

Urban Heat Island Mitigation Grant Application Guidance

Table of Contents

Program Background.....	2
Program Summary	2
Section A: Application Instructions, Terms and Conditions	4
I. Minimum Qualification Requirement	4
A. Eligibility and Procedure.....	4
B. Overburdened Municipalities Defined	4
II. Instructions for Completing the Urban Heat Island Mitigation Program Application Form.....	5
III. Terms and Conditions	6
A. General Terms and Conditions	6
B. Evaluation of Applications and Approval of Projects	7
C. Milestones for Approved Projects	7
D. Submitting an Application.....	8
E. Use of Funds / Budget Guidelines	8
F. Use of Contractors.....	9
G. Considerations to maximize your project	9
Section B: Urban Heat Island Mitigation Application Guide.....	10
I. Signing Up for an NJPBU SAGE Account and Basic User Tips	10
II. Finding the UHI Program Application in SAGE.....	11
III. Filling out the Application – Information About the Entity	11
...For Municipalities	11
...For CBOs.....	12
IV. Filling out the Application – Required Attachments for CBOs.....	12
V. Submitting the Application	13
Appendix A: list of overburdened municipalities.....	14
Appendix B: Template for the Letter of Support (as required for CBOs)	14

Program Background

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (“Board” or “BPU”) established its first comprehensive Urban Heat Island Mitigation Program (“UHI Program”) to alleviate extreme heat impacts and further enhance resiliency in NJ’s overburdened communities (“OBCs”) in July 2025. The UHI program will employ community proposed interventions supported by frameworks in the 2019 State Energy Master Plan (“EMP”), Community Energy Plans, NJ Extreme Heat Resilience Action Plan, Priority Climate Action Plan (“PCAP”), and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (“RGGI”) Strategic Funding Plan. The goal of this program is to assist overburdened municipalities (“OBMs”) and community-based organizations (“CBOs”) in developing and implementing projects that address extreme heat and the urban heat island effect in communities disproportionately impacted by extreme heat, thereby advancing equitable energy and climate resilience efforts.

The Office of Clean Energy Equity (“OCEE”) now offers a Board-approved updated holistic UHI mitigation program focused on funding a diverse range of cooling strategies. These strategies complement existing efforts and are implemented in consultation with the DEP. The total UHI Program budget is \$5 million.

Program Summary

The UHI Program will provide OBMs and CBOs with funding to implement a range of projects in the following categories: (i) Comprehensive UHI Interventions - defined as large-scale revitalization projects that expand public outdoor cooling infrastructure (e.g., urban green spaces, street trees, shade structures, water features, and cool pavements); (ii) Cooling the Built Environment - defined as enhancing energy efficiency and energy resilience in public buildings that serve as community cooling centers and resilience hubs; and (iii) Urban Microclimate Interventions - defined as smaller scale community identified projects including but not limited to community gardens and place-based initiatives.

For category (i), applicants will be able to receive up to one million dollars (\$1,000,000) in funding for proposals aimed at revitalizing public spaces and parks through an integrated, whole neighborhood approach. These projects should include capital investments meant either to address infrastructure-related conditions that exacerbate the UHI effect or to help build community resiliency against the UHI effect. This can include large-scale tree planting

projects and establishment of water features in parks or cooling pavement; however, these are only examples and applicants are welcome to propose other projects that they think would better serve their communities. Eligible applicants include only overburdened municipalities.

For category (ii), applicants can receive up to five-hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) in funding for proposals aimed at improving cooling efficiency in public buildings through upgrades such as cool roofs and green roofs, geothermal heat pump installation, and weatherization. This category also includes projects aimed at enhancing resiliency through on-site energy storage systems (ESS), specifically battery storage systems. Upgrading and implementing energy efficiency, clean energy and energy storage measures in publicly accessible buildings such as libraries or community centers gives local community members the opportunity to seek relief from the heat while reducing their home cooling costs. Eligible applicants include only overburdened municipalities.

