



Oregon State Department of Forestry

2011 VFA — CFDA# 10.664

VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE

GRANT MANUAL

Federal grant dollars available to improve fire protection capabilities in unprotected or inadequately protected areas.

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Web address for manual and application materials:

<http://oregon.gov/ODF/FIRE/fire.shtml>





Introduction

Purpose - Overview

The **Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)** program is funded through the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Unfortunately, there will be no **Rural Fire Assistance (RFA)** funding this year.

The objective of the VFA program is to improve the capacity and capability of rural and volunteer fire protection districts that protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires within or in the vicinity of federally managed lands. Grants cannot be awarded to a district that serves a city with a population over 10,000. The population of the entire district is not important, just as long as the district does not have an incorporated city of over 10,000 within the district boundaries.


- **THE 2011 RFA PROGRAM – NO FUNDING IS AVAILABLE.** There will be a small amount of 2010 carryover funds that we will wrap into a reallocation plan for 2011.
- **THE 2011 VFA PROGRAM CALL FOR APPLICATIONS – MAXIMUM APPLICATION \$20,000.**

Keep in mind that VFA is a 50% match and that fire departments with lower operating budgets have a better chance for obtaining funding. The review process ranks fire departments in order (from lowest to highest) based on the dollar value identified for the annual operating budget. The application form instructions request only your FIRE operating budget. If you need help figuring out how to identify this number, do not hesitate to call Mary Helen Smith for guidance.

Eligibility

- To qualify you must be an established fire district (as determined by the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office), or in the process of being established (also includes rangeland associations)
- You must have a federal tax identification number (TIN) by the time the grant reimbursement is requested
- Your district boundaries cannot contain an incorporated city with a population over 10,000. The population of the entire district is not important, just as long as there is no incorporated city over 10,000
- Fire protection districts should protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires within or in the vicinity of federally managed lands.
- If you are a "subscription" district but will respond to an incident regardless of "payment status" for the location, then you would be eligible.
- The rural fire department must be a party to an agreement with the Oregon Department of Forestry (as in mutual aid agreement) and/or a cooperative fire agreement with a US Forest Service, Department of Interior Bureau (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service or US Fish and Wildlife Services).
- The RFD must be compliant with the NIMS certification requirements in order to be eligible to receive these grant dollars. The Department of Homeland Security is requiring this of all grant recipients.
- Projects from agencies that cannot show proof of expenditure will not be eligible.
- Projects that do not indicate improvement of the protection capabilities will not be eligible.

Allowable (YES) / Unallowable (NO) Costs

COST ITEMS	VFA
Organization improvements such as legal and administration fees, election costs, advertising, etc. to form a new rural fire protection district	YES
<u>Structural</u> fire fighting equipment, training, PPE, or prevention activities and programs	YES
<u>Structural</u> training such as instructor fees, travel expenses, tuition costs, classroom materials, etc.	YES
<u>Wildland</u> training, either for basic suppression or for advanced courses, such as instructor fees, travel expenses, tuition costs, classroom materials, etc.	YES
Equipment or safety improvements for the acquisition or modification of <u>structural OR wildland</u> fire fighting equipment which may include labor and materials. The use of grant funds to pay FEPP fees or to improve FEPP equipment is appropriate (including costs of transportation or acquisition charges). Homeland Security/FEMA may prove to be a good alternative funding resource. For these purposes “equipment” is considered rolling stock or vehicles such as engines, tankers, tenders, etc that actually are used directly in putting a fire out.	YES
Basic PPE, specifically, new generation fire shelters, and basic <u>wildland and structural</u> PPE (Nomex shirts and pants, hard hats, eye protectors, gloves, boots, turnouts). Additional clarification: <u>no wildland “jackets” or coats, only “shirts”; no shrouds, ear, face or neck protectors.</u>	YES
Basic tools such as fire line hand tools, hose, adapters/reducers, fittings, valves, pumps, nozzles, fold-a-tanks, portable tanks, chainsaws	YES
Communications equipment, such as narrow band or narrow-band compatible hand held or vehicle units, pagers and accessories,  Global Position Units (GPS)	YES
Land acquisition	NO
Construction or remodeling of buildings, or any work on “real” property (such as wells)	NO
Emergency <u>medical</u> equipment (VFA funds are for fire use only)	NO
Personnel wages (as in employees on a payroll) will only be funded if they relate to “instructor fees” for training project activities. These grant dollars are not intended to pay for wages, salaries, stipends or other volunteer/employee payments unless it relates to being an instructor.	NO
Office equipment, computers, software, cameras, Global Positioning units (GPS) , smoke detectors, TVs, DVD players, VCRs or projectors will NOT be funded.	NO

