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Introduction

Purpose - Overview

The **Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)** program is funded through the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. The **Rural Fire Assistance (RFA)** is funded through the United States Department of Interior (DOI) agencies: Bureau of Land Management, Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the National Park Service. These two programs represent a significant source of grant dollars for Oregon Fire Districts.

RFA  After a year (2007) without new RFA dollars, a reduced (60% of the 2006 levels) allocation has been made for 2008. It is not known at this time whether RFA funding will continue beyond 2008. Even if you have submitted a DOI application form to BIA, US Fish & Wildlife, or National Park Service you should also submit a Department of Forestry application form to assure full consideration of your request.

 New this year we have added the **Ready Reserve (RR)** program to the application process. This program is funded through the United States Department of Interior agencies that are listed above. The target audience is similar to **RFA** in that fire departments should play a consistent role as cooperators with Department of Interior bureaus in initial/extended attack on or adjacent to DOI-managed lands. The objective of the **RR** program is to increase rural fire department wildland fire operations safety, effectiveness, and capacity by sponsoring and/or facilitating focused, local-level training opportunities. This should be done by:

- Addressing critical skills needed for local initial and extended attack who protect wildland urban interface communities and are involved in multi-agency wildfire attack and coordination activities;
- Providing training to help communities to safely and effectively manage wildland urban interface protection activities; and,
- Aid the development of local “Type 3” organizations to manage local lower-complexity wildfire incidents safely and effectively.

The objective of the **VFA and RFA** programs: improve the capacity and capabilities 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 lands managed by the Department of Interior.

All three programs (**VFA, RFA, and RR**) have the same eligibility criteria that 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.



SO, WHAT CAN YOU APPLY FOR?

- EITHER VFA OR RFA; AND YOU CAN APPLY FOR RR.**
- OR YOU CAN APPLY FOR JUST RR.**
- ODF UNITS, FIRE ACADEMIES, COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES CAN ONLY APPLY FOR RR.**

SEE THE CHART ON PAGE 4 FOR WHAT IS ALLOWABLE UNDER EACH FUND SOURCE

Eligibility Criteria for VFA, RFA and RR

-  Due to several factors (reduced funding, ongoing questions about the definition of a “fire district” or “fire department”, and increased focus by federal partners on adjacency issues) we are redirecting this eligibility definition to comply with the Department of Interior guidance: “The RFD must be party to an agreement with a local ODF Unit/District (mutual aid agreement or letter of support from ODF local unit indicating fire department is a cooperator in wildland fire suppression activities) OR Tribe, OR a cooperative fire agreement with a DOI bureau (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service). **This year we are requiring that all RFA applicants provide a copy of the front page and signature page (or letter) that documents this agreement.**
- If you are a “subscription” district, **YOU MUST** respond to **ALL WILDLAND FIRE** incidents regardless of “payment status” for the location in order to be eligible
- 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 lands managed by the Department of Interior (Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Fish and Wildlife and National Park Service) for RFA and the US Forest Service for VFA.
- 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.
- Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.
- Applications not submitted on a current VFA/RFA application form will not be eligible.
- 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.

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Allowable (YES) / Unallowable (NO) Costs

COST ITEMS	RFA	VFA
Organization improvements such as legal and administration fees, election costs, advertising, etc. to form a new rural fire protection district	NO	YES
<u>Structural</u> fire fighting equipment, PPE, or prevention activities and programs	NO	YES
TRAINING  Structural and Wildland training have been removed from allowable costs under RFA/VFA due to reduced dollars, the low volume of requests (in 2006 only 2% of total requested funds were for training); and the availability of Ready Reserve funds for this purpose. See RR Project Detail page 5 in the application form for additional information.	 NO	 NO
Equipment or safety improvements for the acquisition or modification of <u>structural OR wildland</u> equipment which may include labor and materials. Grant funds may be used to pay FEPP fees or to improve FEPP equipment (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.	NO	YES
Basic PPE, specifically, new generation fire shelters (cases & training shelters as well), and basic <u>wildland and structural</u> PPE (Nomex shirts, coveralls and pants; hard hats; eye/ear protectors, gloves, boots, fireline packs, turnouts). Additional clarification: no wildland “jackets” or coats, only “shirts”; no shrouds, ear, face or neck protectors. Keep in mind that structural PPE (turnouts, etc.) would NOT be eligible for funding under RFA, only VFA.	YES	YES
Basic tools (keep in mind that structural equipment would only be eligible under VFA) such as fire line hand tools, hose, adapters/reducers, fittings, valves, pumps, nozzles, fold-a-tanks, portable tanks, chainsaws, weather kits	YES	YES
: Communications equipment, such as narrow band or narrow-band compatible hand held or vehicle units, pagers and accessories  Must be P25 compliant (examples are Bendix King DPH 5102X and Kenwood 5210, we are not endorsing these lines of equipment just illustrating examples)	YES	YES
Land acquisition	NO	NO
Construction or remodeling of buildings, or any work on “real” property (i.e wells)	NO	NO
Emergency <u>medical</u> equipment (VFA/RFA are for fire use only)	NO	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	NO
Office equipment, computers, software, cameras, Global Positioning units(GPS), smoke detectors, TVs, DVD players, VCRs or projectors will NOT be funded.	NO	NO

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.

