



2022 Defensible Space Assistance Grant Frequently Asked Questions

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APPLICATION INFORMATION AND ACCESS

Q: What is the application timeline and where do I apply?

A: The application period opens May 15, 2023 and closes at 11:59pm PST on June 15, 2023. The application is completed online and can be accessed here: <https://cafiresafecouncil.org/grants-and-funding/apply-for-a-grant/>

Q: Who do I contact for questions that are unique to my application?

A: Dave Farley, CFSC Senior Grant Specialist dfarley@cafiresafecouncil.org

Q: Is there anyone that can review my application before I submit it?

A: If initiated by the applicant no less than ten days before the application deadline, a CFSC Grant Specialist can review your draft application, but only for completeness and eligibility according to the stated grant guidelines. Grant Specialists will not evaluate or make suggestions for improvement or clarification.

Q: I'm having trouble with my ZoomGrants account. Who do I contact for help?

A: The ZoomGrants Technical Support Team can be reached via email Questions@ZoomGrants.com

Q: Does the space limitation in ZoomGrants count characters with spaces or without?

A: ZoomGrants fields count the total characters, including spaces.

Q: I see that 501(c)3 organizations are eligible to apply. Are 501(c)(7) - or other 501c organizations - eligible?

A: For nonprofits, only 501(c)(3)s are eligible to apply. Other nonprofits have the option to apply through a fiscal sponsor such as one of the eligible organizations, but the fiscal sponsor would need to be the lead applicant. More information on eligibility can be found on page one of the [Applicant Handbook](#).

Q: We represent a countywide coalition of organizations whose 501(c)(3) is in process. We believe we would need a fiscal sponsor to apply. Will that be allowed, or should one of our fire safe councils take the lead on this?

A: If you're not currently a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, you will need a fiscal sponsor. Any eligible entity can take the lead and apply on your behalf. See "Eligibility" on page 1 of the [Applicant Handbook](#) for a list of organizations that could serve as the fiscal sponsor.

Q: We would like to apply as a county government, but do not yet have a Government Information Letter. Will a letter from our County Auditor/Controller work?

A: You may submit your Auditor-Controller's letter with your application, or you may submit a memo stating you requested the IRS letter. However, if you're selected for funding, you'll need to provide the Governmental Information Letter prior to receiving a subaward agreement. Appendix 2 of the Applicant Handbook has additional information. According to the [IRS site](#), you could receive a letter as early as 10-14 days from the time of your request.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Q: Would basic home hardening retrofits, such as screening vents, be an eligible cost?

A: No. We encourage applicants to include an element of outreach/education on home hardening, but not actual retrofits or supplies.

Q: Can the funds be used for chipping?

A: Funds can be used for chipping if it's part of the treatment for a property, but we're not looking to fund traditional "chipper day" programs where property owners/residents do the work, and a crew shows up to chip the material. There are a lot of those programs funded by local, state and federal grants; and they reach an audience that's already motivated and engaged with defensible space. We're trying to reach people that historically haven't treated their properties because of income, physical, language, age, etc. limitations and increase the number of residents involved with a defensible space lifestyle.

Q: Can the funds be used for dead tree removal?

A: Tree removal is allowed only if the tree poses an imminent threat to public health and safety.

Q: Can the funds be utilized to purchase tools that we can use and lend to residents like weed whackers, rakes, saws, etc. for the creation of defensible space?

A: Yes. CFSC would need to be named as additionally insured on your insurance policy.

Q: Could this also include a small shed for safe storage?

A: A storage shed is not allowable; that would be considered a structure which is an ineligible expense.

Q: Can funds be used to purchase fuel and chain oil?

A: Yes, funds can be used to purchase fuel and chain oil.

Q: Will this grant cover equipment such as water storage tanks?

A: No, the grant won't pay for infrastructure items like water tanks. Equipment is allowed if it is directly related to fuels reduction work and under \$10,000.00. Please see the Applicant Handbook and Application Webinar PowerPoint slides for additional guidance on allowable and unallowable equipment costs.

Q: Can funds be used to pay for lodging and food for volunteers, for example, out of town volunteer groups?

