



2017 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program

Established by SB 17-050

Background

During the 2017 legislative session the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill 17-050, which consolidates the Colorado Forest Restoration Grant Program (previously administered by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)) and the Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program (previously administered by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (CDNR)) into the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program, to be administered by the CSFS. This competitive grant program is designed to assist with funding community-level actions across the entire state to reduce the risk to people and property from wildfire in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), promote forest health and the utilization of woody material (including for traditional forest products and biomass energy), and encourage forest restoration projects.

All grant funds must be utilized on non-federal land within the state of Colorado. All applicants must contribute matching funds in an amount at least equal to the amount of funding requested, including through in-kind sources, for a dollar-to-dollar grant to match ratio.

The two types of projects identified below will be considered through this grant program:

1. Fuels & Forest Health Projects

Fuels and forest health projects must: a) strategically reduce the potential risk for damage to property, infrastructure, water supplies and other high-valued assets as a result of wildfire and/or limit the probability of wildfires spreading into populated areas; and b) promote forest health through scientifically based forestry practices that restore ecosystem functions, structures and species composition.

2. Capacity Building

Projects that address unmet needs for project implementation capacity at the local level through the purchase of equipment, also will be considered. Capacity grant applications should clearly describe how the equipment will be used and maintained to implement fuels treatments beyond the life of the initial project. Implementation capacity grants will be limited to 25 percent of the total available grant funds.

Note: Separate application forms are available for fuels and forest health projects and capacity building projects.

Additional Program Information

Requirement for Monitoring: While there is significant science supporting the value of fuels and forest health treatments for reducing wildfire risk and promoting forest resilience, forest ecosystems are dynamic and new fuels and forest health treatments continue to be developed. The effects of current and novel forestry activities need to be evaluated and the best method for achieving this is through monitoring on-the-ground efforts. Therefore monitoring is an important component of this grant program and will demonstrate the relative efficacy of various treatments and the utility of grant resources. The CSFS will work with successful project applicants to conduct project monitoring and certification site visits to assess effectiveness and completion of projects.

Strategic Proposals: Proposed projects must be strategic in nature in order to maximize the effectiveness of this grant program. Strategic proposals will be those that include such aspects as: implementation across land ownership boundaries; projects conducted within a priority area identified in the Colorado State Forest Action Plan (Colorado Statewide Forest Resource Assessment & Strategy) theme maps (*Conserve Working Forest Landscapes*, *Protect Forests from Harm*, and *Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests*); a previously completed Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) or FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan for the project area; projects that are part of a larger landscape-scale treatment effort; and/or projects in geographic proximity to U.S. Forest Service lands that have been recently treated or are planned for treatment. The Colorado State Forest Action Plan is a companion set of documents required by the 2008 Farm Bill to help guide where the CSFS directs resources to best focus forest management efforts and achieve desired future conditions, and is available online at: <http://csfs.colostate.edu/forest-action-plan/>. Approved CWPPs can be found at <http://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/colorado-community-wildfire-protection-plans/>.

County Level Coordination: Applicants must coordinate proposed projects with relevant county officials to ensure consistency with county-level wildfire risk reduction planning. The application should identify which officials were consulted, and the outcome of those discussions. All grant applications also should include a letter signed by a county official indicating support for the project. For purposes of this grant, permissible county officials include county commissioners, representatives from the sheriff's office and county wildfire coordinators.

Grant Program Criteria

The purpose of this grant program is to assist with reducing wildfire risk to people and property in the WUI and to promote forest health and support long-term ecological restoration. Applications must meet the following criteria:

1) Reduce Hazardous Fuels

Successful project applicants shall facilitate and implement strategic fuels treatment in Colorado at a meaningful scale in WUI areas at risk to wildfire. The Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (CO-WRAP) should be consulted in determining a given area's level of risk (using the default "fire intensity scale" layer); CO-WRAP can be accessed online at <https://www.coloradowildfirerisk.com/>. All projects should be designed to reduce the potential wildfire risk to property, infrastructure, water supplies and other high-value assets, and/or limit the probability of wildfires spreading into populated areas. Successful applicants will consider all the elements required to implement treatments on the ground, which includes acquiring necessary permits and consultations from forestry and/or wildfire experts.

Examples of qualifying project elements include:

- Creation of defensible space around homes and structures, based on the most current CSFS defensible space guidelines.
- Construction of fuelbreaks, based on the current CSFS guidelines.
- Fuels reduction beyond defensible space, designed to protect water supplies and/or reduce potential fire intensity.
- Removal of saleable woody materials with specific utilization plans; also the removal/disposal of slash including through chipping, mulching, grinding, pile burning, broadcast burning or mechanical removal.