For category (iii), applicants can receive up to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in funding for smaller scale interventions for addressing UHI effect that have been identified at the community level. These applicants should have a letter of support from the mayor and/or any relevant elected municipal leader, in the respective municipality where the work will take place. Examples include but are not limited to establishing or expanding community gardens; improving bus stop cooling infrastructure; installing park benches with shading; beautifying spaces through greenery and creative place making; and implementing water stations. Eligible applicants include only community-based organizations.

The below chart demonstrates funding amounts, availability, and applicant eligibility.

Table 1: UHI Program Categories and Scope

Category #	1.	2.	3.
Mitigation Category	Comprehensive Public Space UHI Interventions	Cooling the Built Environment	Urban Microclimate Interventions
Number of Grants	Two	Four	Twenty
Eligible Applicants	Overburdened Municipalities	Overburdened Municipalities	Community-based Organizations

Section A: Application Instructions, Terms and Conditions

I. Minimum Qualification Requirement

A. Eligibility and Procedure

In order to qualify to receive a grant through the UHI Program, the Applicant must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. You must be either:
 - a. An overburdened municipality (as listed in [Appendix A](#) and described below) to be eligible for the Comprehensive Public Space UHI Interventions and the Cooling the Built Environment grants; or
 - b. A community-based organization, which may include local nonprofits, non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”), grassroots groups, and coalitions, to be eligible for the Urban Microclimate Interventions grants;
2. Submit a completed UHI Program application in full (application is located on the BPU’s application portal SAGE, as described in [Section B](#) below);
3. If you are a CBO, you must submit a letter of support from the mayor and/or any relevant elected municipal leader from the municipality where the work will take place

B. Overburdened Municipalities Defined

Overburdened Municipalities have been identified based on the below criteria:

1. The municipality has over 50% of its population living in an Overburdened Community (“OBC”) Census Block as defined by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to New Jersey’s Environmental Justice Law, N.J.S.A. 13:1D-157; and
2. The municipality meets either of the following criteria:
 - a. Over 35% of the population is living under 200% of the poverty level according to U.S. Census 2021 ACS data; or
 - b. The municipality has a distress score of 40 or higher according to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) [Municipal Revitalization Index](#) (MRI).

A list of Overburdened Municipalities is found at [Appendix A](#).

C. Project Location

1. For Comprehensive Public Space UHI Interventions (Category 1) and Urban Microclimate Interventions (Category 3), applicants are required to be within the public right of way or on land that is deed restricted (through the Green Acres Program, Blue Acres Program, or another program that provides deed restrictions on subject properties), or are required to provide a plan to deed restrict the land prior to the end of the grant term through the Green Acres Program, Blue Acres Program, or another program that places deed restrictions on subject properties.

- a. Qualifying urban heat island mitigation project locations include and are limited to: the right of way (ie. sidewalks, road islands/medians, bus stops), Green Acres properties, Blue Acres properties and other deed restricted land; or, if not currently deed restricted, land that will be deed restricted by the end of the grant term.

II. Instructions for Completing the Urban Heat Island Mitigation Program Application Form

1. All questions pertaining to the UHI Program application form should be directed to community.energy@bpu.nj.gov with the subject line including the words “UHI”, “Urban Heat Island” or “UHI Program”.
2. Each municipality applying to participate in the UHI Program must complete and submit the application form in full on the NJBPU’s SAGE website. Application guidance can be found in [Section B \(“Urban Heat Island Mitigation Application Guide”\)](#) below
3. Failure to complete all sections of the Application or to submit all required attachments will cause the Application to be deemed administratively incomplete. If by the December 15th deadline an application is deemed administratively incomplete, it will not be considered for the Program. In the event that there are future program years, the Application may be reconsidered.
4. Completed applications must be submitted through SAGE no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Time on the Application Period Close Date of December 15, 2025 to be considered.

