

State of Oregon



OREGON CONSERVATION CORPS Grants

Request for Grant Applications (RFA)

Date of Issue:

Application Due on: March 4, 2022 to be considered for the initial round of grant funding. Applications will be reviewed on a monthly basis after the initial round of review.

For questions, clarifications, or if you need this material in a different format, please contact Oregon Youth Corps at: occ@hecc.oregon.gov

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The State of Oregon, acting by and through the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), is issuing this RFA for the Oregon Conservation Corps. The purpose of the Oregon Conservation Corps is to:

- Reduce the risk wildfire poses to communities and critical infrastructure;
- Help to create *fire-adapted communities* (defined as, “Communities located in a fire-prone area that require little assistance from firefighters during a wildfire”); and
- Engage youth and young adults (ages 16 through 26) in workforce training.

OREGON CONSERVATION CORPS OVERVIEW

The Oregon Conservation Corps Program was created by the 2021 Legislative Assembly and is authorized in Oregon Laws 2021, chapter 592, sections 21-23. Grants will be awarded to eligible organizations/sovereign nations across the state to aid in reducing wildfire risk to communities.

Projects shall take place within the *Wildland Urban Interface* and shall fall within priority areas set by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) utilizing the [Oregon Wildfire Risk Explorer](#) map. The *Wildland Urban Interface* is the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development—it is the line, area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.

Priority will be given to projects that reduce community fire risks, reduce hazardous fuels, provide educational experiences, and promote youth and young adult workforce development.

All projects must meet fuel reduction standards as defined by ODF. Oregon Conservation Corps will provide standards training to all grantees in consultation with ODF.

Workforce training is a component of the programming with the aim to help close employment gaps, particularly for those underserved and underrepresented communities, by providing young Oregonians with valuable work experience that promotes the development of essential employability skills.

All grant awards will be approved by the Oregon Conservation Corps Advisory Committee. The Committee shall use HECC’s equity lens in awarding grants by identifying and supporting populations with greater vulnerability and underrepresented communities, communities with members who have limited proficiency in English, and communities with lower-income members.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Individuals within a community and communities within a larger society need the ability to shape their own present and future, and Oregon Conservation Corps believes that workforce development and education are fundamental aspects of Oregon’s ability to thrive. Equity is both the means to success and an end that benefits us all. Equity requires the intentional examination of systemic policies and practices

that, even if they have the appearance of fairness, may in effect serve to marginalize some and perpetuate disparities. Data are clear that Oregon demographics have been changing to provide rich diversity in underrepresented community members. Working toward equity requires an understanding of historical contexts and the active investment in changing social structures and practice over time to ensure that youth from all communities have the opportunities and support to realize their full potential. Creating a culture of equity requires monitoring, encouragement, resources, data, and opportunity. Oregon Conservation Corps supports and applies HECC's [Equity Lens](#) to all aspects of its programming.

AGREEMENT & FUNDING INFORMATION

HECC anticipates awarding funds through multiple grant agreements. Each grant agreement in the initial round will not exceed \$1,000,000, however, HECC reserves the right to amend to increase any awarded grant as it determines in its sole discretion, considering subsequent applications and satisfying the purpose of the RFA. HECC reserves the right to amend the grant agreements for amount and activities related to the scope of services described in this RFA.

HECC anticipates releasing fifty percent (50%) of the total award for each individual agreement upon execution of each respective grant agreement. Grantees will be allowed to submit reimbursement requests monthly during the project period. The final ten percent (10%) of the total award will be released upon HECC's acceptance of each Grantee's final report following project completion.

Opportunities to apply for a grant will open approximately February 2022, and remain open through February 2023, and will be reviewed by the Oregon Conservation Corps Advisory Committee on a rolling basis, which will make application evaluations as it determines in its best interest.

Please see the Submission Criteria section below for additional information. All grant funds must be expended on or before June 30, 2023.