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Application Process

Application Forms and Instructions

The application form can be completed manually or electronically. The electronic version can be downloaded from: <http://oregon.gov/ODF/FIRE/fire.shtml> The first two pages will provide the selection committee with a “profile” of your organization that will help target the organizations with the greatest need.

- For those using the electronic version, the entire form is created in Microsoft WORD “table” format.
- Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.
- Applications not submitted on a current VFA application form will not be eligible.
- Using the electronic version, the boxes can be expanded by the “wrapping” feature or by pressing “enter”
- The YES and NO boxes on Page 1 and the boxes on Page 3 and Page 4 can be “checked” by double clicking (electronic version) on the box which should pop up a menu box for you to change the Default Value to “checked” instead of “not checked”.
- Page 3 and 4 have three “dollar” amount columns.
 - Enter the total cost of the particular item in the first column (Total Cost) such as, 100 Fire Shelters @ \$300 each would show \$3,000 in the Total Cost column.
 - Next, for applying for VFA funding (50% match) then \$1,500 would go in the Grant Dollars column and \$1,500 would go in the Match Dollars column.
 - If you are using “In-Kind” then you would put the full \$3,000 in the “Grant Dollars” column and list below on a separate line a brief description of inkind (“volunteer hours attending training”, or “preparation time repairing vehicle”) and then enter the dollar value in the “Match Dollars” column.
 - The columns do NOT automatically (electronic version) total at the bottom, you will need to do this manually.
 - If you need to add lines (for additional items you wish to list), you should be able to insert “rows” to accommodate this. However, you are encouraged to group items as much as is reasonably possible yet being specific enough to provide information to the selection committee. For example, if you want to purchase wildland hose you can list on one line: Wildland Hose – 4 100’ 1”, 1 50’ 1 ½”. Same for nozzles, adapters, etc.
- Page 3 and 4 have a ODF USE ONLY shaded column that will be completed at the time the selection committee meets and makes decisions on what will be eligible under an awarded grant. Do not fill this column in.
- The application form must be signed by an authorized agent of the fire department (such as Fire Chief, Treasurer, or Board Chairperson). If you are submitting electronically (via email), the email cover sheet will be accepted as the electronic signature.

Application Deadlines and Submission Process

- Applications must be **received** no later than 5pm **Tuesday, June 7th, 2011** (no extensions will be granted) via:
 - **electronic** email attachment (email to msmith@odf.state.or.us), send as an attachment – do not paste the document into the email text area and even electronic email versions need to be **received** by 5pm

- **fax** “Attention: Mary Helen Smith” (503-945-7416),
- **US mail service** addressed to Mary Helen Smith, VFA GRANT PROGRAM, OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, 2600 STATE STREET, SALEM, OR 97310
- **Please do not submit multiple copies (a fax and US mail delivery, for example).**
- Your application should be signed by someone who has the authority to obligate funds for the fire department, such as: Fire Chief, Treasurer, or Board Chairperson. If you are submitting an electronic version of the form (as an attachment to an email), we will accept the email as authorization to submit the grant application for the fire department.
- You will be notified of your award status by July 15th, 2011 (pending Regional review with federal partners).

