



2021
*Volunteer Fire Assistance Award
Manual*

**FEDERAL AWARD DOLLARS AVAILABLE TO IMPROVE FIRE PROTECTION
CAPABILITIES IN UNPROTECTED OR UNDER PROTECTED AREAS**

CFDA #10.664

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Award manual and application materials:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/AwardsIncentives.aspx>

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE – OVERVIEW

The **Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)** program is funded through the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS). The objective of the VFA program is to improve the capacity and capability of rural and volunteer fire protection districts. These districts protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires within or near federally managed lands. The VFA award is administered as a **reimbursement award**.

Applications for the VFA program have a maximum amount allowed of \$10,000. The expanded scoring criteria will again be utilized this year. This process better defines those districts that demonstrate the greatest need to increase firefighter safety and target requests that demonstrate an improvement in fire protection capability for that community. The scoring criteria are as follows:

- **Fire Operating Budget (0-4 points)**– This has been a longstanding prioritization criterion. The fire-operating budget is defined as budgeted allocations for firefighting. EMS services, other award dollars, capital outlays and construction should **NOT** be included. If you have questions in regards to calculating your budget, please contact the VFA Coordinator.
- **Communities At Risk (0-2 points)**– Fire Agencies responding to an area designated with moderate and higher risk assessments based on data in the 2020 Communities at Risk report posted at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/AwardsIncentives.aspx>
- **Federal Excess Property Program and Firefighter Property Program (FEPP/FFP) (0-1 point)**– VFA has long supported the FEPP program to restore and revitalize equipment. Acknowledgement of this in the selection criteria codifies that support. For additional FEPP/FFP information, please contact Emily Wall, emily.wall@oregon.gov, phone 503-945-7325.
- **Call Volume (0-3 points)**– One indicator of need is the number of fire runs made by LOCAL FIRE AGENCY. Call volume counts should include both wildland and structural calls (including car fires), but **NOT** medical or rescue. The review committee will rely on data supplied by the applicant and by the Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM). All fire departments are encouraged to submit their data to OSFM on an annual basis. **Future VFA funding amounts are influenced by reported fire calls.**
- **VFA Award Previous Years (0-4 points)**– Rotating funding to more fire departments by limiting back-to-back years of VFA funding is another way to attempt to distribute dollars more equitably.
- **Training (0-1 point)**– Proper training is integral for both firefighter safety and for communication. Training includes course materials, tuition and classes (including travel), and costs for bringing in an instructor.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (0-1 points)**– It is important that LOCAL FIRE AGENCY has adequate safety equipment. Proper PPE is integral to safe and effective firefighting.
- **Wildland (0-1 point)**– LOCAL FIRE AGENCIES are a key component of Oregon’s statewide complete and coordinated fire protection system. Proper wildland firefighting equipment is essential in this effort.

No one criterion listed above will assure or eliminate a fire department from funding. Each of these factors will be part of the ranking criteria with Operating Budget, Call Volume, and Previous Awards given the highest consideration. The Ranking Committee will be using a combination of all criteria on the application for breaking ties.

ELIGIBILITY

- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must be an established fire district as determined by the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office or in the process of being established. Rangeland associations are also included, authorized by the Board of Forestry.
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY's district boundaries **cannot** contain an incorporated city with a population over 10,000. LOCAL FIRE AGENCY may serve an aggregate population of greater than 10,000 as long as the service area of the fire department includes a rural area or a rural community having a population of 10,000 or less. The VFA funding must be used to benefit the rural population.
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY's district boundaries **cannot** contain an incorporated city with a population over 10,000. The population of the entire district is unimportant, just as long as there is no incorporated city over 10,000 within the district boundaries.
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY should protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires within or near federally managed lands.
- If LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is a subscription district, but will respond to an incident regardless of payment status for the location, then LOCAL FIRE AGENCY would be eligible to apply for these funds.
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY **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 USFS or Department of Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service or Fish and Wildlife Services). **Please be prepared to provide a copy of the agreement if requested.**
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must be compliant with the National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) certification requirements in order to be eligible to receive these award dollars. The Department of Homeland Security is requiring this of all award recipients that support emergency services.
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must register on the state's bidding and payment online system OregonBuys, to receive payment. Register at <https://OregonBuys>. Registration guidance can be found at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/AwardsIncentives.aspx>
- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must register on the System for Award Management (SAM) at sam.gov/SAM
- Projects that do not indicate improvement of the protection capabilities will not be eligible.

ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS

COST ITEMS	ALLOWABLE	
	YES	NO
Organization improvements, such as LOCAL FIRE AGENCY legal and administration fees, election costs, or advertising used to form a <u>new</u> rural fire protection district. This does not include wages or payments resembling employee payments.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> firefighting supplies such as basic tools, fireline hand tools, hose, adapters/reducers, fittings, valves, pumps, nozzles, fold-a-tanks, portable tanks, chainsaws, hydrant wrenches, SCBA systems, generators and weather kits. <u>Thermal imaging cameras are eligible, however have a VFA contribution cap of \$4,000. Last year's full listing can be found at: http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/AwardsIncentives.aspx (2020 VFA Scoring list).</u>	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland training</u> expenses, such as instructor fees, travel expenses, tuition costs, classroom materials for either basic or advanced courses.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> equipment, repairs, upgrades, or safety improvements for the acquisition or modification of firefighting equipment, which may include labor and materials. The use of award funds to pay FEPP fees or to improve FEPP equipment is appropriate (including costs of transportation or acquisition charges). For these purposes only, “ equipment ” is considered rolling stock or vehicles such as engines, tankers, tenders, etc. that actually are used directly in putting a fire out. Homeland Security/FEMA may also prove to be another funding resource.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> basic PPE, such as new generation fire shelters, fire resistant shirts and pants, hard hats, eye protectors, gloves, boots and turnouts.	YES	
<u>Structural</u> or <u>Wildland</u> communications equipment, such as narrow-band or narrow-band compatible handheld or vehicle units, pagers and accessories and Global Position Units (GPS). All communications equipment must be P25 compliant or compatible.	YES	
Acquisition of land.		NO
Construction or remodeling of buildings or any work on “real” property (such as wells).		NO
Emergency <u>medical</u> equipment, rescue equipment or extraction 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 award 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, mobile phones, tablets, drones, computers, software, smoke detectors, TVs, DVD players, cameras, VCRs, or projectors.		NO

APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLICATION FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Application materials will be available electronically at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/AwardsIncentives.aspx> and by mail as requested. The application form can be completed manually or electronically. The application will provide the selection committee with the criteria needed to score the application properly.

- Applications received after the deadline of April 15, 2021, will not be considered.
- Applications not submitted on a current 2021 VFA application form will not be considered.
- Each applicant must meet the 50/50 match requirements. This means that for every VFA award dollar, an equal match (cash or in-kind) dollar must be provided by the fire department. The total “project” value is 100% (50% VFA / 50% match). Reimbursement will be for actual costs, not in-kind match.
 - Fire departments that are in formation, or have been in existence for two years or less, may be eligible for a reduced match rate of 75% VFA / 25% Match.
- For those using the electronic version:
 - The entire form is created in Microsoft Word table format. The boxes can be expanded by pressing enter.
 - The YES and NO boxes on Page 1 and the boxes on Page 4 and Page 5 can be “checked” by double clicking (electronic version) on the box, a menu box will appear to change the default value from “not checked” to “checked”.
- Page 4 has three-dollar amount columns.
 - **Total Cost:** The actual total cost of the items being applied for purchase.
 - **Cash match:** Dollars spent to purchase items included on the award and documented on the invoice. The cash supplied for the balance of the purchase will satisfy the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY match requirements, with applicable proof of payments.
 - **In-kind match:** The LOCAL FIRE AGENCY non-monetary matching portion of the award that has measurable value and is donated or volunteered. Mileage value in 2021 is calculated at 0.56 per mile consistent with the 2021 GSA rates. Volunteer in-kind hourly rate is \$15.50 per hour consistent with the 2020 OSFM Mobilization Guide.
 - Page 12 of this manual contains additional information and scenarios for calculating your match requirements.
 - LOCAL FIRE AGENCY can use both cash and in-kind match in the award application.
- The columns do NOT automatically total at the bottom, this will need to be done manually by LOCAL FIRE AGENCY.
- If additional lines are needed, insert rows into the table as necessary; however, group items as much as reasonably possible, yet specific enough to provide information to the selection committee. For example, if LOCAL FIRE AGENCY wants to purchase wildland hose it can be listed on one line: Wildland Hose – 4-1’x100”, 1-1½”x50’. Same listings apply for nozzles, adapters, etc.
- Page 4 has an **ODF USE ONLY** shaded column that will be completed at the time the selection committee meets and makes decisions on particular item eligibility. Do not fill-in this column.
- The application form must be signed by an authorized agent of the fire department (Fire Chief, Treasurer, or Board Chairperson). If the application is submitted electronically, the email cover sheet