2) Promote Forest Health

Projects should incorporate forest restoration and management techniques, based on current science and applicable to the forest type(s) being treated. Proposals should include existing ecological conditions and desired future conditions for project areas. Existing ecological conditions relevant to this grant program may include; highly erodible soils on slopes

that can impact water quality, over-stocked forests that increase wildfire risk, stands of unhealthy trees, reduced water yields and low species and structural diversity. The desired future conditions are what will be achieved through the accomplishment of goals or management activities that promotes the healthy function, structure and composition of essential ecosystem components. Essential ecosystem components may include: tree age and size class diversity, tree species diversity, desired forest cover and tree density in relationship to water quality and quantity and wildfire risk, and water quality associated with soil erosion.

Examples of qualifying project elements include:

- Reducing fuel loads and excessive competition among trees.
- Restoring ecosystem function, structure and species composition, including through the reduction of non-native species populations.
- Preserving older and larger trees to restore ecosystem function or for ecological value, based on scientific research.
- Replanting trees in deforested areas that have been negatively impacted by wildfire, insects and disease or other large-scale disturbance.

3) Utilize Forest Products/Woody Materials

Project applicants must include in their proposal a defined plan for removing and utilizing forest products/woody materials generated by the project, including as traditional forest products and/or biomass energy products. For further information on wood utilization, visit the Colorado Wood Utilization and Marketing (CoWood) webpage listed in the Supplemental Information section at the end of this document. In addition to CoWood, CSFS district offices are available to offer technical expertise to applicants in the development of forest products/wood utilization plans.

4) Support Implementation Capacity Through the Purchase of Equipment (for capacity building grants only)

Up to 25 percent of this program's total available grant funds are allowable to fund the purchase of equipment that will increase current and future implementation capacity for hazardous fuels reduction. Local governments, community groups and collaborative forestry groups with the resources necessary to implement on-the-ground fuels treatments may apply to purchase equipment that directly supports and expands on-the-ground opportunities to reduce hazardous fuels. Grant funds also can be requested to purchase equipment to build capacity. The application should include a specific explanation for how the equipment will result in on-the-ground results and how it will be maintained beyond the life of the project.

Items that support implementation capacity include:

- The purchase and use of equipment for implementation of hazardous fuels reduction treatments, including the removal and utilization of slash or other woody biomass (e.g., purchasing a wood chipper to be made available to the community).
- Equipment for the establishment and operation of neighborhood slash disposal sites.

Additional emphasis will be given to projects that contain the elements listed below:

Leveraged Resources and Collaboration

Projects should substantially leverage additional financial resources when possible, and/or be identified through a community-based collaborative process such as a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), Critical Community Watershed Wildfire Protection Plan or similar.

Partnerships with Youth or Veterans' Groups

Applicants are encouraged, where feasible, to utilize the labor of an accredited Colorado Youth Corps organization, operated by the Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) or an accredited Colorado Corps program serving veterans. Consider contacting one of these groups directly to determine if your project is a good fit for their labor pool. If you have been in contact with a group and it is determined that your project is a good fit, please provide a letter of support from either the CYCA or other affiliated organization.

Protection of Water Supplies

Projects that include forest treatments that result in the protection of water supplies also will be more likely to be accepted. This objective can be achieved by reducing the risk of wildfire to watersheds or to water treatment and/or storage facilities; and through forest management practices including, but not limited to: thinning, selective harvest, clearcutting, chipping, mastication and planting trees in deforested areas.

Examples of projects that DO NOT qualify for this grant program:

- Capacity building for fire preparedness and suppression (e.g., the purchase of fire department equipment)
- Creation of, or updates to, Community Wildfire Protection Plans or other planning efforts
- Construction of permanent infrastructure (e.g., of buildings or roads)
- Local, state or federal policy development or advocacy
- Projects undertaken by and benefiting only one individual homeowner/landowner
- Increased staffing or related capacity building for collaborative and/or community groups

Eligibility

The following individuals, organizations or entities may apply:

- Local community groups, including registered homeowner associations and formal neighborhood associations, that are within close proximity to the WUI;
- Local government entities including counties, municipalities, and special districts in or within close proximity to the WUI;
- Public or private utilities, including water providers, with infrastructure or land ownership in areas of high risk to catastrophic wildfires;
- State agencies, such as the State Land Board and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, that own land in areas of high risk to catastrophic wildfires; and
- Non-profit groups that promote hazardous forest fuel reduction treatment projects in partnership with local, state or private entities.