-  **RFA applicants must also submit a copy of the front page and signature page of ODF or DOI mutual aid agreements.**
- Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.
- Applications not received on a current (2008) application form will not be considered.
- For those using the electronic version, the entire form is created in Microsoft WORD “table” format
- 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. For RFA funding (10% match) \$2,700 would go in the Grant Dollars column and \$300 would go in the Match Dollars column.
 - If you are using “In-Kind” to match VFA 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. Same goes for RFA. See chart on last page for further information on In Kind Match.
 - 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.
- Your application must 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 and the email cover sheet will be accepted as the electronic signature.

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Application Deadlines and Submission Process

- Applications must be **received** no later than 5pm WEDNESDAY APRIL 25TH 2008 via:
 - **electronic** email attachment (email to msmith@odf.state.or.us), send an attachment – do not paste the document into the email text area 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/RFA GRANT PROGRAM, OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, 2600 STATE STREET, SALEM, OR 97310
 - **PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT MULTIPLE COPIES (a fax and a hard copy, for example)**
- Instructions can be found at the bottom of the last page of the application for how to submit a hard copy via mail, a fax copy and an electronic email version.
- No extensions will be granted.

You will be notified of your award status around June 1, 2008 (pending release of notification at national level).

Selection Process for VFA/RFA

Selection Panel

A multi-agency panel will meet in May to review the applications and make award selections. This group is composed of representatives from:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- National Park Service
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Fire Chiefs Association
- Oregon Fire District Directors Association
- State Fire Marshal's Office
- US Fish & Wildlife
- US Forest Service/BLM
- Volunteer Firefighters Association

Selection Guidelines

- Priority will be given to those fire departments 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 review process ranks fire departments in order (from lowest to highest) based on the dollar value identified for the annual operating budget. RFA funds are allocated first then VFA funds. Fire departments with higher annual operating budgets have a better chance at receiving VFA funds because of the substantial demand on RFA funding.
- The maximum award to any one fire department will not exceed \$20,000 from VFA/RFA.
- General dollar amounts have been established to assist the committee in making equitable decisions, such as: fire shelters \$300 (GSA rate) each; portable radios \$1,400 each; mobile radios \$2,000 each; wildland boots \$100 per pair; wildland PPE \$300 per set; turnouts \$1,000 head to toe set. You are not expected to restrict yourself to these limits when making purchases, but keep in mind the committee intended to give you the flexibility to pick and choose through your “laundry” list of project items but still get the highest value possible for the grant dollars.
- Due to limited funding, applications may be partially funded. You are encouraged to apply in the following year for unfunded items.
- Items that have been requested but are unallowable, will not be funded & will be cross out on the Project Detail page.

Selection Process for RR

READY RESERVE SELECTION

We are still in the development phase of how to administer the Ready Reserve funds and will be working on this in the weeks to come.

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 is 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 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.

Susan Moretz has a template letter for the fire departments to complete 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 – CONTACT - SUSAN MORETZ - 503-945-7456
PROTECTION FROM FIRE PROGRAM, 2600 STATE STREET, SALEM, OR 97310**

Reimbursement Requests

Reimbursement Form and Instructions

The details for the **RR** program have not been work out as of this date. It is anticipated the process will be similar to VFA/RFA but there most likely will be at least a change in the end dates to accommodate training next spring 2009.

The VFA/RFA funds are administered as a reimbursement grant. Proper documentation to support a reimbursement request includes copies of invoices (quotes or receipts are not acceptable), supporting

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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 proposed projects must be made in good faith and purchasing completed by December 31st, 2008. 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, 2007 through December 31, 2008)?
- Requests for reimbursements must be **received** by January 15, 2009 – no extensions will be granted and grant dollars cannot be rolled forward. Unspent dollars will be reallocated during the next funding cycle.

Time Period Covered by the Grant

VFA/RFA: You should be receiving notice of your award in June 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. **RR:** The timing needs to be adjusted to accommodate training through next spring. Further instructions will be provided to successful applicants.

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

There is no match requirement for the RR program.

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 match, 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
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 <u>SHOP</u> 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

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EXAMPLES OF MATCH CALCULATIONS

	Example #1 VFA 50% Match All Cash Match	Example #2 VFA 50% Match All In Kind Match	Example # 3 RFA 10% Match All Cash Match	Example #4 RFA 10% Match All In Kind Match
Cash Match from Invoices	\$10,000 (50%)		\$ 2,000 (10%)	
Grant Paid from Invoices	\$10,000 (50%)		\$18,000 (90%)	
TOTAL PROJECT INVOICES	\$20,000 (100%)		\$20,000 (100%)	
In Kind Documents		\$10,000 (50%)		\$ 2,000 (10%)
Grant Paid from Invoices		\$10,000 (50%)		\$18,000 (90%)
TOTAL PROJECT		\$20,000 (100%)		\$20,000 (100%)
A mix of cash/in kind				
Cash Match from Invoices	\$ 8,000 (40%)		\$1,000 (5%)	
In Kind Documents	\$ 2,000 (10%)		\$1,000 (5%)	
Grant Paid from Invoices	\$10,000 (50%)		\$18,000 (90%)	
TOTAL PROJECT	\$20,000 (100%)		\$20,000 (100%)	

ODF Contact

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