Funding is not guaranteed and is subject to the availability of funds. Evaluation of applications are based on the criteria in this RFA. HECC reserves the right to partially fund applications in discrete portions or phases. If HECC chooses to partially fund an application, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the application or portion thereof, was evaluated and selected for award. Funded applications through this competitive RFA are not a guarantee of future funding. When or if additional funding becomes available, HECC reserves the right to issue additional awards under this RFA. These awards will not require further competition. Any additional selections will be made in accordance with the terms of this RFA and HECC policy.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR OREGON CONSERVATION CORPS APPLICANTS

OREGON CONSERVATION CORPS GENERAL APPLICANT GUIDELINES

Applicants

Eligible applicants:

1. Shall have its principal place of business in Oregon or be otherwise registered to do business in Oregon;
2. Shall be a nonprofit youth development organization, public entity, or tribal nation that provides programs of job training, skill development and forest-related or rangeland-related career path training;
3. Should have experience operating youth workforce development programming and/or have experience performing wildfire fuel reduction projects;
4. Shall identify current and future community partnerships;
5. Shall have developed safety, work site, orientation, education, and emergency plans in compliance with state and federal law. These plans must be in place prior to operating; and
6. Shall be required to provide report(s) to HECC. Report components will be described in detail in the Grant Agreements which will include but not be limited to:
 - a. First and last names and date of birth for all participants (this information will be treated as Confidential Information by both parties);
 - b. General participant demographics;
 - c. Total number of hours worked;
 - d. Budget expenditure report(s);
 - e. Before and after pictures;
 - f. Skills developed;
 - g. Project/treatment location;
 - h. Project/treatment outcomes; and
 - i. Any other categories requested by ODF and/or HECC.

Participants

1. Applications should focus on engaging youth participants from underrepresented and vulnerable populations, including but not limited to, communities with members who have limited proficiency in English and communities with lower-income members.
2. Program participants shall be resident youth and young adults of the State of Oregon ages 16 through 26.
3. Program participants shall be compensated in the following manner:
 - a. At least Oregon minimum wage by region according to the current rules regarding Oregon minimum wage established by the Bureau of Labor & Industries; or
 - b. If a grantee is prohibited by state or federal law from the payment of wages, such as an AmeriCorps program, the following formula is to be followed (as detailed in OAR 715-

101-0015): an allowance or stipend, or a combination of an allowance or stipend and postsecondary education and training monetary award, such that the total monetary value of the allowance or stipend and the total monetary value of any other postsecondary education monetary award or institutional credit hour award received by the participant or on behalf of the participant, when totaled and divided by the total hours served in the program, is equal to or exceeds the monetary value of minimum wage.

Criteria for Projects

1. Fuel reduction projects must be designed to reduce the risk wildfire poses to communities and critical infrastructure by helping to create fire-adapted communities.
 - a. Projects may be completed in collaboration with other organizations through subcontracts or subgrants. Generally, treatments must reduce the risk of high severity wildfire.
2. Projects shall be identified in consultation with ODF and Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office to coordinate and avoid duplication of treatment areas and must take place within the *Wildland Urban Interface*.
 - a. Applicants are required to submit a "screen shot" from the Oregon Wildfire Risk Explorer map showing the Wildland Urban Interface area where project work will be completed.
3. Site assessments and the determination of project/treatment effectiveness must be done in coordination with ODF, or the designee appointed by ODF.
4. Projects shall fall within a *Community at Risk* displayed either within the Oregon Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) layer, or the Wildland Urban Interface (USFS RDA) layer, both of which can be found on the [Oregon Wildfire Risk Explorer map](#) under the "Planning and Cadastral" layer.
5. Fuels to be removed shall include but not be limited to:
 - a. Fine fuels such as grasses and needles
 - b. Surface fuels such as shrubs, brush, and tree limbs
 - c. Heavy fuels, like large bushes, small trees, and downed trees and limbs
6. Projects may involve hand and/or mechanical treatments and may include but not be limited to:
 - a. Invasive species removal
 - b. Thinning trees
 - c. Pruning
 - d. Slash treatment, including but not limited to: Chipping, hauling, pile and burn, or other small diameter wood utilization

Workforce Training

In addition to having safely completed fuel reduction projects, the objectives of Oregon Conservation Corps also include making gains in the following areas:

1. Learning and practicing essential employability or "soft skills" such as skills like integrity, dependability, work ethic, effective communication, open-mindedness, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, adaptability, organization, willingness to learn, and empathy.
2. Preparing youth with the skills to advance in their careers and educational paths.
3. Opportunities to discover career and education pathways.

