



Coalition Governance Framework **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

Issued by the Cleveland Tree Coalition

Released on: October 22, 2024

Submission Deadline: November 8, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.



Introduction and Background

The Cleveland Tree Coalition Governance Framework described in this Request for Proposal is an **important step towards equitable growth of the City of Cleveland's urban tree canopy**. Trees are an essential component of redevelopment, economic prosperity, climate resiliency, and public health, yet the city is losing significant tree canopy annually - an average of 75 acres per year.

The Cleveland Tree Coalition (CTC) is a collaborative group of public, private, and community stakeholders partnered with the City of Cleveland to rebuild our urban forest. The Coalition strives to create a healthy, vibrant, sustainable, and equitable urban forest by collaboratively implementing the Cleveland Tree Plan. Together, we're making Cleveland the Forest City once again. The core functions of the CTC include:

- Grow tree canopy in low canopy Cleveland neighborhoods
- Convene and support member organizations
- Provide grant funding to CTC member organizations to support their tree canopy initiatives and projects
- Advocate for improved urban forestry policy
- Shift public sentiment around the value and importance of urban trees

The Coalition has grown to include more than 40 organizations and is a nationally recognized model for engaging the community, including all residents, in reforestation. In addition to the membership group, the CTC Executive Committee of the Cleveland Tree Coalition is comprised of executive-level leadership from Holden Forests and Gardens, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Black Environmental Leaders, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Cleveland Metroparks, City of Cleveland, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, Environmental Health Watch, Trust for Public Land, and Cuyahoga County.

In 2024, the CTC adopted a new strategic plan outlining the CTC's path forward for the next five years. The strategic plan included initial findings on potential governance models but identified the need to devote more time and resources to solidify and adopt a framework. Initial findings can be found in Appendix A.

The governance framework should establish coalition governance and authority, a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, coalition intent and decision making, partnership and participation at all levels, and sustainable funding. We look forward to working towards restoring Cleveland as the Forest City.

Scope of Services

The CTC seeks to engage a consultant team based upon the following desired goals and deliverables.

Deliverables and Tasks

Deliverable 1: Coalition Governance Framework

Establish a governance framework that details the operations of the Cleveland Tree Coalition and defines authority, roles, and expectations of both coalition leadership and membership.

Task 1. Research other coalition models, including frameworks, governance documents, and any associated policies that define operations and partnerships.

- Research should be conducted using cities or communities that are similar to Cleveland in population size, demographics, urban form, political atmosphere, etc.
- Summarize and share findings with CTC leadership.

Task 2. Facilitate a series of three to five meetings with the Executive Committee.

- Meetings should cultivate a consensus about the coalition regarding, meeting structure, membership requirements, terms and functions of leadership roles, function and authority of the Director and any additional coalition staff members, procedures for making changes to the governance framework, etc.

Task 3. Create a series of recommendations that address issues and propose clear answers to the questions identified in meetings.

Task 4. Review and provide feedback on coalition governance documentation.

- Support Coalition staff in reviewing drafted governance materials.

Deliverable 2: Sustainable Funding Plan

Identify sustainable funding opportunities for the Cleveland Tree Coalition to support operations and continued growth.

Task 1. Research other coalition funding models.

- Review existing research and recommendations created during the strategic planning process in 2022 and 2023.
- Research should be conducted using cities or communities that are similar to Cleveland in population size, demographics, urban form, political atmosphere, etc.

Task 2. Create a sustainable funding plan that outlines a series of recommendations for the CTC's continued growth.

Project Schedule and Budget

The entire project is expected to take approximately two months to complete. The project budget maximum is \$15,000. If a different period of time is proposed, the proposal should explicitly show why more or less time is needed.

Submission Instructions and Schedule

Proposals should be submitted electronically to Sara Tillie, Director of the Cleveland Tree Coalition, at stillie@wrlandconservancy.org no later than **November 8, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. EST**. If the file is too large for email, a link to the file should be provided. Late arrivals will not be accepted. Mail submissions will not be accepted.

Following written proposal review, the CTC anticipates hosting short-listed candidates for an interview and oral presentation of their approach. These interviews will be hosted in person, virtually, or in a hybrid setting depending on the locations of consultant team members and will tentatively be scheduled for the Monday November 25 and Tuesday November 26, 2024.

