

U.S. Natural Climate Solutions Accelerator

Round 3 Finalist: Arbor Day Foundation

Initiative: Reforestation Hubs

NCS Pathway: Urban Tree Planting

U.S. Geographic Focus: Southeast, Northeast, Midwest, Northwest

15-Month Pilot Potential Cities: Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cleveland, New Haven, Detroit

The Arbor Day Foundation will develop and launch “**Reforestation Hubs,**” an innovative effort to minimize wood waste and bolster urban reforestation and management. The new initiative will mobilize public-private partnerships in major U.S. cities to turn urban tree waste into value-added wood products. Revenue generated from the upcycled products will be reinvested in tree planting and maintenance in the surrounding landscapes. The Foundation, in partnership with Cambium Carbon – a social enterprise focused on unlocking scale in urban wood economies - aims to launch 2-4 Reforestation Hubs during the 15-month grant term, provide a guidebook based on the lessons learned, and mobilize outreach to galvanize a pipeline of 10-15 additional cities in the planning stage to become Reforestation Hubs.

How it works: Reforestation Hubs will generate revenue from upcycling urban wood waste to create an ambition loop for reforestation. By creating a source of local capital, investing in nursery capacity, and engaging local businesses, residents, and policymakers they aim to drive tree planting and maintenance in urban centers and surrounding landscapes. Core elements of the project will include stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, and the development of partnership agreements to plan and launch Reforestation Hubs in pilot cities.

Innovative feature: The initiative aims to build an ecosystem of partners with clear roles and responsibilities, to develop partnership agreements with city governments, and to enter into offtake agreements for urban wood products to ensure cashflows for repayment. Cash flows generated can be utilized for tree planting and maintenance in cities anywhere in the U.S where there is an opportunity to restore trees to the landscape. By distilling a complex ecosystem of stakeholders into an easy-to-follow framework, the team aims to help tailor the Reforestation Hub model to the specific needs of each city.

Scaling/Replication: Reforestation Hubs can impact cities and surrounding landscapes across the U.S. Based on successful pilots, the team will develop a “Reforestation Hubs” guidebook to chart a pathway to scale in alignment with national NGOs. This guide will highlight success stories in the national media and will share lessons learned for stakeholders in additional cities to lay the groundwork for new hubs. Financial resources, earned media, nursery capacity, and NGO and government partnerships generated by Reforestation Hubs could be leveraged by local land trusts, landowner groups, national NGOs, and corporations to advance their reforestation-related goals.

Climate mitigation benefit: Cambium Carbon estimates that the initiative can sequester 5,591,264 aggregate tCO₂e over 10 years of projected landscape scale implementation. This estimate includes tree-based sequestration, landfill emissions diversion benefits, and energy savings.

Co-benefits: The initiative aims to generate energy savings, storm water benefits, urban air quality improvement, and landfill savings based on tons of waste diverted.