A: Yes, you can pay for lodging and food for out-of-town volunteer groups. Food and beverage expenses need to be associated with a per diem. We suggest using the federal GSA food and lodging

rates for the project area as a starting point. We also suggest having a contract with the volunteer group, stating the budget based on the number of volunteers, daily food per diem and daily lodging rate. Let them work out the details within that budget framework.

Q: In the webinar you mentioned that the funds could not go toward neighbors helping neighbors (i.e., like a volunteer stipend essentially). In our county we have a significant lack of contractors to do D-Space work, therefore, one of our strategies is to encourage neighborhood clean-up days. We would like to use this grant to promote more community efforts and a neighborhood model of risk reduction. Could we use the funds to pay volunteers a stipend?

A: The funds are not really for the purpose of volunteer stipends. You could, however, reimburse volunteers for their expenses (fuel, lodging, per diem).

Q: Does this grant give incentives to reach out to a Corps program such as the California Conservation Corps or Local Community Conservation Corps to do the work?

A: No.

Q: Can this grant money be used on US Forest Service land? What about Army Corp land that we have a responsibility for?

A: No. This grant is for defensible space around habitable structures on private property.

Q: Can this grant be used for roadside clearance near homes?

A: You could make a case for it on a limited basis if you have some extreme conditions around a few homes. That is, after the property is treated, maybe it makes sense to clear some areas along the road adjacent to the property. However, this is a defensible space grant at its core. An application with a great deal of roadside clearance work will be less competitive. Also, roadside clearance sounds like it would open up CEQA issues. Ongoing maintenance and sustainability is another issue. If the roadside isn't currently being treated, who's going to maintain it after the grant ends? Again, you might be able to make a case for limited roadside clearance, but it would need to be compelling, and it would need to clearly tie into defensible space treatment around homes.

Q: Can grant funds financially support property owners performing the treatments on their property? Or must grant funds cover the cost of contractors performing the treatments only?

A: We don't allow making sub-grants to homeowners, but there are some options to reimburse eligible homeowners for completed work on a cost-share basis. Please email Dave to make sure your concept falls within eligible guidelines.

Q: Can funds be used to host defensible space community events (education, outreach, equipment rental, and volunteer work)?

A: Yes, the funds could be used to produce community events that promote defensible space work, provide education on home hardening, offer techniques for drought and fire-resistant landscaping and Zone 0 requirements.

Q: Can the funds be used to pay for the costs of preparing the grant application?

A: No.

Q: Is pass-through funding allowed?

A: You can contract with other businesses and organizations to conduct various aspects of the work.

TARGET COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES

Q: What about disabled veterans as a target demographic?

A: Disabled Veterans are within the scope of vulnerable populations.

Q: We are looking to fund work on vacant properties. Can you talk about the scope allowed regarding that?

A: As noted in the [applicant handbook](#), we encourage creating a partnership with absentee owners.

Q: When you say county wide, can two Fire Safe Councils within the same county collaborate?

A: Yes, collaboration amongst organizations and agencies is encouraged.

Q: When you say county wide, does this mean throughout the whole county, or can we focus on a certain part of the county? For example, South Siskiyou County communities such as Weed, Mt. Shasta, Dunsmuir, etc.

A: Yes, you could. We encourage you to create a program that can be re-created throughout the county so as not to duplicate efforts.

Q: Where County boundaries for defensible space are blurred, and resources are shared at a regional level, is it allowable to go across county lines? Think “maximizing the scope and scale of work across partnerships.”

A: Working across county lines, and collaborating with neighboring organizations, is allowed.

Q: Any guidance on selection of properties to be treated?

A: Selection of properties treated is left to you and your local fire officials to be determined. Hopefully, it's outlined in a planning document or other evidence of priority selection for your area.

Q: Can county-level low-income census designation be used as criteria for an award, or should it be more localized to neighborhoods?

A: As you develop your applications, if you're going to serve low-income communities, there should be some type of rationale or explanation of how you determined that location to be low-income.

Q: Do we have to have locations identified at time of application?

A: You don't have to identify individual, specific properties, but you will want to identify general areas and explain why those are chosen.

DELIVERABLES AND METRICS

Q: What measurables are you expecting from future grantees? Acres treated vs. homes assisted?

A: The [22 Defensible Space Assistance Grant Handbook](#) provides more details on measurables and deliverables. Some examples include acres treated, parcels treated, and events/workshops conducted.