will be accepted as the electronic signature. If the application is not submitted by the signatory on Page 5, please copy the signatory on the email to acknowledge their approval.

APPLICATION DEADLINES AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

- Applications must be **received** no later than 5:00 p.m. **April 15, 2021** via:
 - **Email** with attachments to mary.k.schmelz@oregon.gov This is the preferred submittal method. **Please verify receipt.**
 - **Fax** “Attention: VFA Coordinator” (503-945-7416). The fax machine tends to be bogged down with incoming applications on the deadline day.
 - **Mail** to VFA Coordinator, Federal Initiatives Unit, Oregon Department of Forestry, 2600 State Street, Building D, Salem OR 97310.
 - Submit only **ONE** copy. **DO NOT submit multiple copies (i.e., fax and U.S. mail delivery).**
 - LOCAL FIRE AGENCY will receive their award status by June 30, 2021.

SELECTION PROCESS

SELECTION PANEL

Any unallowable items will be identified in a pre-review process as well as a committee review process. A multi-agency group will meet in May to review the applications and will include the following representatives:

- USFS
- Oregon State Fire Marshal
- Oregon Department of Forestry, Salem Staff and Field Representative

Successful applicants will receive a Volunteer Fire Assistance Award Agreement, along with other award documents, via e-mail after the selection process is completed. This Agreement **requires signatures and return** to the VFA Award Coordinator before any awarded funds will be reimbursed.

ORDERING PROCESS

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (GSA/DLA)

GSA no longer facilitates purchasing from the Wildland Fire Protection. Ordering from the Wildland Fire Protection Program Catalog is now facilitated through the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). For additional information, please contact the Oregon SPOC, Emily Wall, emily.wall@oregon.gov at 503-945-7325.

REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTS

REIMBURSEMENT FORM AND INSTRUCTIONS

The VFA award is administered as a reimbursement award. Once the project is completed, the award recipient must provide a copy of the paid receipts, paid invoices and/or checks or statements showing payment. Only cancelled checks or bank/credit card statements will be accepted as proof of payment. Proper documentation to support in-kind match must include an individual's name, dates, hours, and activity. This can include training/meeting rosters and maintenance logs. An Authorization for Payment request form must also be completed with information required for payment. This form, along with other documentation templates, can be found at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/AwardsIncentives.aspx>

LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must have a federal tax identification number (TIN), as well as a data universal numbering system number (DUNS) issued by Dun and Bradstreet by the time the award reimbursement is requested.

When a request for reimbursement is received, the following audit is performed before any payment is processed:

- Has the Award Agreement been signed?
- Does the supporting documentation (invoices and in-kind) match the items listed in the application?
Prior approval from the VFA Coordinator is needed for purchase of items other than those listed on the application. Request must include:
 - Plan to purchase all of the allowable items in original application
 - Where the savings comes from to make this additional purchase;
 - What specific items to be purchased; and
 - Why that/those item(s) were not included on the original application list.
- Is there adequate match? The 50/50 match means that for every award dollar to be reimbursed, there must be either cash expenditure and/or in-kind match of equal value. Reimbursement payments will only be made for those expenditures that have an acceptable match. Reimbursement will be for actual costs, not in-kind match.
- The proposed projects must be made in good faith and purchasing, expending and/or obligating completed between the established dates.
 - Purchases: January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021
 - Match Accumulation: October 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021
- Requests for reimbursements must be **received** by January 15, 2022. Extensions will **not** be awarded and award dollars **cannot** roll forward. Unspent dollars will be reallocated during the next funding cycle.

