



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

April 30, 2025

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-69 Congressionally Directed Spending/Community Grant Round 2 (\$1,000,000)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds *Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-69 Congressionally Directed Spending/Community Grant Round 2 (\$1,000,000)* is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County. The appropriation will fund six small-scale community-based restoration projects and three tree-planting projects. A large portion of the funding will directly benefit Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-led organizations and communities, including disadvantaged youth. The projects will increase the number of shade trees and aid in improving stormwater management-which is a benefit for all residents in the County.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA #25-69 is to allow the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to pass-through funds received through the Congressionally Directed Spending/Community Grant Round 2 Federal grant to local nonprofits. The funding will enable organizations to implement Clean Water Montgomery and tree planting projects. The remaining funds will benefit projects that do not target BIPOC-led organizations or communities but work to reduce impervious surfaces and expand tree canopy. This will enhance green infrastructure, provide shade, improve air quality, support wildlife, and reduce stormwater runoff, mitigating storm flooding.

Additional details on the grant funds are below:

- (1) **Clean Water Montgomery:** The County will pass through funds to six non-profit organizations to carry out watershed restoration and outreach programs in the County. As the sub-recipient of the funds, the Chesapeake Bay Trust will oversee the design and construction of the projects.
- (2) **Tree planting:** The County will fund 3 projects that aim to increase tree canopy and shade in urban communities through the Tree Montgomery program. The County will also pass through funds for planting and establishing shade trees on private property that does not qualify for Tree Montgomery funding, removing pavement, and reforesting the newly exposed land at a homeowner's association in North Potomac. The grant will also allow the County to convert three acres of lawn on private property to forest, which will earn credits toward the County's MS4 permit.¹

The EPA grant requires a 20% cost share from the County. DEP's share totals \$250,000, which includes \$67,046 funded by the Water Quality Protection Fund-Clean Water Montgomery Grants and \$182,954 from the Tree Canopy Conservation Fund.

- III. ANALYSIS:** Around 43% of the total grant awards will be directed to BIPOC-led organizations or be deployed in areas with a larger population of BIPOC or low-income residents, or benefit schools with students who are English language learners or receive free or reduced-priced meals.

Several specific projects receiving Clean Water Montgomery (14%) or Tree Montgomery (28%) program grant funds have the ability to advance racial equity and social justice. Among the Clean Water Montgomery grants, there is a Price & Elkin Streeter project in Wheaton, which will reduce racial inequities through increased green infrastructure, community engagement, improved shade, and enhanced pedestrian access. Additional projects at the Forum Condominiums and Parkside Plaza will focus on engaging disadvantaged youth and diverse residents while improving green infrastructure and tree canopy. The tree planting initiative, representing 28% of funding, prioritizes areas that have historically lost green space due to development and zoning practices, providing cooling shade, cleaner air, and mental health benefits to communities most impacted by racial inequities.

ORESJ has conducted several Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIA) on the impact of tree planting programs, especially those awarded to the Chesapeake Bay Trust². In those REIAs, ORESJ explained the role redlining and other systemic inequities have played in

¹ The main objective of the MS4 Permit Program is to reduce stormwater pollution across the United States and preserve the health of our waters. Montgomery County receives its own MS4 Permit from MDE, which requires the County to meet specific water quality standards. This permit is renewed every five years. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/water/clean-water-montgomery/watershed/watershed-planning.html#ms4>

² REIA #25-43 Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Urban Trees Grant Award; REIA #24-18 Chesapeake Bay Trust Urban Trees Grant; REIA #23-26 Chesapeake Bay Trust Urban Trees Grant; and REIA #22-29 Tree Replacement.

the inequitable distribution of tree canopy and its health benefits. Our most recent review and references to all of our previous REIAs on this topic are included below. Additionally, ORESJ's review of the Tree Montgomery Program is also included below.

- REIA #25-43 Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Urban Trees Grant Award
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/25-43.pdf>
- REIA #23-58 Tree Canopy Fund
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-58.pdf>

cc: Jon Monger, Director, Department of Environmental Protection
Tricia Swanson, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive