

Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition Operating Principles

August 2021

SUFC's Guiding Principles

SUFC Members understand the benefits of healthy urban forests include:

- Promoting human and community health and well-being;
- Sequestering carbon;
- Conserving energy;
- Helping with stormwater management and run-off, and ensuring clean water;
- Improving air quality;
- Boosting the economic health of communities by increasing property values, and improving business settings;
- Creating employment opportunities in local economies;
- Fostering neighborhood cohesion and solidarity, reducing crime and creating safe spaces for neighbors to interact;
- Making streets safer and communities more walkable; and
- Promoting and nurturing biodiversity in both built and natural ecosystems.

At the same time, urban and community forests face unprecedented threats from invasive pests, weather extremes, changing environmental conditions, and growing competition for high value land, which reinforces the need for continued public and private investment.

We also understand the following statements are fundamental to supporting urban forests throughout the US:

- Science-based research is fundamental to sound decision-making and the development of best practices for professionals, communities and private citizens;
- Research into the benefits of urban forests and the threats they face is more important than ever before for public managers, private industry, and individuals seeking to expand and protect their urban forest resources and improve the quality of life in their communities;
- Supporting sustainable urban forests requires an inclusive approach to communication, outreach, and research across multiple disciplines that intersect with urban and community forestry, including arboriculture, ecology, ecosystem services, human health, governance/civic engagement, and the interaction between people and natural systems; and
- Urban and community forestry projects are a long- term investment with differing requirements throughout their life-cycle and will often require ongoing citizen engagement as well as physical and biological monitoring, maintenance, and care.

SUFC Members, Advisers, Affiliates and Partners

Member

Voting membership in SUFC is open to national membership-based or non-profit organizations working to advance an urban and community forest agenda for our nation's communities. Each member organization in good standing may cast a vote on decisions that require Member input or have otherwise been put to a vote by the Steering Committee or SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair).

SUFC Advisers

The Coalition may have voluntary advisors, who provide input and ideas and participate in Coalition committees and activities because of their position or employer. Advisors are non-voting members, but may serve on Working Groups and support the Steering Committee as needed. Advisors serve 2 year terms, and renewals are subject to Steering Committee approval.

Affiliate Organizations

Local, state, and regional organizations with a demonstrated focus on urban and community forests can become SUFC Affiliates. Affiliates receive periodic communications from the Coalition, provide input through conference calls and other venues, and participate in SUFC campaigns to advance urban forests. Affiliate organizations are non-voting members, but may serve Working Groups and the Steering Committee.

Strategic Partners

Strategic Partners are financial supporters of the Coalition. These organizations often work closely with SUFC members. Strategic Partners are non-voting members, but may serve Working Groups and the Steering Committee.

Responsibilities

1. Each member, advisor, affiliate, and strategic partner will identify a designated representative (liaison) for purposes of participating in SUFC and if they are a voting member to vote on SUFC positions. Organizations may identify an alternate as well as additional representatives to work on SUFC activities. Each member organization will receive one vote regardless of the number of representatives engaged in SUFC business.
2. Members and strategic partners are required to pay annual dues.¹ A notification structure for dues will be provided to members and strategic partners.

¹ If a potential or current member is unable to pay the annual dues and would like to stay an active member of the SUFC, an alternative payment/arrangement may be negotiated with the Convener and approved by the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair).

Membership Engagement Expectations

1. A liaison from each member, advisor, affiliate, and strategic partner is encouraged to attend the Coalition Annual Meeting (usually held in Washington, DC).
2. Member, advisor, affiliate, and strategic partner organizations are also encouraged to engage in the business of the Coalition through participation in one or more committees (ad hoc or standing) or working groups. Organizations may choose to have more than one representative serve on multiple committees/working groups.
3. Each member, advisor, affiliate, and strategic partner should relay the business and work of the Coalition to their organizational membership and relay the interests of their constituency back to the Coalition.
4. Each member, advisor, affiliate, and strategic partner should respond to membership reporting requirements as requested.

Membership Approval and Termination

1. The Steering Committee will approve any request to join SUFC as a member, advisor, affiliate, or strategic partner.
2. Steering Committee may terminate a member, advisor, affiliate, or strategic partner for:
 - a. Failure to abide by Membership Responsibilities outlined above, including failure to meet engagement expectation or failure of a member or strategic partner to pay annual dues or make an alternative arrangement as outlined above; or
 - b. Engaging in harassing, abusive, or otherwise inappropriate behavior while participating in SUFC businesses or events.
3. The process for terminating relationships with a member, advisor, affiliate, or strategic partner will include a determination by the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair), in consultation with the Steering Committee. Any organization that is not in good standing (failing to meet the Responsibilities outlined above) will be notified. After written notification, the organization will be given 60 calendar days to comply before final termination by the SUFC Steering Committee.
4. Members, advisors, affiliates, or strategic partners may voluntarily withdraw from SUFC at any time by sending a letter to the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) outlining the withdrawal and effective date.

