



Rural Grant Navigator Grant Program

2025 Report

*Prepared for the Wildfire Matters Review Committee or to the House of Representatives Agriculture, Water, & Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
Feb. 20, 2026*

Purpose of report

To update the Wildfire Matters Review Committee, or if the committee no longer exists, the House of Representatives Agriculture, Water, & Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, annually on information regarding the Rural Grant Navigator (RGN) Grant Program administered by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), as required in House Bill 24-1006.

Background

The RGN Grant Program was created through House Bill 24-1006, identifying CSFS as the agency to develop criteria and guidelines for the program. This competitive grant program provides state funding assistance to non-governmental organizations (NGO) that provide assistance to rural communities in Colorado seeking to apply for federal or state grants related to wildfire mitigation and preparedness. The program is designed to deliver grant money for NGO organizations providing outreach and technical assistance, including grant writing assistance, to rural communities seeking to apply for federal or state grants related to wildfire mitigation and preparedness. Approximately \$237,000 in funding is available for the 2025 3-yr grant cycle.

RGN grant process

The CSFS application window was from Feb. 28, 2025 – May 2, 2025, with applicants electronically submitting the application form and allowable attachments as a single PDF. The project start date for awardees was approximately July 2, 2025. The project completion deadline is June 30, 2028.

Eligible NGOs include, but are not limited to, nonprofit organizations or any scientific, research, professional, business, or public-interest organization that is neither affiliated with nor under the direction of the U.S. government or any state or local government are eligible to apply for grant

funding. Examples include regional and local collaboratives, wildfire councils, consultants, nonprofits, fire departments, and universities/colleges. Additional eligibility factors for interested applicants:

- The ability or a history of supporting rural communities in more than one Colorado county.
- Familiarity with wildfire mitigation and preparedness grants offered from federal or state sources.

All applicants must be able to function as the fiscal agent, and nonprofits must be registered and in good standing with the Secretary of State's Office.

Qualifying projects must provide outreach and/or technical assistance to rural communities in Colorado seeking to apply for federal or state grants related to wildfire mitigation and preparedness. Project examples include assessing funding opportunities, training personnel in grant management practices, and grant writing assistance. Efforts involving non-federal or non-state funding sources and those that are not specific to wildfire mitigation or preparedness are unallowable.

A rural community to be served is defined as any municipality, town, or unincorporated area in Colorado that meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. Population-Based
 - Fewer than 25,000 residents (latest U.S. Census).
 - Located outside an urbanized area (U.S. Census Bureau).
2. Geographic & Economic Factors
 - Classified as rural by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.
 - Population density under 100 people/sq. mile.
 - Limited access to infrastructure, public services, or economic resources.

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 will be required. Examples of allowable costs include staff time, outreach, travel, and technical assistance.

Applications were independently scored through a competitive scoring process by the CSFS.

2025 RGN grant cycle summary

The CSFS received 11 RGN applications, requesting a total of \$978,393 in funding, shown in Table 1. Through a competitive scoring process, CSFS issued awards to 3 applicants totaling \$236,650, shown in Table 2. Partial funding was awarded to align with the bill's intent and optimize rural grant assistance outcomes. Award amounts were determined based on a calculated percentage of available funds in correlation with the applicants' competitive score ratings.

2025 RGN awarded project details

1. Roaring Fork Wildfire Collaborative (RFWC)
 - RGN funding has helped advance RFWC's initiative to bolster rural wildfire mitigation and preparedness in northwestern Colorado through the strategic and collaborative strengthening of grant capacity. In coordination with key regional partnerships, including

Eagle Valley Wildland, Grand Lake Fire Protection District, Summit County Wildfire Council, and the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, efforts will focus on targeted grant outreach, writing assistance, and training programs.

- o A portion of RGN funds will be dedicated to RFWC capacity building, aimed at improving operational effectiveness, while other funds will be allocated to further enhance services by subcontracting specialized expertise for additional grant navigation support, funding strategy development, grant assistance, and technical training.

