public trees through four accreditation standards: Leadership, Governance, Management, and Engagement.

Standard 1: Urban Forestry Leadership

Standard One demonstrates that tree stewardship leadership and decisions are made by trained and credentialed urban forestry professionals and who are directly employed or retained through a written agreement to advise or assist in the development and management of the urban and community forestry program, based on industry standards.

Standard 1 Criteria

    1.1. Designated Urban Forestry Leadership Position
    1.2. Urban Forestry Professionals on Staff
    1.3. Workplace Management

Definitions

Designated Urban Forestry Leadership position is continuously employed or contracted on staff, <u>AND</u> is responsible for implementing <u>OR</u> overseeing safety and performance standards for all department tree workers or contractors.

Certifications and Credentials accepted:
- ISA Certified Arborist
- ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ)
- ISA Certified Urban Forestry Professional
- ISA Board Certified Master Arborist (BCMA)
- Other - credentials, state designation, etc.

Demonstrated Compliance

See Appendix 2 for full list of possible documentation to prove your adherence to each standard.

Standard Two: Urban Forest Governance

Standard Two demonstrates that policies, ordinances and best practices for sustainable and equitable management and protection of trees are in place, including regulations for planting, maintenance, preservation, and the removal and recycling of public trees.

Standard 2 Criteria

2.1 Public Tree Ordinance
2.2 Urban Forest Strategic Planning
2.3 Data and Systems Management
2.4 Urban Forest Funding

Definitions

An ordinance, approved and enforced by a municipal government or governing officials, for the planting, caring, removal, and protection of public trees that includes the following:

a)   Purpose, goals and scope.
b)   Authority, responsibility and permitting.
c)   Includes basic performance standards.
d)   Penalties, such as fines or other legal repercussions for violation of the ordinance
e)   Determine authority for enforcement, penalties and appeal.
f)   Ordinance has been reviewed in the last 10 years and penalties for violations are actively enforced.

Urban Forest Plan, approved and enforced by a municipal government or administrative officials, describes the vision for the urban forest, goals, strategies, and policies for the long-term development and management of the city's tree canopy, and is actively being implemented.

Demonstrated Compliance

See Appendix 2 for full list of possible documentation to prove your adherence to each standard.

Standard Three: Urban Forest Management

Standard Three demonstrates that tree stewardship decisions are based on approved tree protection ordinances and/or policies, comprehensive planning, strategic goal setting, and accurate up-to-date data.

Standard 3 Criteria

3.1   Urban Forest Retention and Growth
3.2 Enforcement, Preservation, and Protection
3.3 Urban Forest Safety and Monitoring

Definitions

To come

Demonstrated Compliance

See Appendix 2 for full list of possible documentation to prove your adherence to each standard.

Standard Four: Community Engagement

Demonstrates active involvement of residents, businesses, and community groups in urban forestry initiatives and equitable access to urban forest benefits.

Standard 4 Criteria

4.1. Community Outreach Programs
4.2. Partnership and Collaboration
4.3. Public Relations

Definitions

To come

Demonstrated Compliance

See Appendix 2 for full list of possible documentation to prove your adherence to each standard.

Appendix 2 - Demonstrated Compliance

NOTE: This appendix is in active review, and the list of demonstrated proof documents will be added to the manual.

To help cities demonstrate compliance with all UCFS Accreditation Standards, **types of documentation or proof** that can be provided for each section and criterion is listed below. This ensures clarity and consistency when municipalities submit evidence.

Submission Best Practices

- **File Naming:** City_SectionCode_ItemCode_YYYY-MM-DD (e.g., Springfield_CommOutreach_VolunteerProgram_2025-07-01.pdf)
- **Metadata:** Include **dates**, **signatures**, **version numbers**, and **approval references**.
- **Metadata:** Include **approval/adoption dates**, **ordinance/code references**, **version numbers**, **authors**, **signatures**.
- **Cross-References:** Note when one document satisfies multiple criteria.
- **Redactions:** If submitting case examples (citations, appeals), **redact personal data** per local policy.
- **Redactions:** If you submit examples (citations, permits, tickets), redact personal data per local privacy policy.
- **Accessibility:** Provide **public URLs** where available

Appendix 3 – UCFS Accreditation Council Ethical Guidelines

Confidentiality

All materials associated with a virtual review meeting (for example, written materials, verbal comments, and other reviewer's comments) are confidential.