PAYMENT REQUESTS

One payment is strongly encouraged; however, partial payment(s) can be made but are limited to two payments per award year. If there are special circumstances, please contact VFA Coordinator. Local fire agencies that are in formation or in existence for two years or less, may be eligible for a partial advancement of their award through a special agreement. Contact VFA Coordinator for more information.

TIME PERIOD COVERED BY THE AWARD

- **Applications Due:** April 15, 2021
- **Fire Departments receive Notice of Award:** June 2021
- **Purchasing complete:** December 31, 2021
- **Reimbursement request deadline:** January 15, 2022
- **In-kind Match:** October 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY TRACKING AND DISPOSITION

NOTE: Fire departments are REQUIRED to inventory, monitor, and coordinate with ODF for any disposition of equipment purchased under VFA.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY PURCHASE

Equipment and supplies will be purchased at the most beneficial price. Competitive bidding procedures or multiple price quotes may be utilized. Title to the equipment and supplies purchased with VFA award funds rests with the fire department.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY TRACKING

Equipment is any single item costing \$5,000 or greater, and requires pre-approval from USFS through coordination with the VFA Coordinator. Supplies are single items costing less than \$5,000 (portable radios, radio scanners, chain saws, portable pumps, and small generators. As a federal award recipient, LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is responsible to track all equipment and supplies purchased with VFA funding that has a purchase price of \$250 or greater. Therefore, the award recipient needs to have a tracking or inventory system in place in order to meet these requirements. Purchases made with VFA award funds will be tracked. **(five years from the date of purchase for items \$250 or greater; indefinitely for items \$5,000 or greater).** However, if any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit or other action involving the records has been initiated prior to the end of the five-year period, the records shall be kept until all issues are resolved or until the end of the five-year period, whichever is later.

Equipment and supply tracking records will include the award year purchased, a description of the property, serial number or identification number, source of the property, acquisition date, cost, percentage of federal participation, location and any ultimate disposition information, including the date of disposal and sale price, process of disposal (retained, sold, or traded in) and, if applicable, new owner. LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is also responsible to conduct a physical inventory of VFA funded equipment and supplies at least every two years and the results reconciled with the tracking records. The results are to be sent to the State VFA Coordinator.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY MAINTENANCE

Equipment and supplies must be maintained in good condition.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES DISPOSAL

A competitive public process must be used to facilitate the sale of equipment and supplies and, therefore, no private or individual sales meets criteria. Equipment with a fair market value per unit of less than \$5,000 may be retained, sold, or otherwise disposed of with no further obligation to the USFS. LOCAL FIRE AGENCY are encouraged to insert documentation into the award file for any equipment that is under \$5,000 in value for future reference and documentation of how the value was determined. Equipment with a fair market value per unit of \$5,000 or more may be retained or sold and the USFS shall have a right to an amount calculated by multiplying the current market value or proceeds from sale by the USFS's share of the equipment. For supplies that are unused with a residual inventory exceeding \$5,000 in total aggregate fair market value upon termination or completion of the award and if the supplies are not needed for any other federally-sponsored programs or projects, LOCAL FIRE AGENCY are required to compensate the USFS for its share of the fair market value. If LOCAL FIRE AGENCY plans on selling or transferring a piece of equipment, please contact VFA Coordinator before proceeding. Documentation will need to be provided, such as a letter, with the proper documentation elements requesting approval to sell or transfer equipment. 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 USFS.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY MONITORING

The STATE is obligated to ensure adequate equipment and supply tracking and disposal procedures are in place by recipients of VFA funds. Therefore, on-site monitoring visits will be conducted on a random sample of recipients annually. The basis of the monitoring visits will be to review equipment and supplies acquired over the previous five years, along with proper disposal documentation.

