

## FY2024 Western Wildland Urban Interface Grant Program<sup>1</sup> Criteria and Instructions to States/Island Territories

In the West, funds to mitigate risk from wildland fire within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are available and awarded through a competitive process with emphasis on hazard fuel reduction in the WUI, information and education, assessment and planning, and monitoring through community and landowner action. Funding is delivered through and managed by state/island forestry organizations. This portion of the National Fire Plan was developed to assist interface communities manage the unique hazards they find around them. In addition to the National Fire Plan, the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy brings forward the goals of Resilient Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, and Safe and Effective Wildfire Response; the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition strategies of Conserve, Protect, and Enhance are incorporated into individual states' Forest Action Plans.

Reducing wildfire risk in the west will be strongly influenced by the ability to collaborate across ownership boundaries and implement projects on a landscape scale.



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### **Grant Criteria: General**

- The Project must be for a qualifying activity - if it is not the application will be considered ineligible.
- Meets the 50/50 match requirement<sup>2</sup>- if not the application will be considered ineligible.
- Each grant request is limited to a maximum of \$300,000. Applications over \$300,000 will be considered ineligible.
- No state/island will receive more than 15% of the funds available in the west.

<sup>1</sup> Supported by National Fire Plan Funding through the State and Private Forestry Branch, USDA Forest Service. Administered through the Council of Western State Foresters, Western State Fire Managers WUI Subcommittee

<sup>2</sup>A 50/50 match. The allocated grant amount must be matched in full by the recipient using a **non-federal source**. Exception: Title III funds under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, PL 106-393 are not considered federal dollars and may be used as match. The matching share can be soft match (which includes training hours valued at an accepted rate, donated labor/equipment, etc) and/or hard match (which is actual dollars spent other than federal grant funds within the specified scope of work.) If the project is part of the consolidated payment grant, matching funds can be combined or met from any one or all program areas. The Pacific Islands (excluding Hawaii) are exempt from the 50/50 match up to \$500,000 by statute. Anything in excess of \$500,000 requires 50/50 match for Pacific Island applications.

- Not less than 70% of the funding available will be allocated to hazardous fuel reduction projects.
- The application must be submitted by the state/island forestry organization. The state/island organization will be listed in Box 1 (Applicant Information) on the online application.
- The grant request must be submitted using the WUI Competitive Grant Online Submission System.
- Funds cannot be used on federal lands.

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## **Grant Criteria: Qualifying Project Types**

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### **1) Reduce Hazardous Fuels / Restore Fire-adapted Ecosystems in the wildland urban interface (WUI):**

Fuel reduction projects and vegetation treatments have been identified as a means of mitigating wildfire hazards. Recipients shall facilitate and implement mitigating fuel treatments in or adjacent to identified fire prone communities to reduce the threat of wildfire to communities. These are projects that remove or modify fuels in and/or adjacent to WUI development. Effective fuels mitigation treatments can be implemented across jurisdictional boundaries, on adjoining private lands, or within the respective communities. Projects of this type include fuel breaks, thinning, pruning, landscape modifications, etc. The overall purpose is to modify or break up the fuels in such a way as to lessen catastrophic fire and its threat to public and firefighter safety and damage to property. Another way to prevent future large, catastrophic wildfires from threatening communities is by carrying out appropriate treatments (such as prescribed burning or thinning) to restore and rehabilitate forest and grassland health in and adjacent to the WUI. Such treatments have reduced the severity of wildfires, and may have additional desirable outcomes, such as providing sustainable environmental, social and economic benefits. Project proposals must consider all elements required to implement treatments on the ground, which includes acquiring the necessary permits and consultations needed to complete plans and assessments, as well as treatment prescriptions and measures of success.

#### **Examples of projects that qualify (not all inclusive):**

- Defensible space around homes and structures
- Shaded fuel breaks
- Fuels reduction beyond defensible space adjacent to WUI areas
- Removal of slash including piling and burning; mulching; grinding; etc.
- Prescribed fire
- Thinning
- Maintenance of **non-federally funded** fuels projects (explain in application narrative)
- Monitoring components of projects for effectiveness

### **2) Improve Prevention/Education in the Interface:**

Recipients can provide leadership to coordinate, develop, and distribute wildland urban interface education programs in association with insurance companies, communities, local government agencies, and other partners. Informational and educational projects must target mitigation of risk and prevention of loss. Projects should lead to the use or establishment of one or more fire program elements such as fire safety codes, implementation of Firewise practices, establishing local fire safe councils, and fuels treatments within fire prone

communities. Projects should be concise and clearly demonstrate deliverables and measures of success of prevention/education activities.