SUFC Governance

SUFC Steering Committee

principally responsible for fulfilling the Coalition's purpose and is accountable for the Coalition's overall operations and sustainability. The Steering Committee will be comprised of the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair), Working Group Chairs (and Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) and no more than 10 additional member representatives with a preference for those organizations who identify urban and community forestry as a priority. No organization shall have more than one vote on the Steering Committee, and no more than 2 people from any one organization shall attend a Steering Committee meeting without authorization from the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair).

Working groups provide advice to the Steering Committee on SUFC objectives consistent with a member-approved mission and goals. The Steering Committee sets these objectives, which are implemented by the Convener with oversight from the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair).

Steering Committee members serve a 2-year term.

Any SUFC member organization may serve on the Steering Committee. Two months prior to elections, the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) will request nominations for the Steering Committee from the SUFC Members (voting and nonvoting). Nominees must confirm to the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) that they are willing and able to participate in Steering Committee calls and meetings before being placed on the ballot. Slots will be filled by those candidates with the most votes cast by Members entitled to vote. Unexpected vacancies may be filled by email voting.

Working Groups

Working Groups provide the Steering Committee with suggestions and advice on SUFC objectives, which are later implemented by the Convener (if appropriate). Each working group has a Chair (or Co-Chairs) appointed by the Steering Committee. The Working Chair (or Co-Chairs) interacts with the Convener and the Steering Committee to assure each working group's focus aligns with the Steering Committee's vision and advances the SUFC mission and goals. Working Group Chairs (and Co-Chairs) are appointed by the Steering Committee to serve a 2-year term with the possibility of 3 consecutive terms. One of the Working Group chairs must be a member of the Steering Committee.

SUFC National Chair

The SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) oversees the Convener's day-to-day implementation of the objections set by the Steering Committee. The Chair serves a 2-year term with the possibility of 3 consecutive terms. The SUFC National Chairs (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) are recommended by the Steering Committee and approved by a simple majority of voting members. SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) must be affiliated with a dues paying member of SUFC.

Convener

The Convener (or Convener organization) manages the day-to-day operations of the Coalition, serves as the key point of contact for the Coalition to members and the public and is responsible for implementing tasks and overall operations of the Coalition as set by the Steering Committee with oversight from the SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair). The Convener facilitates structured and informal communications among SUFC partners, tracks and coordinates SUFC decisions and resulting plans, oversees all formal SUFC external communications, supports outreach efforts, acts as liaison and advisor to the Steering Committee, oversees subcontractors with fiscal agent on behalf of SUFC, and acts as central project coordinator and manager for the SUFC. The Convener position has been a contractual arrangement since the inception of the SUFC.

If the Convener is not able to fulfill grant services/obligations, the Steering Committee will step in to fill the void for an interim period until a new Convener is identified or an alternative solution is proposed. The Convener works collaboratively with the Steering Committee and reports directly to the Steering Committee Chair or Co-Chairs.

The Steering Committee is responsible for the process to select a Convener. Due to SUFC's federal funding, the process for selecting a Convener must conform to the applicable Office of Management and Budget regulations and be clearly articulated to the SUFC membership.

Fiscal Agent and Grant Manager

The Fiscal Agent and Grant Manager will oversee all fiscal matters including contracts and grants. They will, within the framework of their organization's operating procedures, comply with all applicable federal laws, rules, and regulations. They will work with the Convener and SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) to provide regular reports to the Steering Committee and an annual report out to the SUFC membership. A Memo of Understanding is to be signed between the two parties. The fiscal agent may require a fee for service.

Communication

SUFC will strive to operate by consensus of the members whenever taking a public position. When necessary, the coalition may use facilitated consensus dialogues to develop consensus recommendations.

The SUFC National Chair (or Co-Chairs, or Chair and Vice Chair) and Convener will be the primary spokespeople on SUFC's behalf. Whenever possible the Chair(s) and Convener will direct inquiries to the appropriate SUFC member.

Public communications based on approved positions and policies will be managed by the Chair(s) and/or Convener.

Public communication that is not based on approved positions and policies should be submitted to the Steering Committee for review and a determination of how it should be handled.