DOCUMENTATION OF MATCH

GUIDELINES

The VFA program requires award recipients of federal award monies to provide either matching dollars or in-kind match. At the time a **request for reimbursement** is submitted, match will be identified as cash match (deducted from the total of invoices) or in-kind match (described in the detailed information provided below).

- **Cash Match:** Dollars spent to purchase items included on the award request and documented on the invoice. For example, if the purchase on the invoices totaled \$8,000 (\$4,000 VFA and \$4,000 Rural Fire Department), then the reimbursement will be \$4,000.
- **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 providing one of the items purchased under the award. Documentation needs to be provided for in-kind match, such as:

Description	Documentation Examples & Description
Volunteer Hours Calculated at \$15.50/ hour	Membership, Fire Defense Board, or board meeting sign-in sheets that show the purpose of meetings, date of meetings, length of time and a list of names.
	Training roster sheet that shows: type of training, name of instructor, date, length of time, list of names. Templates available on ODF's website at: http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/AboutODF/Pages/AwardsIncentives.aspx
	Log showing a person's name, date and time worked and activities performed. Templates available on ODF's website. (Do not use if individual's occupation is a mechanic; use professional time).
Donated supplies	A receipt showing item, cost, date, and signature of person making the donation. A donation receipt from the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY would be best.
Donated Professional Time (mechanic, attorney, physician, etc.)	Individual must provide an invoice that shows business name and address stating time donated by dates and hours and activity performed. In addition, state the occupational hourly/daily rate for services provided. <u>Reduced rates area also acceptable as both match and expense.</u>
Donated Use Time (meeting hall, mechanic shop, etc.)	Individual must provide an invoice that shows business name and address stating time donated by dates and hours and activity performed. In addition, state the occupational hourly/daily rate for services provided.
Mileage	Mileage will be reimbursed according the GSA rates for the corresponding timeframe. Proper documentation includes miles driven, destination, purpose, and driver. 2021 mileage rates are \$0.56 per mile for vehicles.
Unallowable match	Response to actual fire dispatches, hazard mitigation activities, medical dispatches, training associated with medical or extrication exercises.

EXAMPLES

10 fire shelters are requested at a cost of \$300 each. Total purchasing cost is \$3,000.

Department A will use a cash match option for fulfilling their award obligation. On award application, Department A would list \$3,000 in “Total Cost,” \$1,500 “Award Dollars,” and \$1,500 “Match.” Documentation required for reimbursement will include a proof of payment for the fire shelters. The reimbursement check would be \$1,500, for the award project total of \$3,000.

Department B will use an in-kind model for their match obligations. On award application, Department B would list \$3000 in “Total Cost,” \$3000 in “Award Dollars,” and on a separate line \$3000 in “Match,” noting “In-kind.” Between firefighter trainings, equipment maintenance, and meetings, they have accumulated 200 hours of in-kind activities, with a value of \$3000. After the purchase of the fire shelters, the paperwork package would include the volunteer rosters and proof of payment for the fire shelters. The reimbursement check would be \$3000, for the award project total of \$6000. Reimbursement will be for actual costs, not in-kind over match. Mileage is calculated at 0.56/ mile and volunteer in-kind hourly rate is \$15.50 per hour.

Department C will use a combination of in-kind match and cash match. Between firefighter trainings, equipment maintenance, and meetings, they have accumulated 50 hours of in-kind activities, with a value of \$750. By purchasing the fire shelters they expend \$3000. The paperwork package would include the volunteer rosters, invoices and proof of payment for the fire shelters. The reimbursement check would be \$2250 (\$750 for the In-kind match and \$1500 for the cash match contribution from the purchase). Total project cost would be \$3750 (\$750 for In-kind and \$3000 for the fire shelters.)

ODF CONTACT

VFA Coordinator

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