



UCFS Accreditation Standards

First Edition

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Details

The UCFS Accreditation standards push urban and community forestry programs to achieve higher levels of excellence. 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 compliance with broadly accepted industry standards.

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.

Only the UCFS Accreditation Council can award Steward or Champion status. Scoring to one of these levels in your self-assessment **DOES NOT** guarantee that you will achieve that level. You must go through all steps of the process, and the Accreditation Council will determine if the urban forestry program meets standards.

Note that for each sub-standard, you will need to upload proof demonstrating your jurisdiction's compliance. This will be done online.

This document is provided as a guide in your review and scoring of each criterion. UCFS will only accept submissions through its online form.

Standard One: Urban Forest 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

1.1) Designated Urban Forestry Leadership Position - score this section for the primary urban forestry decision maker	Add one point if item fully implemented
Jurisdiction has at least one Urban/City Forester, City/County Arborist, or Tree Warden who is employed full- or part-time or retained through a written agreement that designates their responsibility for the establishment, conservation, protection, and maintenance of a community's trees and forests.	
The above role is defined in ordinance, policy or approved plan.	
Role is responsible for providing urban forestry leadership and decision making.	
Role requires at least five (5) years of experience managing urban forest programs.	
Role requires ISA Certified Arborist.	
Individual creates and/or supports a culture of workplace safety, service, responsibility, and accountability.	
Individual administers tree protection regulations, ordinance, policy, and plans.	
Individual develops, supports, and administers a program specific budget for the management of the urban forestry program and maintenance of trees and forests under jurisdictional control.	
Individual leads or supports staff, partners, and volunteers who are part of urban and community forestry planning and management.	

Individual participates in emergency storm response planning and recovery operations that impact urban and community trees and forests.	
Individual manages the acquisition, performance, and utilization of contractors involved in urban forest management.	
Individual manages agreements between other parties as it relates to tree canopy (i.e. medical response, utilities, etc.).	

1.2) Urban Forestry Credentialing	
See separate scoring tool.	

1.3) Workplace Management	Add one point if item fully implemented
Jurisdiction supports and prioritizes maintenance of credentials, continuing education, and professional development (i.e. allows work time for education, supports conference attendance, etc.).	
Employee on-boarding, performance evaluation, and respectful workplace practices are implemented.	
A process is in place for team building and leadership development.	
Workplace safety policies and risk management strategies are in place along with appropriate trainings.	

Standard Two: Urban Forest Governance and Planning

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

2.1) Public Tree Ordinance	Add one point if item fully implemented
Jurisdiction has an ordinance (or equivalent for private properties, i.e. campuses, etc.) for the planting, care, removal, and protection of public trees that has been approved by the city or governing officials.	
Ordinance includes purpose, goals, and scope	
Ordinance includes authority, responsibility and permitting.	
Ordinance includes minimum standards for management based on industry standards.	
Ordinance includes process for enforcement, penalties and appeal.	
Ordinance defines the legal framework and implications of tree ownership (i.e., public versus private).	
Ordinance includes controlling arboricultural standards of practice for tree care (i.e. ANSI, Urban Wood Network Certification of Standards, local streetscape standards, etc.).	
Ordinance has been reviewed in the last 10 years.	

2.2) Urban Forest Strategic Planning	Add one point if item fully implemented
Jurisdiction has an Urban Forest Plan, either a standalone plan or integrated into city comprehensive plan, that has been approved and adopted by a municipal government or governing officials.	
The Urban Forest Plan describes the vision for the urban forest, goals, strategies, and policies for the long-term development and management of the city's tree canopy.	
Urban forest planning is based on a tree canopy assessment of tree distribution completed within the last 10 years to ensure equitable distribution of tree canopy across all neighborhoods.	
Urban forest planning considers other data such as watershed maps, health, poverty, heat islands, education.	
The Urban Forest Plan identifies and prioritizes tree planting and care based on relevant inventories, equity assessments, tree canopy assessments, and/or resource assessments.	
Urban Forest Plan is actively implemented and reported to internal and external partners/departments and governing officials.	
Urban Forest Plan includes achievable Key Performance Indicator (KPI) metrics that are actively monitored and reviewed for achievement.	
Conservation principles (such as riparian buffers, greenbelts, ecological corridors, open space reserves, and recommendations to protect sensitive areas through zoning, design standards, development incentives) incorporated into urban forest plan.	
Urban Forest Strategic plan is/was developed in partnership with government departments, non-profit, community representatives, and other key partners.	
Urban forestry management policies are integrated into broader urban planning and environmental policies at the municipal or regional level such as climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, pest/disease management, emergency planning, neighborhood planning, etc.	
Jurisdiction demonstrates commitment to building or supporting standards and practices that support recycling or reusing local urban wood resources.	

2.3) Data and Systems Management	Add one point if item fully implemented
Tree inventory is GIS-based and actively used to make urban forest planning and management decisions.	
Tree inventory actively used to perform day-to-day forestry operations (work orders, etc.).	
Tree inventory is actively updated with real time data.	
Jurisdiction utilizes workorder management systems to prioritize proactive work over reactionary/ complaint driven work.	
Work order management system is used to distribute work equitably across the jurisdiction.	
Data is updated in real time and easily accessible for all parties who are doing work in the urban forest, demonstrating active management.	
A system is in place for the public to report tree service needs.	
Tree service requests are tied to work order management database in an efficient way.	
Program metrics (e.g., number of requests resolved, number of permits requests, canopy retention/growth) are collected, analyzed, and used for urban forest management.	

