



2021 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program

Established by SB 17-050

Background

The passage of Senate Bill 21-054 during the 2020 Colorado legislative session provided additional funding for the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) grant program, administered by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). The FRWRM program was created during the 2017 legislative session when the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill 17-050, which consolidated the Colorado Forest Restoration Grant Program (previously administered by the CSFS) and the Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant Program (previously administered by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (CDNR)). This competitive grant program is designed to assist with funding community-level actions across the entire state to: reduce the risk to people, property and infrastructure 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.

Projects

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 to purchase equipment that will address unmet implementation needs at the local level 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 (\$1,500,000 available in 2021 grant cycle).

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 higher priority area identified in the 2020 Colorado State Forest Action Plan (Subwatershed Priority Composite Map); 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 public lands that have been recently treated or are planned for treatment. The 2020 Colorado State Forest Action Plan is 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 in the Colorado Forest Atlas: <https://coloradoforestatlas.org/>. Applicants should launch the Forest Action Plan application to review the 2020 Colorado Forest Action Plan data and documentation. 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 must 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, county foresters or forestry staff or 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 2020 Forest Action Plan app in the Colorado Forest Atlas should be consulted in determining a given area's priority using the Subwatershed Priority Composite Map. The Forest Action Plan data can be accessed online at coloradoforestatlas.org.

The Subwatershed Priority Composite Map prioritizes areas that address combined themes of Forest Conditions, Living with Wildfire and Watershed Protection. The Forest Conditions Theme Priority Map evaluates threats such as insect and disease disturbance, canopy fire, and land use conversion. The Living with Wildfire Theme Priority Map evaluates wildfire risk including the wildland urban interface, drinking water assets, forest and riparian assets combined with burn probabilities. The Watershed Protection Theme Priority Map evaluates improving and maintaining quality of water and infrastructure by looking at infrastructure and predicted post-fire erosion rates. More information about this can be found at: <https://coloradoforestatlas.org/>. Applicants must launch the Forest Action Plan application and select the Subwatershed Priority Composite map to view and create a map of their project area.

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 or maintenance of defensible space around homes and structures, based on the most current CSFS defensible space guidelines.
- Creation or maintenance of fuelbreaks, based on the current CSFS guidelines.
- Fuels reduction, including prescribed fire, beyond defensible space, designed to protect water supplies and/or reduce potential fire intensity.
- Removal of saleable woody materials with specific utilization plans.
- The removal/disposal of slash and non-merchantable materials 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 and/or invasive 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, please consult the following: the Colorado Wood Utilization and Marketing (CoWood) webpage and the Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA) webpage, both of which are listed in the Supplemental Information section at the end of this document. In addition to CoWood and CTIA, CSFS field offices are available to offer technical expertise to applicants in the development of forest products/wood utilization plans. The Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA) is a source for information and forest product companies. It is **required** that wood utilization businesses or companies are consulted throughout the development of project proposals in order to identify effective forest product utilization plans.

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

Up to 25 percent (\$1,500,000 for 2021) 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. Applicable training and safety measures for use of equipment should be addressed.

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, fire protection districts and other 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 or are engaged in firefighting or fire management activities.

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 Field Office.

Budgets

General

The CSFS estimates that approximately \$6,000,000 is available for this grant cycle. The CSFS reserves the right to award full or partial funding to successful applicants.

An individual request may not exceed \$1,000,000 of program grant funding. Therefore an individual project budget may only exceed \$2,000,000 if matching funds exceed the required minimum 1:1 ratio (e.g., grant request is \$1,000,000 with required match of \$1,000,000 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 activities such as compiling paperwork; 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

Matching contributions 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 (\$29.50/hour per individual for 2021).

Legislative changes to the FRWRM program in the 2020-2021 grant cycle allow for grant funds of an individual project to cover up to 75% of the total project cost for projects located in areas having fewer economic resources. For all other project locations, grant funds will continue to cover up to 50% of the total project. All applicants must contribute matching funds in an amount of at least 25% (if in an area of fewer economic resources) or 50% (if not in an area of fewer economic resources) of the total project cost, including through in-kind sources.

The CSFS collaborated with researchers at Colorado State University in the Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics and the Rocky Mountain Research Station for assistance in defining and developing a social vulnerability index to wildland fire (WFSVI) in Colorado to address areas of fewer economic resources in the state. The researchers constructed the WFSVI using data from the 2016 American Community Survey (5-year average) with weighted categories for socioeconomic status, household composition/disability, minority status/language, housing/transportation and new equity variables. Applicants can determine if proposed projects are located in an area of fewer economic resources from the Colorado Forest Atlas Wildfire Risk Viewer. Additional background and information on the WFSVI can be found at <https://coloradoforestatlas.org/>. Individuals should launch the Wildfire Risk Viewer application and select the WFSVI layer for results and description.

Areas with Fewer Economic Resources

Applications with a project location partially or fully within an area of fewer economic resources as defined by the WFSVI will be required to demonstrate an ability to match the requested amount at 3:1 grant to match ratio with either cash, in-kind contributions or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions. Total project costs should be no more than 75% from the grant and at least 25% from match.

Areas NOT identified as having Fewer Economic Resources

All applications with project locations outside areas of fewer economic resources 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. Total project costs should be no more than 50% from the grant and at least 50% from match.

Revenue

Any revenue or cost offsets generated by the project must be explained clearly in the budget section and be factored into the grant request. For example, if the cost for treatment is \$3,000 per acre but utilization will decrease the cost to \$2,500 per acre; show the \$500 per acre as revenue, request funding based on the \$2,500 per acre, and explain the reasoning within the budget section.

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 provide electronic map boundaries of project areas such as shapefiles, kml, kmz, etc. and work with the CSFS to obtain 'license(s) to enter' (permitting the CSFS to enter private lands) and allow the 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 the 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 combined into a single pdf file to their [local CSFS Field Office](#). Hard copies will not be accepted.

2021 Grant Cycle Timeline

Request for applications (RFA) release – April 7, 2021
Application deadline – **May 19, 2021, by 5:00 pm MDT**
Anticipated pre-award date – July 19, 2021
Final award/project start date – August 16, 2021
Project completion deadline – September 30, 2025

Proposal Evaluation / Scoring

Applications will be independently scored by a 10-11 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 the respective application instructions. 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 Colorado and priority areas from the 2020 Colorado Forest Action Plan are on the Forest Atlas:

<https://coloradoforestatlas.org/>

Applicants should launch the Forest Action Plan application.

Information about Areas of Fewer Economic Resources (WFSVI) are on the Forest Atlas:

<https://coloradoforestatlas.org/>

Applicants should launch the Wildfire Risk Viewer application.

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

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 (Colorado Wood Utilization and Marketing Program):

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

Colorado Timber Industry Association:

<http://coloradotimber.org/>

Information on forest restoration of ponderosa pine and dry mixed conifer forests on the Colorado Front Range:

https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs_series/rmrs/gtr/rmrs_gtr373.pdf

Information on forest restoration in the Southwest:

https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr310.pdf