



2022-2023 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program

Established by SB 17-050

Background

Legislation during the 2021 Colorado legislative session provided additional funding and an expanded scope for the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) Grant Program, administered by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). The FRWRM Grant 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.

Projects may be located on one or more ownership types including private, state, federal, municipal, county, etc. All grant funds must be used on lands within the state of Colorado.

Eligibility

The following individuals, organizations or entities may apply:

- Local community groups, including registered homeowner associations and formal neighborhood associations, that are located within or are in 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 with high risk of catastrophic wildfires;
- State agencies, such as the State Land Board and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, that own land in areas with high risk of 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.
- Follow applicable [Colorado Forestry Best Management Practices](#) (BMPs). Use of other BMP standards or guidelines must be reviewed and approved by the local CSFS Field Office.

Qualifying Projects

The two types of projects include 1) Fuels & Forest Health and 2) Capacity Building. Separate application forms are available for the two project types.

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.

Fuels and Forest Health 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 of wildfire. To determine a project area's priority, the applicant should consult the Wildfire Risk Reduction Planner web mapping application within the [Colorado Forest Atlas](#). To access this application an account must be requested for the Colorado Forest Atlas. This account is free of charge and is usually approved within 24 hours of receiving the request. The 2020 Forest Action Plan Composite Priority Map theme will need to be enabled to view Colorado's determined priority areas and rankings.

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

- 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 by various appropriate methods, including mechanical thinning, prescribed fire, and others, 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 using methods such as 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 may 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 should promote 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 relation to water quality and quantity and wildfire risk, and water quality associated with soil erosion.

Examples of qualifying project elements

- 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

Capacity Building

Capacity Building projects will provide local governments, community groups and collaborative forestry groups with the resources and staffing necessary to plan and implement forest restoration and wildfire risk mitigation projects. Capacity grants will be limited to 25 percent of the total available grant funds (\$3.75 Million available in 2022-2023 grant cycle).

Capacity Building applications must meet the following criterion:

1. Increase Community Capacity

Successful applicants will describe how funding will support capacity expansion to plan and implement forest restoration and wildfire risk mitigation projects including community and partner outreach and engagement, identifying priority project areas, prescription planning and acquiring community equipment that will address unmet implementation needs at the local level. Capacity grant applications should clearly describe how the capacity building efforts will be sustained to promote implementation of treatments beyond the life of the initial project. Capacity Building projects that include equipment purchases should address applicable training and safety measures for use of equipment. The expectation is that equipment will be used and maintained by the awardee for a minimum of five years following the grant.

Examples of qualifying project elements

- The purchase and use of equipment for implementation of hazardous fuels reduction treatments, including the removal and utilization of slash and/or other woody biomass (e.g., purchasing a wood chipper to be made available to communities)
- Outreach efforts to plan forest restoration and wildfire risk mitigation projects, including project prioritization and project prescription development
- Increased staffing or related capacity building for collaborative and/or community groups that support planning and implementation of forest restoration and wildfire risk mitigation projects

Examples of projects that DO NOT qualify

- Capacity building for fire preparedness and suppression (e.g., the purchase of fire department equipment)
- Education and outreach efforts that do not directly lead to fuels reduction
- Construction of permanent infrastructure (e.g., of buildings or roads)
- Local, state or federal policy development or advocacy
- Projects undertaken by and benefitting only one individual

Additional Grant Program Criteria

Utilize Forest Products/Woody Materials

Project applications must include 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 . In addition to CoWood and CTIA, [CSFS Field Offices](#) offer

technical expertise to applicants in the development of forest products/wood utilization plans. The Colorado Timber Industry Association (CTIA) is a reliable source of 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. Links to these resources are provided in the Supplemental Information section.

Strategic Proposals

Proposed projects must be strategic in nature in order to maximize the effectiveness of this grant program. Strategic proposals will include aspects like these:

1. Implementation across land ownership boundaries.
2. Location within higher priority areas identified in the 2020 Colorado State Forest Action Plan* (Accessed in the Colorado Forest Atlas, Forest Action Plan 2020 or Wildfire Risk Reduction Planner applications with Composite Priority Map theme enabled).
3. Project areas with previously completed [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) (CWPP) or FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan.
4. Part of a larger landscape-scale treatment effort.
5. Geographic proximity to public lands that have been recently treated or are planned for treatment. Projects may be on federal lands so long as 1) the project maintains continuity (within 1-mile distance) across a landscape including federal lands and 2) the area of the federal lands does not exceed the combined area of the nonfederal lands involved in the project.

*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. Applicants should launch the Forest Action Plan 2020 application or the Wildfire Risk Reduction Planner application to review the 2020 Colorado Forest Action Plan data and associated documentation.