Allowable Uses for Grant Funds

Applicants shall provide a budget estimate that details the following allowable costs:

1. Program Costs: Program Personnel Costs/Wages, Employer Costs for Taxes/Fringe, Transportation, Supplies/Materials, Program Participants' Support Services Costs, Personal Protective Equipment, Equipment, Training and Certification costs, etc.
2. Administrative Costs: Expenditures incurred by grantees in the performance of administrative functions necessary in carrying out activities under the grant agreement. Acknowledging the funds for the resulting grant agreements derive from state funds as opposed to federal funds, administrative costs to administer them should be lower.
 - a. Administrative Costs will generally be limited to a rate of 10 percent. HECC reserves the right to negotiate, in its sole discretion, higher Administrative Cost rates if a successful applicant can justify why a higher rate is necessary.

Additional Requirements:

The following provisions apply to all successful applicants, except that some of the below provisions may not be required for federally recognized tribes.

Public Records

All information and records submitted to HECC are subject to disclosure under the Public Records Law, ORS 192.311 to 192.478. If Applicant believes that any information or records it submits to HECC may be a trade secret under ORS 192.345(2), or otherwise is exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law, Applicant must identify such information with particularity and include the following statement:

“This data is exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law pursuant to ORS chapter 192[insert], and is not to be disclosed except in accordance with the Oregon Public Records Law, ORS 192.311 through 192.478.”

If Applicant fails to identify with particularity the portions of such information that Applicant believes are exempt from disclosure, Applicant is deemed to waive any future claim of non-disclosure of that information.

Governing Law and Regulations

This RFA is governed by the laws of the State of Oregon. Venue for any administrative or judicial action relating to this RFA, evaluation and award is the Circuit Court of Marion County for the State of Oregon; provided, however, if a proceeding must be brought in a federal forum, then it must be brought and conducted solely and exclusively within the United States District Court for the District of Oregon. In no event shall this Section be construed as a waiver by the State of Oregon of any form of defense or immunity, whether sovereign immunity, governmental immunity, immunity based on the Eleventh Amendment to the Constitution of the United States or otherwise, to or from any claim or from the jurisdiction of any court.

Applicant must not be in violation of any tax laws of the state or a political subdivision of the state, including, without limitation, ORS 305.620 and ORS chapters 316, 317 and 318.

Applicant understands that any statement or representation it makes, in response to this RFA, if determined to be false or fraudulent, a misrepresentation, or inaccurate because of the omission of material information could result in a “claim” (as defined by the Oregon False Claims Act, ORS 180.750(1)), made under Contract being a “false claim” (ORS 180.750(2)) subject to the Oregon False Claims Act, ORS 180.750 to 180.785, and to any liabilities or penalties associated with the making of a false claim under that Act.

Applicant will comply with the Pay Equity law, ORS 652.220, if applicable.

Applicant does not discriminate in its employment practices with regard to race, creed, age, religious affiliation, gender, disability, sexual orientation, national origin. When awarding subcontracts, if HECC allows, Applicant does not discriminate against any business certified under ORS 200.055 as a disadvantaged business enterprise, a minority-owned business, a woman-owned business, a business that a service-disabled veteran owns or an emerging small business. If applicable, Applicant has, or will have prior to contract execution, a written policy and practice, that meets the requirements described in ORS 279A.112, of preventing sexual harassment, sexual assault and discrimination against employees who are members of a protected class. HECC may not enter into a contract with an anticipated contract price of \$150,000 or more with an Applicant that does not certify it has such a policy and practice. See <https://www.oregon.gov/DAS/Procurement/Pages/hb3060.aspx> for additional information and sample policy template.

Applicant, by submitting its application, certifies it will follow all local, state, and federal guidelines and requirements protecting against the spread of COVID-19 while conducting any activities that require in-person contact.

HECC will not fund lobbying activities.

GRANT SUBMISSION & EVALUATION

SUBMISSION CRITERIA

The Application is located at: <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/Pages/grants-contracting.aspx>

By submitting an application, applicant is agreeing to all of the grant requirements listed in this RFA.

All submissions shall be sent as attachments electronically to occ@hecc.oregon.gov.

To be considered for the initial round of grant funding, please submit your application no later than March 4, 2022. HECC reserves the right to review applications on a monthly basis and will make application evaluations as it determines in its best interest. In order to be considered for review, applications should be submitted by the fifth calendar day of each month to be included in that month's review.