The CTC anticipates the following submission and evaluation schedule. It is subject to change at the CTCs discretion.

Date	Benchmark
10/22/2024	RFP publicly posted and distributed
11/8/2024	Proposal deadline
Week of 11/25/2024	Interviews for short-listed candidates
12/06/2024	Final selection

Qualifications

The proposal must describe the consultant's qualifications to conduct the scope of work and highlight expertise, knowledge, and experience, including examples of similar/related work and experience working in urban communities. Successful consultant team applicants will need to possess the following qualifications:

- Strong facilitation and project management skills.
- Experience working with diverse communities.
- Experience working with coalitions and non-profits to develop governance frameworks, identify member roles etc.
- Experience in creating sustainable funding streams for non-profit agencies.
- Knowledge of urban forestry and environmental issues.

Proposal Contents

Proposal submissions should consist of the following content and utilize the suggested page allocations outlined below. Proposals should be submitted as PDF files.

Cover Letter (1 page) should identify the firm and other general information regarding the consultant's business organization. At a minimum, the cover letter must include the name, form of business entity, address, federal tax identification number, telephone number, primary contact, e-mail address, and the names of any sub-consultant firms included in the proposal.

Executive Summary should provide a clear and concise summary of the consultant's background, level of expertise, relevant experience, ability, and project approach. The executive summary should include:

- a. A statement discussing your understanding of the CTC Communications Campaign and Community Engagement Plan.
- b. *Firm Qualifications/Experience*: Consultants should discuss their industry experience, including previous relevant work, and what defines them as a leader in their industry. Please include the following information:
 - Identify how you meet or exceed the minimum qualifications.
 - List relevant recent experience and role (e.g. prime, subconsultant) for each firm on the consultant team as it relates to providing the desired scope of services.
 - Highlight project experience and/or links to similar completed projects should reflect the abilities of consultant team members in roles like those proposed for this project.
- c. *Key Staff and Capacity*: Consultants should indicate the key staff proposed for this contract, identifying specific project responsibilities and availability of each proposed key staff person. This section should also include any subcontractors. Provide for each proposed key staff person a resume detailing experience related to the services as defined in this RFP.
- d. Any proposed scope changes and justification.

Project Approach should provide detailed discussion of how your team will approach this opportunity to ensure that the CTC's goals and objectives are met. Include a proposed schedule of work to complete the Scope of Services within 2-4 months following contract execution.

Management Approach should provide an explanation of how and where the management of this contract will fall within the consultant team, and what resources will be available to support this contract in both primary and secondary or back-up roles.

Timeline should outline a clear timeline for the completion of the project, including key milestones.

Budget should detail costs for each stage of work and include proposed payment schedule tied to project milestones and deliverables.

Applicants may attach any previous work products that demonstrate their ability to successfully execute the deliverables outlined in this RFP.