III. Terms and Conditions

A. General Terms and Conditions

1. The “Applicant” is defined as an overburdened municipality or CBO that submits a UHI application located on the BPU SAGE website.
2. All applications must comply with all local, state and federal rules, regulations and laws.
3. By submitting an application, the Applicant acknowledges on behalf of all project participants that the information included in the application is subject to disclosure under the Open Public Records Act (“OPRA”), N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. Please review OPRA rules if an applicant would like to claim any information as confidential. Based on information received, the Board and/or other state, federal, county, regional or local agencies may use aggregated information in reports and evaluations, and the geographic location may be used to update Geographic Information System (“GIS”) mapping. Furthermore, the Applicant understands that the list of approved UHI Mitigation projects will be published on the Board’s website after such time as Board Staff (“Staff”) has selected all participating Applicants.
4. Amendments or supplements to the UHI application form will be made available via the New Jersey Clean Energy Program (“NJCEP”) website on the “UHI” page at <https://www.njcleanenergy.com/residential/urban-heat-island-mitigation-program>. This application form may be modified for future application periods at any time without prior notification to Applicants.
5. Applications that are deemed administratively complete will be considered for participation in the UHI Program. An application will be deemed administratively complete only if:
 - a. All questions are answered;
 - b. All required attachments are included; and
 - c. All required signatures in required documents are included.
6. Applicants will be notified if their application is deemed administratively incomplete and will have the opportunity to revise their application for no more than one week following the grant application deadline.
7. The Applicant may be required to supplement the information provided in the application form upon request from the Board or Staff.
8. Grant funding will be distributed following the receipt and signature of the grant agreement.
9. *After the application window has closed, Applicants are encouraged to check SAGE regularly (1-2 times each week) for updates on their application.*

B. Evaluation of Applications and Approval of Projects

1. Following the Application Period Close Date, an evaluation committee will review and evaluate each application.
2. As previously noted, applications will be evaluated for completeness to be considered for participation in the UHI Program. To be considered complete, applications from CBOs must have a written letter of support from the mayor or relevant elected leader in which the Applicant is planning to do the work.
3. At the Application Period Close Date, staff may reject applications that are incomplete or that do not meet a minimum standard for selection, as set forth in the UHI Program.

C. Milestones for Approved Projects

1. By accepting a grant of up to \$1,000,000 or \$500,000, an Applicant receiving such grant (“Grantee”) agrees to complete the following scope of work:
 - a. They must submit 11 quarterly financial reports over the course of the three (3) year grant term; and
 - b. One (1) final expenditure report at the end of the grant term (3 years)
2. By accepting a grant of up to \$50,000, a Grantee agrees to complete the following scope of work:
 - a. Awardees are required to submit seven (7) quarterly financial reports over the course of the two (2) year grant term; and
 - b. One (1) final expenditure report at the end of the grant term (2 years)
3. For all grants, upon project completion, the final performance report must include the following:
 - a. Required: Tracking community engagement and social impact by reporting the number of community members served, details on media that was used to get the word out through outreach campaigns (i.e. emails, flyers, and social media; frequency of outreach; total number of outreach efforts made), gathering survey responses to get feedback from the community, and assessing the reach of outreach campaigns.
 - b. Required: Completion status of interventions that were originally proposed in the grant proposal and the projected long-term benefits, i.e., project sustainability and co-benefit outputs. For example, and not by way of limitation, plans for long-term tree canopy maintenance to promote higher tree survivability for improved energy savings outcomes and maximized benefits.

- c. Required: Estimated data, through modeling or direct measurements, on the efficacy of cooling measures (e.g., temperature difference measurements before and after cooling modifications are implemented such as cool pavements or shading).
- d. Only required for Category 2 - Cooling the Built Environment: Details of energy savings or the change in utility costs for the resilience hub site from resilience upgrades through compiled data from over the course of a year and the number of days the resilience hub was in use in response to extreme heat events.

D. Submitting an Application

Completed applications must be submitted through the BPU’s SAGE website no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Time on the Application Period Close Date of December 15, 2025 in order to be considered for the UHI Program.

E. Use of Funds / Budget Guidelines

Overburdened municipalities are eligible to receive the grants of up to \$1 million or \$500,000 grants, for the Comprehensive UHI Interventions or the Cooling the Built Environment grants respectively. Community-based organizations are eligible to receive the grants of up to \$50,000 for the Urban Microclimate Interventions.

