



HAND Small & Simple Grant to Control Invasive Plant Species Application Guidelines 2025

Through a partnership with the City of Bloomington, Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND) and Monroe County Identify and Reduce Invasive Species (MC-IRIS), neighborhood groups may apply for a HAND Small & Simple Grant to Control Invasive Plant Species (SSCIPS).



This program funds efforts to remove invasive plants throughout your neighborhood. Grant monies can be used to purchase tools and supplies or to rent equipment to help remove invasive plants, as well as to purchase native plants to replace the invasive species that have been removed.

As an added bonus, MC-IRIS will provide a free native replacement tree or shrub for each invasive tree or shrub removed through the [Reduce One Invasive Species Challenge](#). In 2025 the Challenge focuses on THREE particularly problematic species: Callery Pear, Burning Bush, and Japanese Barberry. Paired with a SSCIPS grant your neighborhood will be able to add many native plants to your landscape.

*****BEFORE YOU BEGIN to fill out the application form, please read through both the application and these guidelines in their entirety.***

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1. The maximum annual grant per neighborhood is \$500.00.
2. The SSCIPS Grant does not require a monetary match component. However, because of the nature of the project to be undertaken, a minimum 10% neighborhood household participation is required.
3. Applications may be submitted anytime between January 1 and September 1, 2025, or until all funds have been granted. If the application process must close prior to September 1, 2025, an announcement will be posted in ['The HAND Update'](#) and on [HAND Facebook](#) and [web pages](#).
4. All funds must be expended and receipts and submitted to HAND no later than November 17, 2025.
5. Applicants will be notified of award decisions within ten business days after submission of a competed application. If any specific conditions apply, these must be met before a contract may be executed.

6. After your application is approved by HAND, if applicable, you will need to secure appropriate approvals from other City Departments.
7. A neighborhood representative will purchase grant-related goods or services and will submit receipts to HAND for reimbursement. Alternatively, vendors may be paid directly by the City (i.e., through an invoice). All entities who will seek reimbursement or payment from the City, must complete and submit vendor documents to be vetted by the Controller's Office. HAND staff will provide guidance to each neighborhood.
8. A Funding Agreement will be executed between the HAND Department and the neighborhood. After all parties have signed the Funding Agreement, the neighborhood may start their project. *The City is under no obligation to reimburse the organization for expenses incurred prior to a finalization of the Funding Agreement.*

II. PROCESS & TIMELINE

1. Recruit neighbors to participate in removing invasive plants from your neighborhood. In order to be eligible for a SSCIPS grant, you must be able to demonstrate that at least 10% of households in your neighborhood will participate in the project. Educating neighbors about the importance of replacing invasives with native plants may assist in your recruitment efforts.
2. Schedule a FREE invasive plants workshop with an MC-IRIS volunteer. Contact mciris2010@gmail.com. In preparation for the workshop, you may wish to consult the [MC-IRIS website](#), which has many educational resources. An MC-IRIS volunteer will come to your neighborhood to educate your neighbors about:
 - a. Why it is important to remove invasive plants and replace them with natives.
 - b. How to identify common invasive plants.
 - c. When it is safe to remove particular species, and when to avoid doing so.
 - d. How to keep invasive plants from growing back, and best practices for safe use of herbicides.
 - e. Best practices for disposal of invasive plants.
 - f. Resources about good native plant replacements.
3. For purposes of the grant, together your neighbors will identify one or two invasive species on which to focus your efforts. Consulting this [Calendar of Control](#) will help you to determine which species are safe to remove, based upon the time of year you are conducting your project. Avoid removing plants when they are in fruit or have gone to seed, as disturbing them will cause them to spread and you may have difficulty disposing of the debris. In particular, Japanese stiltgrass must be controlled prior to September 1, after which it flowers and fruits. Mowing, bagging, and transporting this plant during the flowering and fruiting period is prohibited due to the [Indiana Terrestrial Plant Rule](#).
4. The best means of disposal may help you to determine the species on which to focus. Non-woody plants can be placed into compostable paper yard waste bags, whereas woody plants may best be disposed of by using a wood chipper to turn

them into mulch (which can be used in your garden beds). You will need to know which types of plants you'll be focusing on in order to include necessary items in your budget. ***You must have a realistic plan for disposal.*** For example, if you plan to focus on a large woody shrub or tree, you may wish to consider hiring a professional with a commercial grade wood chipper, rather than renting a small wood chipper to run on your own. Alternatively, if you plan to focus on non-woody plants that can be disposed of using yard waste bags, you'll need to factor in the cost of the bags plus the disposal fee (see #5 below).