ODF Contacts

MARY HELEN SMITH, GRANT COORDINATOR MSMITH@ODF.STATE.OR.US 503-945-7341

Selection Process

Selection Panel

A multi-agency panel (Pacific Northwest Coordinating Group, Fuels Management Working Team) will review the applications and provide input in to the prioritized list of applications that are received. This group is composed of representatives from:

- US Forest Service/BLM
- US Fish & Wildlife
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Oregon Department of Forestry

Selection Guidelines

- Priority will be given to those districts that demonstrate the greatest need and to requests that demonstrate a genuine improvement in fire protection capability for that community, as well as to increase fire fighter safety. The applications are ranked in order from lowest operating budgets to highest.
- The maximum award to any one fire department will not exceed \$20,000.
- Due to limited funding, applications may be funded partially. You are encouraged to apply in the following year for unfunded items.
- Eliminate unallowable items.

GSA Ordering

GSA Ordering Process

Fire departments are eligible to purchase equipment and supplies from GSA (General Services Administration) which is an agency of the US Government. Many fire departments are already signed up to take advantage of this process. If you are interested, you need to apply for an Activity Address Code (AAC) and this done, in part, through “sponsorship” by ODF. In order to start the process, you can either contact Susan Moretz of the Protection from Fire Program at 503-945-7456 or you can contact your local ODF field office to initiate the process. One of the requirements is that there be an existing mutual aid agreement between your fire department



and the local ODF office. Once this has been clarified and the local ODF office is aware you are applying for GSA purchasing access, the Fire Chief needs to send a letter to Susan Moretz requesting application be made and the following additional items need to be included in the letter:

- That the requesting fire department is a tax-based entity
- That there is a mutual aid agreement with ODF
- Three addresses (mailing, billing, and delivery), which can all be the same address.

Sandy Middleton has a template letter that could be sent out for the fire department to complete that covers all the information needed for requesting the AAC number.

The application will then be packaged up and submitted to Washington D.C. The response back from D.C. with approval and the AAC number usually takes 4 to 6 weeks. You will then receive a package of information for accessing the system. As you can see, this is a lengthy process and needs to be started early in the grant process in order to meet the end grant date deadline.

ODF PROTECTION FROM FIRE – SANDY MIDDLETON - 503-945-7456
PROTECTION FROM FIRE PROGRAM, 2600 STATE STREET, SALEM, OR 97310

Reimbursement Requests

Reimbursement Form and Instructions

The VFA grant is administered as a reimbursement grant. Proper documentation to support a reimbursement request includes copies of invoices (quotes or receipts are not acceptable), supporting documentation for in-kind, and an Authorization for Payment request form. When a request for reimbursement is received the following audit is performed before any payment is processed:

- Does the supporting documentation (invoices and in-kind) match the items listed in the application? **If for some reason you need to purchase items other than what is listed in the application, first contact Mary Helen Smith for prior approval.** Send an email (msmith@odf.state.or.us) which describes first that you plan to purchase all of the allowable items in your original application; second, where you see the savings coming from to make this additional purchase; and third, specifically what items you would like to purchase (and why) that were not included on your original application list.
- Are there any unallowable expenditures (either that had been identified by the selection committee or falls within the unallowable category defined by the grant guidelines or had not been preapproved)?
- Is there adequate match? The 50% VFA match means that for every grant dollar you want to be reimbursed for you must demonstrate either cash expenditure and/or in kind match of equal value to the amount of grant dollars you will be reimbursed.
- The proposed projects must be made in good faith and purchasing completed by December 31st, 2011. You must complete your purchasing and expend or obligate your funds by this date. Do the dates on the invoices and in-kind documentation match the grant period (October, 2010 through December 31, 2011)?
- Requests for reimbursements must be **received** by January 15, 2012 – no extensions will be granted and grant dollars cannot be rolled forward. Unspent dollars will be reallocated during the next funding round.

Time Period Covered by the Grant

You should be receiving notice of your award in July and you need to complete purchasing by December 31st. If you feel comfortable obligating your agency, you can claim purchases back to the previous (previous to the June notification) October for grant expenditures. The risk involved is making a purchase prior to the time you know if you will be awarded funds.

Partial Payment Requests

We do have the capability to make partial payments, but would like to have you limit your requests to two payments per grant year. If you have other special circumstances, please do not hesitate to contact Mary Helen Smith. We encourage one payment if at all possible.