Within 60 days of the completion of the UHI Grant, any remaining unused funds must be returned to the Board. As previously noted, the Grantee must submit a final expenditure report and final performance report following project completion. If the project is completed at the end of the grant term, **the Grantee has 60 days from the Grant Term End date to submit a final expenditure and performance report to the Board.**

Sample Eligible Expenses	Sample Ineligible Expenses
- Stakeholder engagement costs (promotional flyers, survey distribution, venue reservation, etc.) - Staff time for planning, procurement and implementation of the project - Consultant costs (see “Use of Contractors” below) - Purchase of goods for implementation/installation (ie.	- Purchase of solar panels - Food/refreshments for stakeholder meetings - Construction or other work not related to a building’s energy efficiency and resiliency

Trees, heat pump for installation, green infrastructure such as cooling pavement) - Installation costs of equipment/resources (insulation, heat pumps, energy storage systems, trees, green infrastructure)	
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F. Use of Contractors

Contractors/consultants can be used for any project category, which includes the Comprehensive UHI Interventions, Cooling the Built Environment, and Urban Microclimate Interventions opportunities.

The role(s) for consultants will depend on the needs of the OBM or the CBO. If the OBM or CBO does not have capacity to manage the process, a consultant serving as project manager will be beneficial. If the OBM or CBO can manage all or some of the process, more funds are available for the consultant to bring technical expertise to undertake research to support planning for specific projects. Before deciding to hire a consultant consider:

- Capacity to complete all or some of the project with in-house staff and/or volunteer resources (green team or other community groups)
- Initiatives that will require specific (outside) technical expertise

If the Applicant intends to hire a contractor/consultant as a part of its project, the Applicant must state that in their SAGE application. Once the grant is awarded and the Grantee identifies the consultant, the Grantee must provide a copy of the written agreement with the proposed contractor/consultant.

G. Considerations to maximize your project

While all projects will be reviewed and scored based on the scoring criteria as listed in the Notice of Funding Availability, Staff recommend that applicants take into consideration the following for their projects:

For tree planting in a right-of-way:

- In a right-of-way, coordination with the owner of the right-of-way plot of land should be early on in the process; ideally before the project and project location is approved.

- Communicate with residents of the property in front of which the tree will be located, regardless of whether or not they own the land.
- Always call 811 and do utility mark outs before beginning the digging associated with planting.
- Research each municipalities' guidelines for tree planting near infrastructure (stop signs, streetlights, water/sewer lines, etc.).

For park expansion:

- Consider using existing open spaces, such as Green Acres or Blue Acres properties, to reduce spending on land purchase and maximize dollars spent on open space infrastructure (ie. trees, restrooms, food stands)

For community gardens:

- If you are in need of water infrastructure and are adjacent to a fire hydrant, consider getting a permit to use the fire hydrant for use of irrigation

Section B: Urban Heat Island Mitigation Application Guide

You will complete this application on the BPU's SAGE website. Applicants will be notified if their application is deemed administratively incomplete and will have the opportunity to revise their application for no more than one week following the grant application deadline. All questions pertaining to the UHI Program application form should be directed to: community.energy@bpu.nj.gov with the subject line to include "UHI", "Urban Heat Island" or "UHI Program".

I. Signing Up for an NJPBU SAGE Account and Basic User Tips

1. **How do I access the SAGE system?** Link: <https://njbpu.intelligrants.com/>
2. **Where can I find general guidance on how to use SAGE?** Use the [SAGE User Guide](#), which can answer things like:
 - a. How to set up an account;
 - b. How to find the grant you are working on; and
 - c. How to share the grant page with someone else to work on it.
3. **Do I have an account?** BPU's SAGE grant system was debuted in February of 2025. If you haven't signed up for an account since that time, you will need to do so now.
4. **Who can sign up for an account?** Anyone who is helping you fill out the application can sign up for an account. This could be a staff member, volunteer, or consultant.