Affiliation

Accreditation Council reviewers act as agents for UCFS. In serving as such agents, reviewers follow the mission statement and other policies set forth by the Executive Director, UCFS Board of Directors, and the Accreditation Council.

Competence

Accreditation Council reviewers promote and conduct activities within the level of their competence. Reviewers proactively stay abreast of current information in the field and participate in ongoing professional efforts to maintain their knowledge, practice, and skills as reviewers.

Professional Conduct

Accreditation Council reviewers conduct activities with honesty, fairness, and respect, interacting with other reviewers and organization personnel. This includes, but may not be limited to, the following:

a) Making no false, misleading, or deceptive statements when describing personal qualifications or reporting findings of the review;
b) Being aware of how their belief systems, values, needs, and limitations affect the review process;
c) Being transparent with program staff as to their roles and obligations as a reviewer;
d) Accepting responsibility for their behavior and decisions;
e) Possessing an adequate basis for professional judgments;
f) Respecting the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of program staff;
g) Striving to be sensitive to cultural and individual differences- including those due to age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status;
h) Not engaging in sexual or other harassment or exploitation of program staff and participants; and,
i) Avoiding involvement in situations where personal problems or conflicts will impair judgment.

Right to Autonomous Decisions and Feedback

Accreditation Council reviewers respect the right of program staff to make autonomous decisions and, if appropriate, assist them in understanding the consequences of their choices as they pertain to the accreditation process. Reviewers also provide appropriate opportunities to discuss the review's preliminary results, interpretations, and preliminary conclusions with appropriate staff.

Social Responsibility

Accreditation Council reviewers are aware of their responsibility to the program being reviewed, UCFS, and the profession. Responsibilities include but are not limited to, appropriately encouraging the development of standards and policies that serve the field and the public and respecting the rights and dignity of others.

Dual Relationships

Accreditation Council reviewers avoid situations that may result in actual or perceived conflicts of interest. This is accomplished by intentionally avoiding dual relationships with organization staff and participants that could impair professional judgment. This includes but is not limited to, business relationships or personal relationships such as staff recruitment or consultation.

Timeliness

Accreditation Council reviewers are expected to provide oral and written feedback to UCFS in the timelines outlined above.

Appendix 4 – Responding to Complaints about Accredited Organizations

UCFS, aware of the value of information from the public, will receive complaints against its accredited communities, but pursue only those complaints that bear upon the community's meeting UCFS's accreditation standards. Because the complaint process is intended to pursue only those matters that suggest substantive non-compliance by communities, UCFS shall expect individuals who have a personal dispute with an accredited community to use other internal and external grievance mechanisms, particularly the internal grievance procedures of the community, to resolve the dispute. In no case will UCFS use the complaint process to seek redress or to fashion an individual remedy with a community on behalf of a complainant.

Details:
- UCFS will consider no complaint that concerns facts or circumstances that took place more than five years from the date the complaint was received by UCFS.
- All complaints must be in writing and signed by the complainant although UCFS may at its discretion consider other complaints where warranted subject to the requirements in Additional Information (below).
- UCFS will acknowledge a complaint promptly and within 30 working days of receipt will advise the complainant whether or not the complaint warrants consideration by UCFS.
- If UCFS determines a complaint warrants further consideration, UCFS will give the accredited community named in the complaint an opportunity of 60 days to respond to the complaint or to a summary of the complaint if the complainant requests confidentiality of identity or documents, before UCFS completes its review and makes a decision regarding the complaint.
- UCFS may require that the institution file a follow-up report or, upon approval by the UCFS Accreditation Council, may schedule a focused review to the accredited community regarding issues raised by the complaint. Such follow-up review may lead to further actions or withdrawal of accreditation following UCFS policies and procedures related to such actions.
- UCFS reserves the right to reject any complaint that contains defamatory statements.

When UCFS receives a complaint(s) about an accredited community that has an impending assessment and review that raises questions about the compliance of the community with UCFS accreditation standards, it will forward the complaint(s), or a summary thereof, to the attention of the Accreditation Council for consideration instead of, or in addition to, the regular review UCFS might undertake regarding a complaint. The findings related to the complaint will be included either in the initial report, or in a separate memo.

Additional Information: In addition to pursuing complaints, UCFS may initiate an inquiry in response to any information that gives reason to be concerned about the institution's meeting one or more of UCFS's accreditation standards