2. Fire Adapted Colorado (FACO)

- a. RGN funding has supported FACO in providing free, comprehensive statewide grant navigation services to assist rural communities with essential funding resources for wildfire mitigation and preparedness initiatives. FACO's outreach efforts extend statewide, expanding access to grant awareness and support for rural communities across Colorado.
- b. RGN funds also added contractor capacity for the effective management and administration of grant support efforts, further strengthening FACO's ability to provide grant assistance to rural communities. This includes an initial partnership with the experienced development team at the Community Resource Center to offer wildfire-related grant training, mentoring, and technical assistance.
- c. This year, FACO developed a statewide intake and tracking system to streamline grant-related processes, coordinated with state agency grant managers, launched targeted outreach to expand awareness of and access to funding opportunities, and responded to five initial requests for grant assistance. One Rural Grant Navigator relationship led to an additional partnership to help Custer County complete their Community Wildfire Protection Plan update in time to apply for the last round of USFS Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) funding.

3. Middle Colorado Watershed Council (MCWC)

- a. RGN funding has supported MCWC in securing technical grant writing assistance, facilitating the growth of its Colorado River Wildfire Collaborative (CRWC) program. This program engages directly with rural communities' wildfire mitigation and preparedness initiatives in western Garfield County.
- b. The enhanced capacity from RGN funds not only increased program staffing and technical grant faculty, it also facilitated the successful award of a 2026 Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) grant, where funds will be used to hire a CRWC Program Manager for a three-year period. This position will lead and administer the program, which provides direct support for rural communities in funding and grant assistance, prioritizing and implementing wildfire resilience projects, outreach and education efforts, managing grants, and coordinating contractors and partners.
- c. As part of a strategic modification of RGN awards funded, a portion of the award was leveraged as match for the FRWRM grant to further support these capacity-building efforts, enabling the CRWC program to strengthen its comprehensive support in grant-related wildfire mitigation access in western Garfield County's rural communities.

Table 1. 2025 RGN Applicants

2025 RGN Applicants

Applicant	Amount Requested	Project Name	County	Eligibility Status
Big Thompson Watershed Coalition	106,375.00	Big Thompson Watershed Coalition Forestry Program Capacity Growth	Larimer	Eligible
Climate Adaptation Center (Rocky Mountain Chapter)	\$230,000.00	Building Rural Climate Risk Awareness and Adaptation Capacity	Mesa	Eligible
Coalitions and Collaboratives, Inc.	\$109,010.80	Colorado Community Navigators	Denver	Eligible
Fire Adapted Colorado	\$115,000.00	Grant navigation and capacity building for wildfire resilience	Montezuma	Eligible
ISET International	\$20,308.00	Capacity Building for Wildfire Risk Reduction	Boulder	Eligible
Lost Ranger Wildfire Mitigation Services	\$60,000.00	Northwest Colorado Wildfire Mitigation and Forest Health Grant Support	Routt	Eligible
Melanie Gaylord	\$14,000.00	Giant's Heart Wildfire Project, Empowering Rural Resilience	Larimer	Ineligible
Middle Colorado Watershed Council	\$70,500.00	Colorado River Wildfire Collaborative	Garfield	Eligible
North Routt Fire Protection District	\$48,200.00	North Routt FD Grant Support	Routt	Eligible
Roaring Fork Valley Wildfire Collaborative	\$175,000.00	The Colorado High County Rural Grant Navigator Program	Garfield	Eligible
Southern Park County Fire Protection District	\$30,000.00	Fire Mitigation	Park	Ineligible

Table 2. 2025 RGN Awardees

2025 RGN Awards by Competitive Score Rating				
Awardees	Amount Requested	Partial Funds Awarded	Percent of Funding Request Received	Project Location/s (by county)
Roaring Fork Valley Wildfire Collaborative	\$175,000	\$120,750.00	69%	Summit County, Grand County, Garfield County

Fire Adapted Colorado	\$115,000	\$73,600.00	64%	Montezuma, Statewide
Middle Colorado Watershed Council	\$70,500	\$42,300.00	60%	Garfield County

Figure 1. 2025 RGN Applicant and Awardee by County