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.

Agreement for CSFS 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. CSFS-led long-term 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.

Additional Program Preferences

Preference will be given for applicants that include the following elements in their projects.

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, FEMA approved hazard mitigation plan or similar.

Adoption of Local Measures to Reduce Wildfire Risk

Preference will be given to applicants that are adopting local measures that reduce wildfire risks to people, property and infrastructure that complement funds provided through the program. Stronger measures shall receive greater preference while taking into account geographic differences and needs for mitigation.

Examples of adoption of local measures

- Existing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) or similar plans (current or revised plans less than 5 years old receive greater preference)
- Adoption of, or plans to adopt, county or local building codes for wildfire mitigation
- Wildfire Mitigation Overlay Zoning (if existing would receive higher preference)
- Participation in [Firewise USA®](#) program
- Demonstrated ongoing citizen outreach and education about wildfire risk
- Hazard mitigation planning
- Forest management planning and implementation
- Existing slash/mulch collection or chipping programs

Partnerships with Youth or Veterans' Groups

Applicants are encouraged, where feasible, to use 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 its labor pool. If you have been in contact with a group and it is determined that your project is a good fit, provide a letter of support from either the CYCA or other affiliated organization.

Protection of Water Supplies

Projects that include forest treatments that also result in the protection of water supplies will be more likely to be accepted. This objective can be achieved by 1) reducing the risk of wildfire to watersheds or to water treatment and/or storage facilities and 2) through forest management practices including, but not limited to thinning, selective harvest, clearcutting, chipping, mastication and planting trees in deforested areas.

Budgets

General

The CSFS estimates that approximately \$15 Million is available for the 2022-2023 grant cycle. The CSFS reserves the right to award full or partial funding to successful applicants.

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 is 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.)

Matching funds

Matching contributions may be in the form of private, local government, state or federal support for the project. State funds may be used as match; however, no more than 50% 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 (\$30.31/hour per individual for 2022).

The FRWRM program allows 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 may 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.

Researchers at Colorado State University in the Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics and the Rocky Mountain Research Station assisted the CSFS in defining and developing a social vulnerability index to wildland fire in Colorado to address areas of fewer economic resources in the state. Applicants can determine if proposed projects are located in an area of fewer economic resources using the Colorado Forest Atlas web mapping applications. The Social Vulnerability Index map layers are found within the Reference Layers section of both the Wildfire Risk Viewer and the Wildfire Risk Reduction Planner applications. Additional background and information on the Social Vulnerability Index layer can be found at <https://coloradoforestatlas.org/>. Individuals should launch one of these applications and enable the Social Vulnerability Index map layer for results and descriptions.

Areas with Fewer Economic Resources

Applications with a project location partially or fully within an area of fewer economic resources as defined by the Social Vulnerability Index 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, then 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, 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. During the pre-award process 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 the approved minimum ratio, 3) submittal of reports and reimbursement paperwork, and 4) completion of project inspections conducted by the CSFS.

At the completion of the project, a final report will be required. The final report for Fuels & Forest Health projects should have a narrative of accomplishments that includes the following:

- number of acres treated
- cost per acre to treat
- amount of woody material generated
- number of jobs created
- use and value of any forest products generated
- digital “before and after” photos
- spatial/map data (e.g., shapefiles) for treated areas

The final report for Capacity Building projects should have a narrative of accomplishments that includes the following applicable items:

- number of community or partner engagements
- type of audience and number of attendees
- number of projects developed and/or prescriptions written
- number of jobs created
- digital photos of events or equipment
- spatial/map data (e.g., shapefiles) for planning areas

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 treatments.

Successful applicants will be asked to share their grant award(s) through a local press release. Press release templates and program talking points will be made available by the CSFS for applicants to use.

How to Apply

Applicants should combine grant application and allowable supporting documents into single pdf and submit via email to their [local CSFS Field Office](#). Hard copies will not be accepted.

2022-2023 Grant Cycle Timeline

Request for applications (RFA) release – August 17, 2022
Application deadline – **October 19, 2022, by 5:00 pm MDT**
Anticipated pre-award date – January 31, 2023
Final award/project start date – March 31, 2023
Project completion deadline – March 31, 2027

Proposal Evaluation / Scoring

Applications will be independently scored by a Technical Advisory Panel convened by the CSFS. The valuation/scoring criteria used to score Fuels & Forest Health and Capacity Building applications included in 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 the State Forester makes all final funding decisions.

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 (Social Vulnerability Index) are on the Forest Atlas:

<https://coloradoforestatlas.org/>

Applicants should launch the Wildfire Risk Viewer or Wildfire Risk Reduction Planner applications and enable the Social Vulnerability Index map layer.

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