In addition, all applicants must:

- Be able to function as the fiscal agent and have legal authority to administer and/or implement treatments on proposed project area(s).
- Confirm that participating landowner(s) agree to reporting and monitoring requirements.
- Comply with all applicable federal and state environmental laws. Applicable Colorado Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) are required for project implementation, and can be found here: <http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/ForestryBMP-CO-2010.pdf>. Use of other BMP standards or guidelines must be reviewed and approved by the local CSFS district.

Budgets

General

An individual request may not exceed \$250,000 of program grant funding. Therefore an individual project budget may only exceed \$500,000 if matching funds exceed the required minimum 1:1 ratio (e.g., grant request is \$250,000 with required match of \$250,000 or more). Budget requests must be clearly explained in the budget narrative section of the grant application. A description of specific outcomes generated by the proposed budget and methods for successfully expending resources within the proposed timeline also will be required.

(Note: Grant funds cannot be used for volunteer labor, homeowner labor, personnel coordination or grant administration; however, those activities are valuable and can be considered as match.)

Proposals involving the purchase of capacity building equipment must provide a specific explanation for how the purchase will result in on-the-ground results and how these results and the equipment will be maintained beyond the life of the project. The expectation is that the equipment will be used and maintained by the awardee for a minimum of five years following the grant.

Matching funds

All applications will be required to demonstrate an ability to match the requested amount on a dollar-for-dollar basis with either cash, in-kind contributions, or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. The match may be in the form of private, state or federal support for the project. State funds may be used as match; however, no more than 50 percent of the applicant's matching funds can come from another state funding source. An exception is made if the applicant is a state agency, where more than 50 percent of matching funds can then come from a state source. In-kind contributions must be clearly quantified and justified in the budget narrative section of the grant application. In-kind contributions may consist of donated supplies, equipment, or volunteer time/sweat equity (based on hourly value). Donated time should be accounted for using current volunteer labor rates (\$25.96/hour per individual for 2017).

The CSFS estimates that approximately \$1 million is available for this grant cycle. Due to the highly competitive nature of grant programs, the CSFS reserves the right to award full or partial funding to successful applicants.

Reimbursements and Reporting and Monitoring Requirements

Successful applicants will receive a pre-award letter and will work with the CSFS to finalize approved project activities. Activities deemed to be unachievable may be modified or removed from the final award. Pre-award applicants will work with CSFS to obtain 'license(s) to enter' (permitting CSFS to enter private lands) and allow CSFS to conduct pre-monitoring site visits prior to beginning project work. Successful applicants will be reimbursed for actual (cash) costs incurred in implementing the project after the following requirements: 1) completion of project activities outlined in approved award letter, 2) providing documentation that project funds have been matched at a minimum ratio of 1:1, 3) submittal of reports and reimbursement paperwork, and 4) completion of project inspections conducted by CSFS.

All reports should include the following: 1) number of acres treated, 2) number of homes/home sites treated or affected, 3) cost per acre to treat, 4) amount of woody material generated, 5) number of jobs created, and 6) use of any forest products generated. At the completion of the project, a final closeout report must be submitted that includes: a summary of positive or negative impacts; digital "before and after" photos; and spatial/map data (e.g., shapefiles) for treated areas. Project inspections to ensure completion of activities will be conducted by the CSFS prior to reimbursements. Additional monitoring may be carried out by the CSFS. Successful project applicants will authorize the CSFS access to the project site for two years post-treatment to monitor the effectiveness of hazardous fuels reduction and forest health project activity.

How to Apply

Applicants should electronically submit (i.e., by e-mail) the attached grant application form and any additional attachments to the [local CSFS District office](#). Hard copies will not be accepted.

2017 Grant Cycle Timeline

Request for applications (RFA) release – Monday, Sept. 25, 2017

Application deadline – **Monday, Nov. 27, 2017, by 5:00 pm MST**

Anticipated pre-award date – Mar. 1, 2018

Final award/project start date – June 1, 2018

Project completion deadline – April 20, 2021

Proposal Evaluation / Scoring

Applications will be independently scored by an 11-member Advisory Panel convened by the CSFS. The valuation/scoring criteria used to score fuels reduction and forest health projects and capacity building applications are attached at the end of this document. The Advisory Panel, as mandated through SB 17-050, will recommend to the CSFS State Forester which proposed projects should be funded, and all final funding decisions are made by the State Forester.