5. **How long does it take to get an account?** It can take up to 3 days.
6. **Who can help me fill out the application?**
 - a. Your organization can assign different authorized roles to account holders. Only certain roles have certain powers, such as signing documents and submitting applications. For more information, see page 4 of the general [SAGE User Guide](#).
 - b. Your organization can give other account holders access to your application so they can help fill it out. See page 20 of the [SAGE User Guide](#) (under the “tools” section)
7. **Do I have to have a SAM Number for a UHI application?** No. A SAM number is a unique federal ID number given to those applying for federal grants. Where you see a box requesting a SAM number, leave it blank or use the suggested alternative.

II. Finding the UHI Program Application in SAGE

1. The “Home” page is the portal landing page. On the home page, you will see the dashboard. From this screen, the rest of the system can be navigated. In the Dashboard:
 - a. The “My Opportunities” panel allows the user to start grant opportunity documents such as applications. This will show a list of all eligible opportunities for the user to initiate.
 - b. “My Applications” shows the user active, required tasks that have been assigned to them.
2. Search for the application in the “My opportunities” panel
3. Select the grant opportunity name in the “Name” column. This brings up the document initiation agreement modal with information specific to the grant opportunity and the “Proceed” or “Cancel” buttons.
4. Select the “Proceed” button to initiate the application for the grant opportunity.

III. Filling out the Application – Information About the Entity

...For Municipalities

1. Applicant Information
 - a. Question 1: Applicant Agency Information:
 - i. Municipality
 - ii. County
 - iii. Mailing Address
 - iv. Zip code

- b. Question 2: Mayor's/Relevant Elected Municipal Leader's contact information
 - i. First/Last name, phone number, email address
- c. Question 3: Program Contact information (Business Administrator, Municipal Clerk, etc.)
 - i. First/Last name, title, phone number, email address
- d. Question 4: Primary Municipal Fiscal Contact for UHI (Municipal Treasurer, Finance Officer, Comptroller, etc.)
 - i. This may be the same person as the Program Contact
 - ii. First/Last name, title, phone number, email address

...For CBOs

2. Applicant Information

- a. Question 1: Applicant Agency Information:
 - i. Organization name
 - ii. County
 - iii. Mailing Address
 - iv. Zip code
- b. Question 2: Leadership in the organization's contact information
 - i. First/Last name, phone number, email address
- c. Question 3: Program Contact information (the lead person on the project)
 - i. First/Last name, title, phone number, email address
- d. Question 4: Primary Fiscal Contact for UHI (Chief Financial Officer, Treasurer, Program Lead, etc.)
 - i. This may be the same person as the Program Contact
 - ii. First/Last name, title, phone number, email address

IV. Filling out the Application – Required Attachments for CBOs

CBOs are required to submit the following attachments. The attachments will be submitted through the BPU's SAGE system.

Written Letter of Support from the Mayor or Relevant Elected Municipal Leader 1. The template is located in Appendix B. This is not required language, but rather an example.	☐ Yes ☐ No
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2. All applicants who are CBOS must complete the Letter of Support as part of their application. The letter of Support must be signed and certified. 3. The purpose of the letter of support is to affirm that the CBO has the approval of the municipality to establish their project for the benefit of the community.	
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Note: Additional attachments not reflected in the table above may be required and are identified throughout this application form.

V. Filling out the Application – Requirement for Categories 1 & 3 if the land is not currently deed restricted

If for Categories 1 and 3 the applicant is planning a project on land that is not currently deed restricted, the applicant must submit a plan for making the property (or properties) deed restricted before the end of the grant term through Green Acres, Blue Acres, or another program that places similar deed restrictions on subject properties. The plan must be included in the SAGE application under in the objectives section under the title “the project will provide long-term shading or cooling for future generations”.

VI. Submitting the Application

1. There will be a tab on the left-hand side of the window to submit application.
2. Once you submit, the system will let you know if there are any errors that need to be addressed.
3. You will get a confirmation if the application is submitted with no errors.
4. If anything else is needed for the application once it is submitted, the NJBPU will reach out to you.

Deadline: You must submit the application in the BPU’s SAGE system on December 15, 2025.