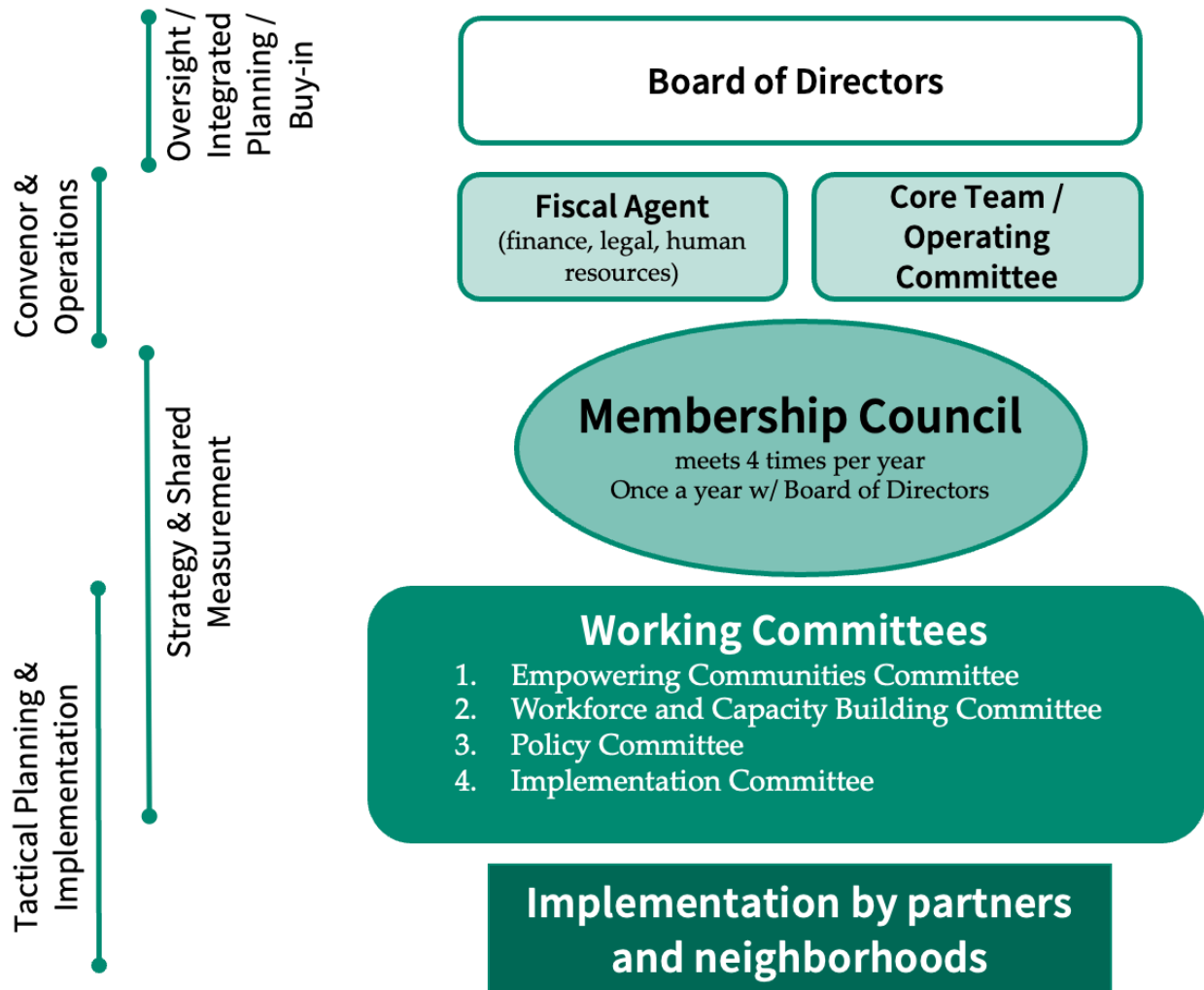
Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria

The CTC Director and a steering committee of CTC members will comprise a Selection Committee to evaluate each proposal submission. The Selection Committee will invite short-listed candidates to a presentation and interview. The Selection Committee will present its recommendations to CTC Executive Committee for final approval. The CTC will only consider proposals that are received on or before the submission deadline, and which meet all the requirements of this RFP. The CTC reserves the right to request a “best and final offer” from consultants meeting the minimum requirements.

Each submission will be rated using the following set of factors. The rating system reflects the CTC’s best attempt to quantify each consultant’s ability to provide the services set forth in the project scope and to meet the specific conditions and criteria included in this RFP.

- Experience and previous work product (20 points)
- Project approach (20 points)
- Capacity. Key staff and personnel are qualified and demonstrate excellence in work products and deliverables (20 points)
- Experience working within diverse communities on projects focused on equity; cultural competency (25 points)
- Budget is complete and reasonable (15 points)

Cleveland Tree Coalition Governance



Board of Directors (Working Title)

Responsibilities & Expectations

- The Board of Directors is responsible for hiring, managing, and compensating the Executive Director and clearly defining the Executive Director's role. This includes defining the role relative to other parts of CTC leadership. The board may choose to delegate this responsibility to a Board subcommittee or task group.
- The Board approves the annual budget, tracks its management, and creates policies for the organization. Policies include establishing "by laws" and similar document guidance.
- The Board of directors has a fiduciary responsibility to stay objective, unselfish, responsible, honest, trustworthy, and efficient. Board members, as stewards of public trust, must always act for the good of the organization, rather than for the benefit of themselves.
- The Board provides strategic planning leadership with the Executive Director and sets and reviews annual goals with recommendations from the working groups.
- The Board selects the chairs of the working committees and determines membership of the Core Team.
- The Board serves as an integrated implementation and strategic planning role, being able to recognize opportunities across the working committees.
- Oversee the shared language of equity, the overall strategy integration, and equity as part of the organizational health pillar. (Working Committees track equity as part of their ongoing metrics.)
- The board is responsible for the fifth strategic pillar, organizational health.
- Each Board member (individually and collectively) serves as a resource to the Director and their supports and as needed works to provide access to other members and resources needed to advance the work of the CTC.
- The Board will meet 4 to 6 meetings per year, one of which will be in concert with the chairs of the working groups council and one of which will include Ex officio members described below.