Supplemental Information

Information about the WUI in Colorado and priority areas for wildfire risk:

<http://www.coloradowildfirerisk.com/>

Information on the Colorado Youth Corps:

<http://www.cyca.org>

Colorado State Forest Service guidelines for defensible space:

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/protect-your-home-property-forest-from-wildfire/#dspace>

Colorado State Forest Service guidelines for fuelbreaks:

http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/fuelbreak_guidelines.pdf

Maps of U.S. Forest Service land in the WUI:

http://apps.fs.fed.us/fsmviewer/index.html?config=public-config/r02_ColoradoActivities_01.xml

Forestry Best Management Practices to Protect Water Quality in Colorado:

<http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/ForestryBMP-CO-2010.pdf>

Information on forest products/wood utilization in Colorado available through the Colorado Wood Utilization and Marketing Program (CoWood):

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/cowood/>

Information on the Colorado State Forest Action Plan:

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/forest-action-plan/>

FOREST RESTORATION AND WILDFIRE RISK MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM

CAPACITY BUILDING SCORING SHEET

Final Score: _____ / 60

= _____ %

Applicant: _____

Application #: _____

Name of Project: _____

Reviewer: _____

Instructions for Reviewers: The scoring sheet tracks with the application. For each item, provide brief comments and a numerical score. When you have finished, please add up your final score in the upper right corner of this page.

1. Budget

(Sections C, D, E)

Score: _____ /10 pts.

Review both the budget breakdown and the accompanying narrative. Does the budget demonstrate a match of at least 50 percent of total project budget? Are expenditures clear, and have utilization revenues been considered? Do costs seem reasonable for the proposed work? Does the budget provide effective leverage for other funds?

2. Brief Project Description

(Section F)

Score: _____ /10 pts.

Is the project likely to be effective in reducing risk to identified objectives? Will the project achieve results at a meaningful scale? Does the applicant demonstrate an ability to fully utilize the equipment? Consider any maps included.

3. Capacity Building
(Section G)

Score: _____/30 pts. _____

Have the applicants been persuasive about long-term use and maintenance of the equipment, and provided details to explain this? Will it extend risk reduction into the future?

4. Partners and Supporters
(Section H)

Score: _____/10 pts. _____

Does the project maximize the use of partners and supporters? Review letters of support including those from the county level (required), and consider any plans to partner with Youth Corps or Veterans Corps.

FOREST RESTORATION AND WILDFIRE RISK MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM

FUELS & FOREST HEALTH PROJECTS SCORING SHEET

Final Score: / 110

= _____ %

Applicant: _____

Application #: _____

Name of Project: _____

Reviewer: _____

Instructions for Reviewers: The scoring sheet tracks with the application. For each item, provide brief comments and a numerical score. When you have finished, please add up your final score in the upper right corner of this page.

1. Budget
(Sections C, D, E)

Score: _____ /10 pts

Review both the budget breakdown and the accompanying narrative. Does the budget demonstrate a match of at least 50 percent of total project budget? Are expenditures clear, and have utilization revenues been considered? Do costs seem reasonable for the proposed work? Does the budget provide effective leverage for other funds?

2. Project Objectives, Description and Current Conditions
(Sections F, G, H)

Score: _____ /30 pts

How well is the project area defined (i.e., does it list participating landowners)? Consider any maps included: CO-WRAP and/or project map(s). Do the maps align, and what risk zone is the project located in? Are cost/acre numbers justified (e.g., based on current forest and market conditions)? Is the project likely to be effective in reducing risk to identified values?

3. Prescription and Scientific Foundation

Score: _____/30 pts

(Section I)

How appropriate are the standards and prescriptions to achieve the project and grant program’s objectives within the current forest condition? Do the scientific standards reflect best available information? Are applicable Colorado Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) addressed or discussed? Have applicants consulted with experts? Have CSFS guidelines been integrated? Are the prescription standards detailed and measurable?

4. Strategic Value of Project

Score: _____/10 pts

(Section J)

Does the project tier to a county plan, watershed assessment or relevant CWPP? Is it adjacent or in close proximity to other planned or previously treated areas? Are federal treatment areas applicable? Will the project achieve results at a meaningful scale?

5. Forest Product Utilization

Score: _____/10 pts

(Section K)

Do utilization plans appear to maximize the possibilities? Has the applicant corresponded with any wood products businesses? Are details provided?

6. Partners and Supporters

Score: _____/10 pts

(Section L)

Does the project maximize the use of partners and supporters? Review letters of support including those from the county level (required), and consider any plans to partner with Youth Corps or Veterans Corps.

7. Maintenance Sustaining Project Longevity

Score: _____/10 pts

(Section M)

Is there an appropriate plan to maintain the project after completion? Does the maintenance plan include details of who will accomplish maintenance tasks, how the work will be funded and how often activities will occur?