Appendix A: list of overburdened municipalities

Municipality	County	Municipality	County	Municipality	County
Asbury Park City	Monmouth	Gloucester City	Camden	Perth Amboy City	Middlesex
Atlantic City	Atlantic	Guttenberg Town	Hudson	Phillipsburg Town	Warren
Bayonne City	Hudson	Haledon Boro	Passaic	Pine Hill Boro	Camden
Beverly City	Burlington	Hamilton Twp	Atlantic	Plainfield City	Union
Bridgeton City	Cumberland	Hi-nella Boro	Camden	Pleasantville City	Atlantic
Brooklawn Boro	Camden	Irvington Twp	Essex	Prospect Park Boro	Passaic
Burlington City	Burlington	Jersey City	Hudson	Riverside Twp	Burlington
Camden City	Camden	Keansburg Boro	Monmouth	Roselle Boro	Union
Cape May City	Cape May	Kearny Town	Hudson	Salem City	Salem
Chesilhurst Boro	Camden	Lakewood Twp	Ocean	Seaside Heights Boro	Ocean
City of Orange Twp	Essex	Lawnside Boro	Camden	So. Toms River Boro	Ocean
Clayton Boro	Gloucester	Lindenwold Boro	Camden	Sussex Boro	Sussex
Clementon Boro	Camden	Lodi Boro	Bergen	Teterboro Boro	Bergen
Commercial Twp	Cumberland	Long Branch City	Monmouth	Trenton City	Mercer
Deerfield Twp	Cumberland	Maurice River Twp	Cumberland	Union City	Hudson
Dover Town	Morris	Millville City	Cumberland	Upper Deerfield Twp	Cumberland
East Newark Boro	Hudson	Mount Holly Twp	Burlington	Victory Gardens Boro	Morris
East Orange City	Essex	New Brunswick City	Middlesex	Vineland City	Cumberland
Egg Harbor City	Atlantic	Newark City	Essex	West New York Town	Hudson
Elizabeth City	Union	North Bergen Twp	Hudson	West Wildwood Boro	Cape May
Fairfield Twp	Cumberland	Passaic City	Passaic	Westville Boro	Gloucester
Fairview Boro	Bergen	Paterson City	Passaic	Wildwood City	Cape May
Flemington Boro	Hunterdon	Paulsboro Boro	Gloucester	Woodbine Boro	Cape May
Freehold Boro	Monmouth	Pemberton Twp	Burlington	Woodbury City	Gloucester
Garfield City	Bergen	Penns Grove Boro	Salem	Woodlynne Boro	Camden
Glassboro Boro	Gloucester	Pennsauken Twp	Camden	Wrightstown Boro	Burlington

b) The municipality has a distress score of 40 or higher according to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs ("DCA") [Municipal Revitalization Index](#) (MRI)

Appendix B: Template for the Letter of Support (as required for CBOs)

[MUNICIPAL LETTERHEAD AND LOGO]

Date:

To: The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, Division of Clean Energy

44 S. Clinton Ave, Trenton, NJ 08609

From:

Re: Letter of Support for the UHI Program Project: [PROJECT NAME]

To whom it may concern,

I [insert municipal elected leader] have agreed to collaborate with [CBO NAME] on a project that will mitigate against the urban heat island (“UHI”) effect [MUNICIPALITY/NEIGHBORHOOD]. The UHI effect impacts everyone but particularly those who are most vulnerable, and access to a cool and shaded environment helps alleviate against the strains of extreme heat. [MUNICIPALITY] and [CBO NAME] will work to ensure that a successful and sustainable project is implemented for the benefit of the people in [MUNICIPALITY/NEIGHBORHOOD].

[CBO NAME] and [MUNICIPALITY] are [AFFILIATION/NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP] and will do [DETAILS OF COLLABORATIVE EFFORT] to successfully implement [PROJECT TYPE]. Through this collaborative effort, [CBO NAME] and [MUNICIPALITY] will establish [PROJECT NAME].

Sincerely,

[MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL NAME]

[MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL SIGNATURE]