



2020 USFS SFA Grant Application Webinar Question and Answers

May 29, 2020

1. How much funding is available?
 - a. \$1.4 million total. Maximum grant award is \$200,000
2. Are these funds/grants ear marked for FSC's only
 - a. No. And some have asked if FSC's get priority - the answer to that is no as well. Applications are judged on merit and capacity to successfully complete the project.
3. Please explain 50:50 match. Does volunteer time get valued as in-kind? What is the value? How do we use landowner in-kind contribution ?
 - a. Landowner and volunteer in-kind can be calculated at the California Volunteer Rate, which is approximately \$27.59 per hour. Number of people (x) number of hours (x) \$27 per hour = your total in-kind for that landowner. The value placed on third party in-kind contributions for cost sharing must be valued at rates consistent with those ordinarily paid for similar work in the same labor market.
4. Is there a CEQA requirement if appropriate?
 - a. If applicable yes, but not for the application process. That is not something that is included in our environmental clearance process so if there are CEQA requirements your organization handles those separately from our requirements.
 - b. We suggest asking your RCD for some guidance on this for estimating the cost of CEQA, and then build it into the grant project budget under "prep for treatment", also put it in the first part of your project work plan.
5. Regarding Board roles - do you just need info on Board members involved in the project, or all Board members and their roles?
 - a. All board members and their roles
6. How is a community at risk defined? Do we define our area specifically or is there an official list?
 - a. You will define your area specifically, but you can refer to your County Community Wide Protection Plan and/or look up the Cal Fire's Fire Risk map. I would also recommend working with your local fire authority for accurate information for your specific community.
7. Where do we locate Fire Regime and Condition Class?
 - a. There are a few ways to find this information. You can search on line for Cal Fire's Fire Risk Map, you can talk with your local fire agency, and/or you can also ask your CALFIRE unit forester for help with determining the fire regime and condition class.
8. How can we confirm that Cal Fire will have crews available to commit to our project?
 - a. Cal Fire crews cannot guarantee availability because wildfire doesn't stick to a schedule. A back up plan is always recommended. It is good to make contact with the chief at your local CALFIRE conservation camp and request the paperwork to get a project approved for crews. Because of the long lead time between writing the grant and starting the



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project, the camp probably won't commit but it's good to start the conversation and learn their process for getting crews assigned to your project.

9. Can you elaborate on acres prepped vs acres treated and how they overlap, what you are looking for?
 - a. Typically the acres prepped includes things like CEQA/NEPA activities, flagging, permissions/permits, and project management costs. Acres treated begins when the fuel starts being modified, for example when the chainsaws start, chipper arrives, goats are unloaded. Treated costs also includes your onsite project manager staff time.

10. Would an outside contractor for labor be considered a sub-grantee or just covered under the applicants cost?
 - a. NO, you are the subgrantee, the contractor is a contract cost to be included in your budgeted expenses.

11. Does Contractual require competitive bidding?
 - a. Yes, if cost is \$9,999 or more

12. Would it be an option to lease equipment during project schedule?
 - a. Yes, you can rent or lease equipment with the grant funds, but you cannot purchase.

13. What is the difference between a letter of commitment and a cover letter of commitment?
 - a. The cover letter will summarize ALL the Letters of Commitment. If there is only one letter of commitment, no cover letter is needed.

14. Letters of commitment for chipping programs. Multiple homeowners who have not yet scheduled. We have a very good historical average, can the FSC sign the letter of commitment on behalf of the homeowners to be served?
 - a. Yes. For chipping projects with many undetermined homeowners, the FSC/org can submit the LOC. Be conservative.

15. Can a "submitted" application be revised?
 - a. Yes, you can revise a submitted application BEFORE the deadline.

16. Can other CA State funds be used as match for FSC Funds?
 - a. Yes, as long as the state funds and USFS funds are being used for the same project in the same project footprint.

17. Is cattle fencing, such as permanent barbed wire fencing, and infrastructure for grazing to reduce fuel in the WUI a potentially eligible project?
 - a. Funding for temporary fencing is allowable, for instance temporary/moveable fencing for goat grazing. USFS does not fund the building of permanent fencing or structures.



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18. Does a FSC need to be incorporated?
 - a. The applicant organization needs to have legal standing which is to say they must be incorporated to do business in the State of California or Nevada and have a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN). Organizations that do not meet these requirements must identify an organization with legal standing to act as a fiscal sponsor to administer the grant funds for the applicant.

19. What are the written policies requirements of federal grants?
 - a. The required written and board approved policies are:
 - i. Financial Management
 - ii. Personnel
 - iii. Travel
 - iv. Conflict of Interest
 - v. Property Management & Procurement Procedures

20. Can equipment purchases be used as match?
 - a. Expenses that are not allowed to be purchased with grant funds, (including equipment), are also not allowed to be used for match.

21. If my fire department was looking at obtaining a grant for fuels reduction purposes, using goats, not buying goats but hiring a contractor that uses goats, could this type of grant be approved?
 - a. Yes this is an eligible project.

22. As we get our draft proposals ready to whom might we submit that draft for review and comment before we file.
 - a. You can send it to any Grant Specialists listed on our website.

23. If the entity that commits to supplying the match fails to do so what is the liability to the entity that failed to do the match?
 - a. In order to apply you will need letters of commitment. The responsibility for assuring that the match amount proposed is met lies with the grantee. If overall match doesn't meet requirements then the USFS requires us to ask for funds to be returned equal to the value of the missing match. We suggest you not rely on only 1 or 2 sources of match but get more than you need. Also, your Grant Specialist can help you with finding alternative solutions to meet required match

24. How do we estimate the cost of environmental assessments?
 - a. It depends on the size of the project area, the time of year you plan to do the grant, and other environmental factors. If you are only working within defensible space zones then you may be exempt. You can ask a company that does assessments or ask a planner in your local jurisdiction to help you with this estimate



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25. Can an applicant submit one application doing the same work (hazardous fuel reduction) for two different locations? Or is it one application per location?
 - a. You can have more than one treatment area in your application, it helps in writing your proposal if your projects are similar but that isn't required.

26. When the requirement states that you must have successfully completed similar projects, does this mean the entity applying for the grant or the fiscal sponsor or both?
 - a. Both. there are 2 sections, one for the applicant and one for the fiscal sponsor.

For further clarification or answers to questions not addressed here please contact one of our Grant Specialists listed on our website.