Q: Are we more interested in acres treated or acres protected (parcel size) as a result of the project?

A: We posed the question to CAL FIRE and they're working on some clarifying guidance. Ideally, a subgrantee could report on both—showing the work that was done as well as the project impact.

Q: How do we expect the metrics to be collected?

A: Regarding treatment area, if you're working on a property, an estimate of size based on length and width is allowable. Shapefiles can also be used to measure and map treatment areas.

Q: Acres treated can be difficult to accurately measure. Do you advise us to actually go out and measure each property, or is an estimate of acres treated on average sufficient?

A: For the grant application, an estimate of acres is sufficient. If you receive the grant, an approximation of acres treated will be fine for reporting purposes. Just make sure you track the parcels treated by physical location.

MATCH FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Q: Is match funding required?

A: No, match is optional. However, if you choose to reflect it in your grant application, you will be required to track and report it throughout the course of the grant.

Q: Can we connect this to a FEMA funded grant?

A: We are not aware of any regulatory prohibitions; however, we urge caution. This is a 16-month grant that must be completed by December 31, 2024, while the FEMA periods of performance are typically longer and it can take a year or more to get approved. Also, connecting with a FEMA grant, even on a matching basis, could potentially trigger NEPA requirements for all project aspects.

Q: Are there any letters of support or commitment from agencies needed? If so, how many?

A: Letters of support or commitment are not required but are encouraged. It is nice to see documented support from outside agencies and the community.

Q: Is it possible to partner with another county so we can share expertise and supplies to conduct the defensible space creation?

A: Yes, you can partner with another county.

PROJECT TERM AND SUSTAINABILITY

Q: What is the funding term?

A: Projects that are selected for funding can start no earlier than September 1, 2023, and end no later than December 31, 2024. Final reports must be submitted on or before January 31, 2025.

Q: Since funding will be available Sept 2023 and end Dec 2024, is it for the 2024 fire season only? How are future years envisioned to be handled?

A: We encourage you to consider maintenance and future years in this current project. Can you create a program that is sustained by homeowners or others for future years? This funding is only available through the specified period.

Q: Is this an ongoing grant opportunity?

A: Currently, this is one-time funding. If additional funding for defensible space becomes available, the opportunity will be posted on our website www.cafiresafecouncil.org/grants-and-funding/cfsc-grant-programs

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Q: Is there any CEQA filing requirement needed for this grant?

A: CEQA could be triggered if the defensible space treatment falls outside of the 100-foot guidelines of PRC 4291, or within an environmentally or culturally sensitive area.

Q: What if 100 feet from the homeowner's structure goes outside of their property line – does removal of fuels outside that property line (but within 100 feet) trigger CEQA?

A: Each homeowner can do work within 100 feet of their structure or up to their property line (whichever comes first) without triggering CEQA.

Q: On page 3 it states that no ground disturbing work can be done without environmental compliance. But in the webinar, it was asked if we needed to file CEQA, and the answer was no. Can you provide more guidance on what will actually be needed?

A: As long as the treatments are within the 100' perimeter of the home or to the property line (whichever comes first), the work should fall within the scope of defensible space per California PRC 4291 and CEQA is not required. We encourage building relationships with your local CAL FIRE unit staff, and if there are any unique concerns with your project area(s) we recommend reaching out to them with your questions.

Q: Since this is Cap and Trade funding, do these grants require CEQA per parcel before treatment?

A: No, as long as the work remains under the scope of PRC 4291.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Q: What is the allowed administration percentage?

A: The maximum indirect cost rate is 12% unless you have a higher federally negotiated rate. The [applicant handbook](#) has instructions for indirect rates, as well as instructions on how to go about requesting a rate higher than 12%.

Q: Is the funding distributed on a reimbursement basis or an advance basis?

A: Advance basis by submitting payment requests through our ZoomGrants portal.

SELECTION OF AWARDS

Q: What are Selection criteria for grant award?

A: The selection criteria is listed in Appendix 1 of the [22 Defensible Space Assistance Grant Handbook](#).

Q: When will award notifications go out?

A: We anticipate announcing the awards in late July.

Q: Will I be notified if my project is not selected?

A: Yes, you will receive an email from CFSC via the ZoomGrants email host once an official decision has been made on your application.