2.4) Urban Forest Funding	Add one point if item fully implemented
Permeant funding is in place to create, implement, and maintain a diverse and resilient community forest.	
There has been a documented increase in urban forestry funding over the past 5 years.	
Financial forecasting is completed annually.	
Jurisdiction includes strategy, line item, or mechanism(s) for contingency funding (i.e., use for emergency response with funding not taken from management or planting budget).	
Jurisdiction has a system in place for fee in lieu if trees are removed during development.	
Jurisdiction's trees are tracked as a dedicated capital asset.	

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

3.1) Urban Forest Retention and Growth	Add one point if item fully implemented
Jurisdiction sets regular, scheduled tree maintenance on an established cycle.	
Tree planting and care is prioritized and delivered in an equitable way, as directed by the urban forest management plan.	
Jurisdiction prioritizes a systematic tree health care program that includes soil health, pest and disease management, structural support, etc.	
Jurisdiction sets pruning objectives that maximize tree benefits and longevity while minimizing risk and liability.	
Jurisdiction implements young tree/structural pruning.	
Jurisdiction implements mature tree pruning.	
Tree planting plan maintains and/or meets the goals of the community urban forest management plan to maximize the benefits of the urban tree canopy.	
Community tree planting: Jurisdiction restocks trees at removal rates.	
Community tree planting: Jurisdiction restocking tree rates surpass removal rates.	
Community tree planting: Jurisdiction incorporates tree planting on adjacent private/public property (property that is not within jurisdiction's control).	
Jurisdiction focuses on creating and/or expanding tree planting sites.	
Holistic and climate-based tree planting and management practices are actively implemented.	

3.2) Enforcement, Preservation, and Protection	Add one point if item fully implemented
Jurisdiction has rules and regulations pertaining to trees in publicly owned locations.	
Jurisdiction has rules and regulations pertaining to trees on private property.	
Regulatory compliance is continuously audited, monitored, and reported.	
Noncompliance of regulations are enforced by fines, penalties, or remediation (tree planting).	
Development code specifically directs the rules and regulations for trees in development for public and private property.	
Jurisdiction sets tree protection policy for trees near construction, development, or demolition sites.	
Jurisdiction holds regular and routine trainings and/or meetings with local tree care companies, developers, building associations, etc.	

3.3) Urban Forest Safety and Monitoring	Add one point if item fully implemented
Safe operation and maintenance of arboricultural tools and equipment is monitored and reported.	
Jurisdiction has a storm and emergency response plan with identified internal and external partners along with their roles.	
Jurisdiction has a plan that includes remediation strategies after storm or other emergencies.	
Tree risk management plan with strategies and policies that assess risk tolerance, consequences, mitigation strategy, and budget has been created and documented.	

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

4.1) Community Outreach Program	Add one point if item fully implemented
An actively implemented process is in place for training, coordinating, and managing a volunteer program.	
A public education program that reaches a wide range of participants and partners is actively implemented.	
Jurisdiction supports or runs an urban forestry-based job training, workforce development, or employment program that promotes career opportunities in urban forestry.	
Outreach actively engages historically underrepresented communities in trust building, volunteer opportunities, public education, and workforce development.	
Jurisdiction documents and tracks all individuals, volunteers, organizations, businesses, contractors, etc. who are involved with tree planting and care.	

4.2) Partnerships & Collaboration	Add one point if item fully implemented
Urban Forestry engages and collaborates with Parks, Planning, Transportation, Public Health Departments, Public Works, and/or Office of Sustainability, regional planning organizations on tree related issues.	
A community participatory planning process is in place that involves the local community in urban forestry decision-making and planning.	

Partnerships are in place with neighborhood/community groups, non-profits, schools/universities, businesses, hospitals, faith-based groups, environmental groups, and/or research institutions to enhance urban forestry efforts.	
Urban Forestry works with professionals from affiliated fields to maximize the benefits of urban forests (e.g., Urban Wood Network, ASLA, APA, APWA, UAA, etc.).	
An urban forestry advisory group (ex. board, council, commission, etc.) advises on and monitors the city's tree-related policies and programs.	
Advisory group meets regularly	
Advisory group is provided or manages a budget for urban forestry promotion, planting, etc.	
Advisory group reports progress to governing officials.	
Advisory group recommends and/or makes tree policy	

4.3) Public Relations	Add one point if item fully implemented
Urban forest value and benefit data is communicated to management, colleagues, partners, elected officials, and the public.	
Relationships with the public, non-profits, interdepartmental, interagency, media, utilities are actively initiated, cultivated, and maintained	
Process is in place to address community inquiries, needs, complaints, and escalating concerns.	
A Status of the Urban Forest - or other regular report - is made to governing officials at least once per year.	
An urban forestry communications campaign is delivered via TV, social media, news articles, utility bill, or other method. Communication is delivered in a method that meets community needs (ex. multiple languages, delivery method, etc.)	