Applicants can apply for funds more than one time and grants may overlap in implementation.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following questions will be scored and weighted as follows:

Rating	Description	Definition
4	EXCELLENT/OUTSTANDING Responses meets all requirements specified in the directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Response provides all required information in a thorough manner and uses specific examples o Response demonstrates that the Applicant has a complete understanding of the requirements addressed by the question, or about the topic o Response demonstrates that the Applicant possesses capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet or exceed expectations address in question
3	ADEQUATE/MEETS EXPECTATIONS Response meets most requirements specific in the directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Response provides most required information o Response demonstrates that the Applicant understands the requirements addressed by the question, or about the topic o Response demonstrates that the Applicant possesses sufficient capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet the expectations addressed in the question
2	INCOMPLETE/NEEDS IMPROVEMENT Response meets some requirements specified in the directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Response provides some required information o Response demonstrates that the Applicant has some understands of the requirements addressed by the question, or about the topic o Response demonstrates that the Applicant possesses some capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet the expectations addressed in the question
1	INADEQUATE/RESPONSE OF LITTLE OR NO VALUE Response does not address the question's requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Response provides little or no required information o Response demonstrates that the Applicant has limited or no understanding of the requirements addressed by the question, or about the topic o Response does not demonstrate that the Applicant possesses some capacity, expertise, and/or strengths to meet the expectations addressed in the question
0	NO ANSWER	o Response field is left blank or is a non-answer and/or unrelated answer

The following scoring sheet will be used to grade and weight the application questions:

<p align="center">Evaluation Score Sheet <u>Oregon Conservation Corps Grant Application</u> Year: 2021-2023</p>				
Applicant Name:				
Evaluator Name:				
Date of Review:				
<p align="center">You are encouraged to provide comments and/or justification for each of your scores below. Please remember that all comments made on this form become public record.</p>				
Section I. Applicant Experience	Max Points (do not alter)	Rating (1-4)	Score (do not alter)	Comments/Justification
What experience do you have operating youth workforce development programs and/or wildfire fuel reduction projects?	10		0.00	
Section II. Populations to be Served	Max Points (do not alter)	Rating (1-4)	Score (do not alter)	Comments/Justification
How does the project advance opportunities for those that have been historically underrepresented?	7.5		0.00	
How have you intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by this program/project to inform decision-making?	7.5		0.00	
	<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>0.00</i>	
III. Project/Treatment Plans	Max Points (do not alter)	Rating (1-4)	Score (do not alter)	Comments/Justification
How does the project(s) reduce the risk that high severity wildfire poses to communities and critical infrastructure?	8.75		0.00	

In which areas will project(s) fall within a Community at Risk, displayed as the Oregon Wildland Urban Interface layer, under “Planning and Cadastral Layers” on the Oregon Wildfire Risk Explorer map (Include screen shot of the area within the map where projects will take place)? Please include approximate acres or number of sites to be treated.	8.75		0.00	
Explain how projects have been identified in consultation with the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State Fire Marshal’s Office, or local forest or rangeland Protection Association(s), or other fire staff delegated by the aforementioned organizations to coordinate and avoid duplication of treatment areas.	8.75		0.00	
Who are the other partners for the project(s) (landowners, city, etc.) and what role will they play?	8.75		0.00	
	<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>0.00</i>	
IV. Skill and Career Development	Max Points (do not alter)	Rating (1-4)	Score (do not alter)	Comments/Justification
What specific technical skills will Corpsmembers learn?	8.75		0.00	
Which Essential Employability skills will Corpsmembers learn?	8.75		0.00	
Will Corpsmembers have the opportunity to obtain any certifications or credit? (Please list)	8.75		0.00	
What careers will Corpsmembers be exposed to	8.75		0.00	

and how will that exposure occur?				
	<i>Subtotal</i>		<i>0.00</i>	
V. Budget and Narrative	Max Points (do not alter)	Rating (1-4)	Score (do not alter)	Comments/Justification
Are expenses reasonable, necessary and an accurate reflection of current cost trends to complete the proposed scope of work and are expenses clearly represented in the budget narrative?	5		0.00	
TOTAL SCORE	0.00			

Grant funds will be awarded based on:

1. Available funding
2. The Advisory Committee's best value determinations based on applicants' scores and how the Advisory Committee can best utilize grant funds to meet the purposes of this RFA, including, but not limited to, socio-economic impact and Wildland-Urban Interface.