**Examples of projects that qualify (not all inclusive):**

- Firewise or similar programs
- Fire education components to Project Learning Tree
- Pamphlets, brochures, handouts

**3) Planning:**

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are created by local communities and may address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, structure protection, or a combination of the above. The process of developing these plans can help a community clarify and refine its priorities for the protection of life, property, and critical infrastructure in the wildland-urban interface. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) minimum requirements for a CWPP are: 1) Collaboration (must be developed with community members, local and state government representatives in collaboration with federal agencies and other interested stakeholders), 2) Prioritized Fuel Reduction (plan must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment), and 3) Treatment of Structural Ignitability (must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed in the plan). A copy of the CWPP Handbook can be found at <http://www.communitiescommittee.org/pdfs/cwpphandbook.pdf> .

**Examples of projects that qualify (not all inclusive):**

- Creation of/or update to CWPP/hazard mitigation plans or equivalent document. Note: If applying for funds to update an existing CWPP be sure to address the following in your application:
  - Accomplishments: Explain what projects identified in the original CWPP have been completed.
  - Collaboration: Identify new partners and stakeholders along with updated contact information.
  - Prioritized Fuel Reduction: Identify and prioritize new hazardous fuels reduction projects, the method of treatments to be employed, and how these projects address any changes to the community objectives and values at risk.
  - Treatment of Structural Ignitability: Explain new or additional measures to be implemented to reduce homeowner and/or community ignitability of structures.
- Priority projects listed in existing CWPPs covering the above criteria.

4) **Examples of Projects that DO NOT Qualify (not all inclusive):**

- **Maintenance on previous federally funded fuels projects**
- Preparedness and suppression capacity building; such as purchase of fire department equipment (try VFA, DHS and FEMA grant programs)
- Small business start-up funding
- Research and development projects (try Economic Action Program)
- GIS and database systems that are not related to the West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment
- Construction/Infrastructure (building remodel, bridges, road construction, water development)

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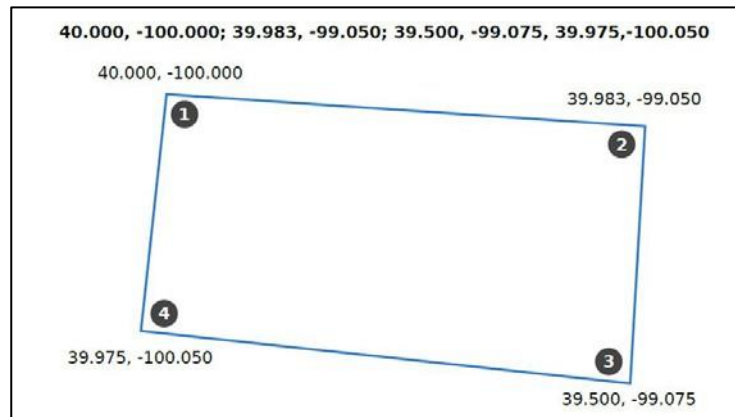
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## **Grant Scoring:**

- All grants will be scored based on the following criteria; applicants must ensure that all boxes are filled in and the application is complete (**the highest possible score is 45**):
  - **Does the application clearly show how the budget will be spent by line item and are expenditures applicable and relevant to the goals and objectives of the project?**  
Clearly defined and applicable = 5                      Not defined/not applicable to project = 0
  - **Describe the Project- Does the application clearly describe the challenges and issues that articulate why the project is important?**  
Clearly defined = 5    Not defined = 0
  - **Planning Linkages- Does the application clearly link or tie the project to an existing Community Wildfire Protection Plan and is the project consistent with the state Forest Action Plan(s) (Enhancing, Protecting and or Conserving). Does the project develop or refine an existing plan?**  
Clearly defined = 5    Not defined = 0
  - **Project Activities- Does the application clearly define what the project is and what the project proposes to do? Does the application clearly define how the project will be accomplished, including identifying measurable outcomes? (are the proposed activities clear and achievable, goals defined, outcomes measurable, # of acres treated, # of education/outreach programs, planning/assessment efforts clearly described etc.)**  
Clearly defined = 10    Not defined = 0
  - **Landscape Impacts- Does the application clearly define the scale of the project including relationships with past, present, or future projects that, when combined, offer more benefits than when taken individually? Is overall landscape that the project influences, in addition to the defined project area, clearly described?**  
Clearly defined = 5    Not defined = 0
  - **Collaboration- Does the application clearly define collaborative elements including support from partners, agencies, landowners, communities? Are contributions of collaborators well described?**  
Clearly defined = 5    Not defined = 0



**Area:** An area defines a region with a boundary defined by straight lines. At least 3 points are needed to define an area. There can be up to 7 lat/longs. The diagram below shows how to specify the corners for an area and the associated coordinate list to be entered into the application. The area name, boundary lat/longs, and description are all **required** fields for an area.



