



Step 5 - Staff the Program

Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Step 5 - Staff the Program

Reference Number: MTAS-1358

A good way to ensure adequate staffing is to cross train your employees in public works to take care of trees. City arborists should be certified. Work plans should indicate how the jobs will be accomplished. There are several possibilities depending on each municipality's situation and preference for getting work done. A few options include the use of in-house (city or county) crews, outside contracts, volunteer or contractual labor, or any combination of these.

The decision on whether to use municipal workers and equipment or contractors, or both, to perform community forestry activities depends on many variables. Following are some of the more common ones:

- The size of the municipality and its urban forest dictate, to a degree, the community's degree of flexibility in the mix of resources used. Larger municipalities have a portion of their work done by in-house crews because it assures that crews are available for emergencies and provides for more flexibility,
- Local policies and regulations relating to municipal work forces and purchasing and contracting for services may determine use of in-house resources instead of contracting.
- Cost effectiveness of in-house services is certainly a consideration. Some activities may be done more effectively by contractors. While this may not be the overriding factor, it should be part of the overall consideration.
- Periodic or seasonal characteristics of some jobs may lend themselves to contracted services, and this may appeal to some decision makers. Because there is no long-term commitment in financing contract operations, as opposed to establishing a municipal work force and purchasing equipment, funds for the use of contractor services may be easier to secure for certain activities.
- Employees involved in urban forestry should have accompanying job descriptions and employers should provide ample training and development opportunities.

Tips for Selecting an Arborist

Reference Number: MTAS-1359

Hiring a tree care provider deserves careful consideration and caution. A mistake can be expensive and long lasting, while the right choice can assure health, beauty and longer life for your trees and landscape. The following suggestions will help a board select an arborist:

- Look for professional membership affiliations.
- Request that the arborist or tree worker be certified through a program of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). This program is the standard of performance for appropriate training, experience and knowledge about tree care. Additionally, it is best to use an arborist who is familiar with native trees.
- Require certificate insurance.
- Ask for local references.
- A good arborist will offer a wide range of services, including removal, pruning, fertilizing, pest control, etc.
- A good arborist will not recommend topping.
- A knowledgeable arborist will not use climbing spikes if the tree is to remain in the landscape.

Tips for Working with Volunteers

Reference Number:

MTAS-1360

Sustainable urban forestry requires far more than a single department or organization responsible for a community's trees. It requires a partnership of all interested people, young and old, professional and non-professional. Volunteers can fill this need. Some of the benefits when using volunteers include:

1. **Obtaining skills that may not be on staff.** Volunteers typically include a cross section of the community: lawyers, landscapers, writers, artists, business people, teachers and many others. Their talents and contacts can add depth and power to any forestry program.
2. **New ideas.** An array of vocational and cultural backgrounds is sure to bring ideas. Some may not be workable, but others can lead to great new projects or the success of old ones.
3. **Public support.** Volunteers can serve as a conduit between urban foresters and their constituents. They can speak up for funding, defend management decisions, challenge politicians or special interests, and serve as a link with broad segments of the community.
4. **Extra hands, more work.** Whether it is pruning young trees, planting, or staffing exhibits and educational programs, volunteers expand the urban forestry work force. More can be accomplished, benefiting the tree resource, citizens of the community, and the volunteers themselves.

According to the National Arbor Day Foundation, there are five important tips to working well with volunteers:

1. **Work with existing volunteer groups when possible instead of creating yet another organization.** Or, if you are involved in the leadership of a group, aggressively recruit members. Of course, be open to all who are interested, but also personally ask people to join who you know would add strength, balance, diversity and the kind of talent needed to accomplish your goals.
2. **Provide direction.** Most volunteers want guidance and do not want their time wasted. Use an agenda at meetings, assign specific doable tasks complete with deadlines and a clear idea about the expected outcome or product. For specific positions (secretary, treasurer, etc.) develop job descriptions just like those for paid positions.
3. **Provide orientation and training.** Orientation can be a presentation or at least a manual. The manual should include the history, mission and goals of your organization; policies; a directory of who's who; and basic information about tree care and urban forestry.
4. **Supervise.** An important part of successful volunteer management is trust and delegation of duties. Train and explain, then step back and let the volunteers do their jobs. However, provide helpful feedback as needed and plenty of positive reinforcement.
5. **Thank!** Virtually everyone likes to be recognized for the good works they perform, especially volunteers. Often, this is the only pay they receive. Express appreciation often and sincerely, including written notes, formal letters, plaques or other tokens of appreciation.

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