5. If you wish to use grant funds to pay for invasive yard waste disposal, your neighborhood will be responsible for transporting yard waste to [Good Earth](#) at [650 East Empire Mill Road](#) (see their website for costs). Your application must include a clear means of transportation—recruit a neighbor or two with a pick-up truck or trailer. You must retain receipts and submit these to HAND for reimbursement. Alternatively, neighbors may include invasive debris removed from their own properties in their personal yard waste containers that are collected by City Sanitation. The City charges \$1 per container.
6. Identify one neighbor, who will act as the neighborhood grant coordinator. That individual will submit your neighborhood's application to HAND. The electronic application will be accepted anytime between January 1 and September 1, 2025. The application consists of a budget, project narrative, and completed Neighborhood Participation Pledges form.
7. After a funding agreement has been finalized between the City and your group, your designated purchaser may begin to purchase goods and services for your project. In order to be reimbursed for grant-related expenses, this individual should **SAVE ALL RECEIPTS!** Grants work on a reimbursement basis, so you must turn your receipts in to HAND. The City is a tax exempt organization and, therefore, cannot reimburse you for sales tax. You will be provided with a grantee letter and a copy of the City's tax exempt certificate, which should be used to avoid paying sales tax when you purchase items for your project. In some cases, HAND may be able to pay a vendor directly, but this must be arranged in advance, as vendors must be vetted by the City prior to accepting any invoice. HAND staff will assist applicants as necessary.
8. The neighborhood grant coordinator will receive a yard sign that indicates the work being done is funded by a HAND SSCIPS grant. The sign should be posted in a prominent location in the neighborhood—ideally it would be moved around to locations where invasive plants are actively being removed.
9. Before work begins, the neighborhood grant coordinator must ensure that each volunteer completes a [Waiver, Release, and Hold-Harmless Agreement](#). In addition, anyone, on whose property invasive plants will be removed, must complete the [Individual Property Owner\(s\) Permission form](#). Signed and dated copies of these forms must be retained by the neighborhood grant coordinator, as they will be turned in to HAND with your final project report. All forms may be completed and submitted electronically. Paper copies will be provided upon request.

10. Plan work days with your neighbors during which you can help one another remove targeted invasive plants. Working together is a great way to build community in your neighborhood! Don't forget to document your work with photos!
11. The neighborhood project coordinator will keep a list of all volunteers as well as a tally of the number of yard waste bags/bundles of brush/truck loads produced. These will both be turned in at the completion of the project as part of the final report (see section V. Grant Requirements for complete final report requirements).

III. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

Applications are accepted from neighborhood-based organizations located within the Bloomington city limits (to determine whether your area is within the city, visit [myBloomington](#) and enter your address). A neighborhood-based organization is a group with a majority of its members residing or doing business in a commonly recognized neighborhood, whose purpose is, at least in part, to improve the quality of life in that area. The group may include representatives from churches, schools, businesses, and other institutions operating in that neighborhood, in addition to residents. Groups may be formed for the sole purpose of completing a grant-funded project, and need not be formally recognized neighborhood associations.

Who is NOT eligible to apply?

Single businesses, single institutions, single government agencies, single religious organizations, political groups, individuals.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to receive a Small & Simple Grant to Control Invasive Plant Species, neighborhood groups must complete the following steps:

1. Hold an educational workshop for your neighborhood, led by an MC-IRIS volunteer. Contact MC-IRIS at mciris2010@gmail.com. Workshops may be held virtually or in person. A workshop must be held no more than six months prior to the commencement of your grant-funded project. MC-IRIS will verify with HAND that this requirement has been met by your neighborhood.
2. Demonstrate that yours is a neighborhood-wide initiative, by gathering participation pledges from at least 10% of the total households in your neighborhood.
 - a. In order to allow all interested neighbors to participate, regardless of ability, a participant is defined as a neighbor who agrees to:
 - i. Remove invasive plants from their property and replace them with native plants (or allow invasive plants to be removed and replaced by volunteers). These individuals will complete the *Individual Property Owner(s) Permission form*. and/or

- ii. Volunteer in the effort to remove and replace invasive plants from the neighborhood, including on private properties and in communal areas. These individuals will complete the *Waiver, Release, and Hold-Harmless Agreement*.
- b. Individuals who fit into BOTH categories (i.e. work on their own property AND volunteer to help neighbors) should fill out both the *Individual Property Owner(s) Permission form* and the *Waiver, Release, and Hold-Harmless Agreement*.

IV. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

SSCIPS Grant applications will be evaluated based upon the following competitive rating criteria:

1. Project Quality. The project is well planned and ready to proceed. The budget is realistic and well thought out. **NOTE: Realistic planning is essential. You must have a plan in place to properly dispose of any invasive material you remove. The budget must reflect all costs associated with invasive disposal appropriate to the types of plants you will be removing.**
2. Neighborhood Participation. The application demonstrates significant neighborhood involvement in selecting, planning, and carrying out the proposed project. A minimum 10% of households within the neighborhood must participate. Contact Angela at HAND for the specific minimum number of participants required from your neighborhood, angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov.
3. Community Benefit. The project provides opportunities for community building within the neighborhood and/or larger community.