Charge

- The Board's charge is to shape the overall strategic direction of the CTC, and to both acquire and effectively deploy the needed capacity to accomplish the mission and vision.

Board Membership (for discussion purposes only)

- The board shall include a member *designated seat* by and representing the fiscal agent, Cuyahoga County, City of Cleveland (CoC), Cleveland Metroparks (CMP), and Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS).
- In addition the board shall include:
 - Chief Executives of three *environmental justice, community, and equity* designated seats (draft process: nominations made by members every three years; applications to be approved by the board);
 - Chief Executives of three *conservation, tree planting, or maintenance organizations* (draft process option 1: nominations made by members every three years; applications to be approved by the board. Draft process option 2: designated seats for specific members, such as WRLC and/or Holden);
 - An arborist (selection same as draft process option 1);
 - Up to two open seats to be determined by the board, such as a resident an/or corporate member. (selection same as draft process option 1). More guidance need to be developed on unique considerations for corporate and resident members;
 - *Ex Officio non-voting members* of the board include Cuyahoga County Executive, City of Cleveland Mayor, Cleveland Metroparks Director, NEORS Director;
 - Each of four *working committee chairs* may attend one or more Board meetings as a nonvoting participant;
 - The board should be limited to a maximum of 15 voting members and a minimum of 13. The board may vote to expand or contract the size of the board. A super majority of 67% or higher is needed to change the board size.

Appendix A. Cleveland Tree Coalition Governance Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

Current Voting Board members of the board and their term start date are as follows:

1. **Fiscal Agent:** Elizabeth Grace, Western Reserve Land Conservancy (2021)
2. **Cuyahoga County:** Jenita McGowan (2024)
3. **City of Cleveland:** Sarah O'Keeffe (2023)
4. **Cleveland Metroparks:** Rosalina Fini (2023)
5. **Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District:** Marie Fechik-Kirk (2023)
6. **Cleveland Neighborhood Progress:** Tania Menesse (2021)
7. **Black Environmental Leaders:** SeMia Bray (2021)
8. **Environmental Health Watch:** Kim Foreman (2021)
9. **Western Reserve Land Conservancy:** Rich Cochran (Chair) (2020)
10. **Holden Arboretum:** Edward Moydell (2024)
11. **Trust for Public Lands:** Sean Terry (2021)

Next Steps: Once the strategic plan is approved, members of the Board of Directors will draft and approve bylaws to define seats, board size, terms, board selection process, distribution and election of leadership (e.g., chair, vice chair, secretary, core team member), how the board votes on making decisions. May determine which are standing member organizations that appoint board members and which are specific seats being filled based on organization type. Note that if there are terms, they should be off sequence from each other so that there is gradual rather than drastic change. For instance, if three-year terms and six potentially rotating seats, 2 would have an initial one-year term, another 2 a two-year term, and the final 2 a three-year term. Will need to determine if there are term limits as well. The chair should not come from the same entity as the fiscal agent.

Core Team

Responsibilities & Expectations

The Core Team is a small group of people who meet monthly to support the director, plan agendas for the Board of Directors and Member meetings, advance tasks, and be a sounding board for how to move work into implementation. This team would be proactive in assisting with identifying and recommending funding opportunities. The core team doesn't have decision making power concerning policies, budget, or appointments, but may make recommendations to the Board of Directors if needed. **It is responsible for implementing the organizational health strategic pillar.**



Charge

To support operations, implementation, and convening of partners and committees.

Draft Participant Make-up

CTC Executive Director, fiscal agent representative, Board of Director's Chair, and an additional Board member selected by the Executive Director.