- **Box 3** - Match includes training hours valued at an accepted rate, donated labor/equipment, etc., and hard match is actual dollars spent other than federal grant funds within the specified scope of work. Federal funds contributed are ineligible for match calculation. Indirect costs must be tied to an established rate and the source needs to be described in the narrative (Box 4). Waived indirect costs are an acceptable source of match.
  - **Box 4** - The budget narrative must describe how the grant funds will be spent. Give specific details for each grant expenditure item in Box 3 (i.e. personnel/labor, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, other, and indirect costs). Explain exactly how grant dollars will be spent and how these expenditures tie directly to the project goals and objectives. **Description of match is not required in Box 4.** Match should be described in Box 9.
  - **Box 5** - Describe both the project area, type, and challenges. There are three types of projects: fuels, education/prevention, and planning/assessment. Projects may include one or more project types. Applicants must give an overview of the project area, identify the hazards that exist and clearly show the need for work in this area. Be specific when describing challenges or obstacles that will need to be addressed for the project to be successful. If applying for a fuels reduction project, describe the fuel/vegetation types.
- It is important to define the problems and challenges so when you get to Box 7 you are clearly stating how the funding will be used to address the challenges in this box.
- **Box 6** - Describe the relationship to Forest Action Plan **and** to a CWPP. Must clearly describe how the project fits into the broad goals of a Forest Action Plan (Enhancing, Protecting and or Conserving) and its connection to a CWPP goals and objectives. It is important to describe how the project accomplishes the goals of these planning documents.
  - **Box 7** - Clearly describe each proposed activities and include where and what will be occurring (i.e. fuel break along the fence line, defensible space around homes, tree crown spacing etc.). The description must include measurables and how the project will be accomplished. Grant funds

should be tied to the activities. Unlike the overview, this will provide the specific details of the project using measurable units where applicable. Treatment prescriptions and measures of success should be clearly stated. For prevention/education activities; the audience, deliverables and measures of success should be clearly stated. For planning/assessment activities; the audience, deliverables and measures of success should be clearly stated.

- **Box 8-** Describe how the project influences greater impact on the landscape. Show how the project has or will have impact outside the immediate project area, including how it relates to other projects/initiatives. For example, a project in a community may complement a Forest Service project on their land where they are creating a fuel break around your community defensible space project. Give specifics on how this project will tie into the larger picture of community protection or education. For information/education and/or planning projects explain how your project complements or enhances those by other agencies or groups and/or ties into a greater goal. Explain, the who, what, when, where, why, and how of its anticipated impacts.
- **Box 9-** Describe the contributions each partner will make to the project by stating the collaborating partners name and what they will be contributing to the project such as manpower, equipment, matching funds, etc. This should include the partners listed in Box 3 (matching share) but may also include federal and other partners that are contributing but are not eligible to use as match. Identify if using overmatch from the consolidated payment grant.
- **Box 10-** The Project Timeline must include such things as: begin/end dates, milestones, quarterly or seasonal targets, etc.
- **Box 11-** Sustainability must clearly describe the who, what, when, where and why of how this project will remain effective and be sustained over time. The four main points to be included for **fuels projects** are:
  - 1) **Environmental Factors:** describe the maintenance requirements unique to this project based on site characteristics i.e., present and future vegetation occupying the site, growth rates, natural fire return intervals or any other environmental factor that affects the continued maintenance of this project.
  - 2) **Education:** describe how key players have been trained and educated to maintain the project and explain their understanding of the needs and expectations of the project's maintenance. If this is an information/education project make sure to explain how it will be delivered, the audience you are targeting, and specific deliverables.
  - 3) **Commitment:** describe the commitment by the individual/community to maintain this project into the future, i.e. state laws, CWPP terms, signed landowner agreements or other documents or agreements that hold the sub-grantee accountable for project maintenance over time. If this is an information/education project, make sure you explain the commitment to carry this program forward and update as necessary.
  - 4) **Monitoring:** describe who will be responsible for monitoring the project, what qualifications they have if they are not obvious (i.e. State Forestry personnel, Fire Safe Council member, Fire Department personnel, etc.), and at what intervals they will be checking (i.e. yearly, quarterly, etc.); clearly describe timelines, and milestones.

For **Outreach/Prevention** you must include three main points (education, commitment and monitoring). Also include: How will outreach/education/prevention be distributed? What is the commitment over time? For monitoring purposes application should describe how outreach will be sustained and updated over the course of time. For **Planning/Assessment/Monitoring** the same points as Outreach/Prevention outlined here should be included and how CWPP will be used over time should also be discussed.

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## **Application Due Dates:**

Each state/island will set its own internal deadlines for its cooperators and partners applications so that they may be reviewed and prioritized at the state level before submission. Please pay close attention to the deadline and any special instructions for your application that has been set by your representative state/island.

Reminder:

- Applications over \$300,000 will be considered ineligible.
- Applications must be submitted by the state/island forestry organization. The state/island organization will be listed in Box 1 (Applicant Information) on the online application.

**All applications must be submitted to the online portal by the state/island forestry agency by 5pm MST on Thursday, January 18, 2024. Proposals submitted after this deadline will not be considered for the grant year.**