V. GRANT REQUIREMENTS

1. The neighborhood will identify a Neighborhood Project Coordinator. This individual will act as the primary contact person with HAND for purposes of facilitating every step of the grant process.
2. The neighborhood will enter into a Funding Agreement stating the amount of the award, along with specification of activities to be performed. No expenditures will be allowed before finalization of the Funding Agreement.
3. A neighborhood elected official will complete the Attestation of Neighborhood Inclusivity, certifying that the organization follows a non-discrimination policy. If your group does not have elected representatives, the Neighborhood Grant Coordinator may sign.
4. The neighborhood will identify one individual (or organization) who will purchase goods and services and seek reimbursement from HAND. This individual/organization will complete and submit two vendor documents as

required by the City Controller's Office. All receipts must be submitted to HAND by November 17, 2025.

5. The Neighborhood Project Coordinator must record the names of all volunteers and retain copies of the [Waiver, Release, and Hold-Harmless Agreements](#), which must be signed and dated by each volunteer listed. If the volunteer is under the age of 18, a parent/guardian must sign the Agreement.
6. All participating property owners must sign and date an [Individual Property Owner\(s\) Permission form](#).
7. The Neighborhood Project Coordinator will maintain a tally of all yard waste bags, brush bundles, and/or truck loads disposed of over the course of the project. These totals will be recorded and submitted to HAND on the [SSCIPS Grant Volunteers and Yard Waste Tally form](#).
8. The Neighborhood Project Coordinator is responsible for a final report which may be submitted electronically, and must be received by HAND no later than December 15, 2025. The final report must include:
 - a. a list of all expenses;
 - b. a brief summary of the project, to include:
 - i. no more than 250 words,
 - ii. explanation of why you undertook this project;
 - iii. explanation of your process (how did you recruit volunteers, how did you work together, etc.),
 - iv. what worked, what didn't?
 - v. what did you learn?
 - vi. how did the neighborhood benefit?
 - c. a completed [SSCIPS Grant Volunteers and Yard Waste Tally form](#);
 - d. at least three electronic photos of the project (e.g., photos of neighbors working together, before and after photos, etc.);
 - e. copies of all signed and dated [Waiver, Release, and Hold-Harmless Agreements](#), (electronic copies preferred); and
 - f. copies of all signed and dated [Individual Property Owner\(s\) Permission forms](#), (electronic copies preferred).
9. If the neighborhood encounters a problem, and is unable to complete the project by November 15, 2025, the date stated in the Funding Agreement, the neighborhood must contact the HAND office for an extension of time.
10. All promotional pieces which receive any funding through this grant program must include the following mandatory grant identification statement: *"Funding provided in part through the City of Bloomington's Small & Simple Grant Program."*
11. Grant funds may not be used to pay for out-of-city travel expenses or for food, beverages, and/or catering services.

VI. PROJECT NARRATIVE

Please describe your project in no more than 250 words. Consider the following details:

- What is your motivation for undertaking this project?
- How did your neighbors come an agreement about the project to be undertaken?
- How did/will you recruit neighbors to participate?
- How will you communicate with neighbors as the project progresses?
- What is your timeline for completion of the project?
- How will the neighborhood benefit from the project?
- Are you working with any partnering organizations? If so, how?

VII. BUDGET

Your budget should include:

1. Total funds needed to complete your project,
2. Total funds requested from HAND (\$500 or less),
3. An itemized list all purchases to be made for the project, including vendor names.
4. Source of funding for each item, either HAND, the neighborhood, or partnering organization(s).

For example:

Total project budget = \$457.69

Total requested from HAND = \$457.69

Item to be purchased	Cost	Source of Funding
50 yard waste bags	\$28.80 (5 for \$2.88)	HAND
Folding saw	\$28.69	HAND
Professional wood chipper service	\$400.00 for 4 hours	HAND
	\$457.49	Total requested from HAND

VIII. APPLICATION

Please complete all portions of the application. In order to submit the application you will need a Google account. This will allow you to upload files, receive a copy of your completed application, and edit your application after submission. Upon submission of the application form, you will receive an email containing a copy of your application. At the top of this email there will be an "edit submission" button. If you need to make changes, you may do so by following that link.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN to fill out the application, please read the application in its entirety and have the following documents available to upload:

1. Project narrative of no more than 250 words,
2. Budget
3. Attestation of Neighborhood Inclusivity, signed by a neighborhood official, and
4. Completed Neighborhood Participation Pledges form.

For application assistance, please contact Angela Van Rooy, Neighborhood Services Program Manager, at angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3505.

The Small & Simple Grant to Control Invasive Plant Species (SSCIPS) application form is available here: [SSCIPS Grant Application form](#).

IX. CITY REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

1. After all expenditures have been made, the Neighborhood Grant Coordinator submits receipts to HAND for reimbursement no later than November 15, 2025. These may be submitted electronically or in hardcopy form.
2. Reimbursement will be made to the individual or organization that previously submitted vendor documents to the City and is pre-approved by the Controller.
3. Once received, there is an approximately three week timeframe for reimbursements. All payments from the City are made by electronic funds transfer (EFT) to the bank account specified on the vendor documents.

All documents referred to herein are available on the
[Small & Simple Grant website](#)
(bloomington.in.gov/neighborhoods/grants/small-and-simple).