Fiscal Agent

Responsibilities and Expectations

The fiscal agent is responsible for providing:

- **Legal:** a legal entity and ensuring practices are within the law and to review and sign agreements, grants, and contracts,
- **Finance:** Serve as the fiscal agent, including payment, grant management, and budget tracking
- **Human Resources:** Provide staff compensation, benefits, email and basic office equipment and access. Be the legal entity through which staff are housed.
- **Office:** Provide office space, computer, technical support, printing and other office supports as needed.

Any changes to fiscal agent status or move toward CTC becoming its own nonprofit will be made by the Board of Directors and take into consideration existing grant management obligations.

Members and Membership Council

Member Responsibilities & Expectations

- Members are expected to have active participation, including:
 - Participating in the majority of all member meetings
 - Serve on at least one working committee
 - Bring solutions
 - Understand context - learn new trends along with history
- Recruitment and promotion: Members are expected to promote the CTC and recruit new members.

Appendix A. Cleveland Tree Coalition Governance Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

- All members are responsible to help seek participant members who align with values of CTC & org types – see table).
- Promotion may include communications including print, electronic and social media. Members should share consistent CTC messaging.
- Members are also asked to coordinate on and communicate about grant applications.

DRAFT Membership Fee

CTC is committed to having an inclusive membership structure. At the same time, it is critical to raise money for basic costs, such as the salary of the Executive Director and other basic operational expenses. For this reason, the Board of Directors is exploring options for an inclusive membership fee structure, where no member will be turned away for the lack of ability to contribute.

Next steps: Discuss the basic structure with the Board of Directors and then send out a survey to gather member input. As part of this discussion, determine if CTC is open to community members being CTC members. Different member expectations may be needed. Based on board discussion and survey feedback, revise and approve by board.

Member Commitment

Individual members and organizations work to grow the canopy, and to support and make progress on CTC goals through their organizational and individual powers.

Member Council

Collaboration within the member council as a whole develops the broad-scale strategy, tracks measures, and adjusts strategies as needed. It is also an opportunity to share work and learn from each other.

The member council is to meet quarterly.



Membership Council Participant Make-up

All members are part of the membership council.

Member Make-up	
Values	Types of Org
Climate/Environmental	Non-profit
Equity – racial, social, economic	Profit
Community	Government
Health	Education
Forestry, biology	Community-based
Economic	Funders
Aesthetics (arts, architect)	Community members

Working Committees

Responsibilities & Expectations

Working Committees meet monthly, at least through 2024, and are focused on adaptively moving forward strategy implementation. Each committee has a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Chairs serve a two-year term for up to three terms and also serve on the Governing Committee. The Board of Directors will select the working committee chairs, and each committee will then select a Vice Chair and Secretary internally.

In addition, working committee members are:

- Information gatherers,
- Boots on the ground,
- Identifiers of best practices,
- Proposers of tangible outcomes to Executive Director and Board of Directors,
- Advisors to the CTC,
- Identify gaps so that ED and Board and develop strategies to fill
- Trackers of data collection and performance metrics,
- Outcome evaluators, and
- Recommenders to prioritize or adapt strategies to the Executive Director for implementation

Charge

The charge of the working committees is to advance the implementation of the strategic pillars and develop annual milestones.

Participant Make-up

Working groups are to be composed of members that have organizational mission and projects that align with the advancement and implementation of a strategic pillar or meet the needs for the committee to be successful. A member organization may have a maximum of two representatives on a single committee.

Meetings are open to members if they would like to attend a specific meeting even if they are not on the working committee.

Prioritized Next Steps for Governance

1. Current Executive Committee approves the Governance document and appoints the initial Board of Directors.
2. Develop organizational values; revise new mission and vision.
 - a. Helpful mission / vision resource is here.
 - b. Helpful resource with value examples is here.
 - c. Helpful coalition trust document that can also support values is here.
3. Develop and distribute member surveys to explore membership fees.
4. Codify membership fees into board policy
5. Codify overarching organizational policies (akin to bylaws) to be approved by the Board and to include values, mission, vision, and membership fee structure.
6. Develop an MOU between WRLC and CTC to be drafted by WRLC and approved by the Board
7. Develop and approve by the Board a conflict of interest policy and other policies as needed (e.g. harassment / discrimination, financial policies, etc.)