Equipment Tracking and Disposition

As a federal grant recipient, you are responsible to track any equipment purchased with RFA or VFA funding. There are federal guidelines that apply to tracking and disposition of equipment which has been purchased under VFA/RFA grant dollars. These guidelines apply to any equipment purchases over \$5,000. Therefore, the grant recipient needs to have a tracking system in place in order to meet these requirements. This becomes critical at the point in time when a grant recipient is interested in disposing of the equipment (as in sell). The equipment can be sold, however, a portion (50% if VFA funded and 90% if RFA funded) of the current sale price (or current fair market value, depending on the disposition plan) will need to be returned to the federal funding agency. Any costs associated with the sale can be deducted from the sale price (advertising, repairs to prepare for sale, etc.) in order to identify the actual dollar amount to be returned to the federal agency. A competitive public process must be used to facilitate the sale and, therefore, no private or individual sales will meet the criteria for this sale. You are encouraged to insert documentation into your grant file for any equipment that is under \$5,000 in value for future reference and documentation of how the value was determined. If you find yourself in this situation or looking at transferring a piece of equipment, please contact Mary Helen Smith before proceeding. Documentation will need to be provided, such as writing a letter with the proper documentation elements requesting approval to sell or transfer equipment.

Documentation of Match


Match (In-Kind and Cash) Documentation Guidelines

The VFA/RFA program requires that grant recipients of federal grant monies provide matching dollars or in kind (non cash) match. At the time you submit a **request for reimbursement**, you will identify whether you are meeting the match with cash (deducted from the total of your invoices) or in-kind (described in the detail information you provide as noted below).

- **Cash Match:** will come from the dollars you spend to purchase items included in the grant and documented on the invoice.
- **In-Kind Match:** volunteer hours for work done on the project items (like installing a pump or attending a training session); donated space for holding a training session; and, donated labor from a vendor who is providing one of the items you are purchasing under the grant. Documentation needs to be provided for this in kind, such as:

DESCRIPTION	Documentation Examples & Description
VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION HRS	Membership, Fire Defense Board or board meeting sign in sheets that shows: purpose of meeting, date of meeting, length of time, list of names & calculation of hrs x \$15/hr
VOLUNTEER TRAINING HOURS	Training roster sheet that shows: type of training, name of instructor, date, length of time, list of names & calculation of hrs x \$15/hr
VOLUNTEER HRS MAINTAINING or INSTALLING EQUIPMENT	Any kind of "log" showing persons name, date and time worked, activities performed , & calculation of hrs x \$15 unless individuals occupation is a mechanic (then use normal hourly rate)
DONATED TIME/ SUPPLIES	Any kind of note describing donation, date provided, estimated value and signature of person making the donation

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DONATED PROFESSIONAL TIME (mechanic, attorney, physician, etc.)	Individual must provide an "invoice" or letter that shows business/individual name and address stating time donated (dates and hours), activity performed X normal occupational \$hrly rate
DONATED MECHANIC SHOP USE TIME	Individual must provide an "invoice" or letter that shows business/individual name and address stating shop time donated (dates and hours), activity performed X \$estimated value for shop use
UNALLOWABLE MATCH  Clarification	Response to actual fire dispatches, medical dispatches, training associated with medical or extrication exercises.

EXAMPLES OF CALCULATIONS

	Example #1 VFA 50% Match All Cash Match	Example #2 VFA 50% Match All In Kind Match	Example #3 VFA 50% Mix of Cash & In Kind Match
Cash Match from Invoices	\$10,000 (50%)		
Grant Paid from Invoices	\$10,000 (50%)		
TOTAL PROJECT INVOICES	\$20,000 (100%)		
In Kind Documents		\$10,000 (50%)	
Grant Paid from Invoices		\$10,000 (50%)	
TOTAL PROJECT		\$20,000 (100%)	
Cash Match from Invoices			\$ 8,000 (40%)
In Kind Documents			\$ 2,000 (10%)
Grant Paid from Invoices			\$10,000 (50%)
TOTAL PROJECT			\$20,000 (100%)