




**ROW
HWG**
2019



TREES & UTILITIES

A partnership of the Utility Arborist Association and the Arbor Day Foundation

Working with Contractors: Habitat-Oriented RFPs and Specifications

Objectives

- Revisit **key take-aways from panel discussion** that will help us find ways to incentivize habitat creation, enhancement, and management through contract mechanisms
- Develop a **wish list of tools, guidelines, templates, case studies, or other resources** that are needed to help organizations adopt better contracting practices to promote habitat
- **Identify and prioritize products** that the ROWHWG can create that will be broadly applicable to our diverse participants

“Green” Contracting

- Contracting mechanisms can be a tool to get habitat work done
 - Promote habitat instead of creating perverse incentives to remove habitat
 - Adopt practices to restore/enhance habitat
 - Scale up practices across system
- Revegetation + vegetation management/maintenance



Themes

- Flexibility
 - Empower the right people – don't stifle creativity or innovation
 - Avoid handcuffing or increasing exposure
- Find win-win outcomes that incentivize both ROW organizations (utilities/DOTs) and contractors
 - “Partners” not “contractors”
 - Share financial gains/benefits/risks among parties
 - Understand key drivers – “what’s in it for me?”
- Clear expectations
 - Coordinate with contractors on outcomes
 - Clear chain of command / who “owns” the process



Themes

- Competence
 - Creating and enhancing habitat on ROWs requires specialized skills, which may require additional training and competence-building by contractors over time
 - Can be mismatch between lowest bid procurement requirements and ensuring contractors have appropriate expertise
- Opportunities
 - Improve hand-off from vegetation establishment to maintenance
 - Multi-year contracts
 - Look to build capacity and level work load
 - Demonstrate buy-in from high level



Food for Thought

- How do we move habitat-oriented contracting towards “business as usual” as opposed to a “premium” service?
- What are 1 – 2 early steps the ROWHWG can take to help move this conversation forward?

Potential Outcomes

- It is easy to get excited about ROW as habitat when in a room full of positive support and energy, but it sometimes difficult to get buy-in or change a culture when you carry that back home
 - ✓ Tools: strategies to keep these efforts moving forward when resistance is encountered
 - ✓ Examples: Success stories or case studies
 - ✓ Guidelines: BMPs or recommendations
 - ✗ Spec book



Breakout

Identify the **TOP 5** items needed to help organizations adopt better contracting practices to promote habitat creation, enhancement, and maintenance



Breakout – Our Wish List

- BMP: Contractor accountability – Define vegetative cover
- **Tool: Template contract/boilerplate and deliverables, include in veg mgmt. plan**
- BMP: ROW org controlling inventory (seed, herbicide)
- BMP: Separate green contracts from general contracts; address delay concerns
- Disincentives
- Tool: Scoring system for contractor certification
- BMP: Multi-year contracts
- Tool/Template: Contract mechanism for extending/supporting handoff from establishment to mgmt.
- BMP: Involve contractors early in process (pre-bid mtg)
- Identify clear expectations based on “why” certain practices
- BMP: mandatory pre-bid mtg
- BMP: engage procurement upfront (ID qualified contractors)
- **Tool: define “green” contractor (ecological, habitat)**
- Programmatic “GGC”
- **Tool: habitat specification with visual aids / plant IDs (e.g., NRCS)**
- BMP: Push NRCS to develop standardize ecological site descriptions (DOT concerns)
- BMP: Long-range ROW mgmt. plan in place
- BMP: Leadership peer pressure/ bring to ROWHWG
- **BMP/Tool: Training/certification specification / pre-qual reqt. for contractors**
- BMP: training mechanism
- BMP: annual training/teaching/accreditation for contractors
- BMP: Data collection to inform process
- BMP: Reward documentation of enhancement activities in contracts
- BMP: Clearer communication to contractors where habitat projects have been performed
- BMP: engaging contractors in dialogue
- What/where are contractor meetings – go to them!
- BMP: share listservs where communicating contracts
- Reward excellence above adequacy
- Case studies for demonstration and analysis of success factors
- Webinars