

Volunteer Fire Assistance FAQs



1. What is the maximum amount available for a grant?

Applicants can request from **\$1,000 - \$2,500** in grant funds. This is a match grant and is paid on a reimbursement basis only.

2. What is match?

This is a 1:1 match grant and is paid on a reimbursement basis only, with the submission of required documentation.

This means that for every VFA award dollar awarded, an equal match (cash or in-kind) dollar must be provided by the VFD. The total “project” value is 100% (50% VFA + 50% VFD).

3. Who can apply?

The main criterion that must be met, to be eligible for VFA funding, is that it must benefit the rural population and/or communities with less than 10,000 in population.

This criterion can be met by using the latest census data to confirm population and where the applicant is:

1. a single fire department serving a rural area or rural community with a population of 10,000 or less.

OR

2. a single community or county with a population greater than 10,000 that:

- a. that provides contractual fire protection to an adjoining rural community of 10,000 or less population, *where the VFA funding is used entirely to support the rural community.*

OR

- b. that has a single fire department with one or more fire stations, that serves a rural area or community that does not exceed 10,000. *The VFA funding must be used only for the benefit of the rural population.*

OR

- c. that is served by two or more fire districts operating entirely within the bounds of that county or town, as long as the service area includes a rural area or a rural community, or the population of the fire department’s jurisdiction is 10,000 or less. *The VFA funding must be specifically used for the rural area.*

OR

- d. that has an area fire department (fire districts, townships, etc.) serving an aggregate population of greater than 10,000, but which includes a rural area or rural community having a population of 10,000 or less, *where the VFA funding is specifically used to benefit the rural population.*

NOT ELIGIBLE: A single community fire department serving a population greater than 10,000 and not providing protection to a rural area or to a rural community is NOT eligible for VFA financial assistance.

4. What can grant funds be spent on?

The following items or functions may be purchased under this grant:

1. Wildland personnel protective equipment
2. Pumps and other motorized equipment used in wildland suppression
3. Communications equipment
4. Class A foam used in wildland fire suppression.
5. Equipment for foam application
6. Hand or power tools used in wildland suppression
7. Wildland fire, Incident Command training
8. Dry Hydrants

NOTE: The individual unit cost of any item purchased must be less than \$5,000 (for example, a complete skid unit and pump must total less than \$5,000).

Funding may NOT be used for:

- Any single piece of equipment >\$5,000
- Vehicles (trucks, cars, ATVs)
- Capital improvements
- Land acquisition
- Medical equipment
- Fire hose >2.5" in diameter
- Equipment which is not wildland fire related
- Extrication type equipment

5. What are the match requirements?

The amount awarded must be matched 100%.

If the full amount of the award is not spent, the match requirement is the amount spent:

Example: \$2,000 awarded with \$2,000 in match; only spent \$1,500, match requirement \$1,500.

Reporting and documenting overmatch is appreciated. But the maximum reimbursement is the amount originally awarded.

Examples:

An \$2,000 grant requires documentation of \$4,000 for full reimbursement, spending in excess of \$4,000 will not increase the amount reimbursed but can still be documented as match.

Reimbursement is limited to the amount of match documented (invoice and proof of payment).

Example: If the grant is for \$2,500 but only \$4,000 documented as paid, then \$2,000 is the maximum reimbursement.

NOTE:

1. Excess match, whether cash or in-kind, will not increase the amount of reimbursement above the original grant amount requested and awarded.
2. Insufficient match will result in less than the awarded amount being reimbursed – and only if all other aspects of the project have been completed/documented.

6. What is cash and in-kind match?

Applicants may match grant funds with documented:

- cash purchases
- in-kind contributions (volunteer labor*, municipality/organization personnel and equipment)
- donations, and
- administrative costs directly related to the project.

Cash Match:

Dollars spent to purchase items included on the award request and documented on an 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, or donated labor from a vendor providing one of the items purchased under the award. Documentation is required for in-kind match (*contact DFE for requirements*).

**Volunteer labor is valued based on the national rate found at <https://independentsector.org/resource/the-value-of-volunteer-time>*

7. What is the grant timeline?

1. **June 15- July 31:** Grant application period closes at 4:00 PM and may be submitted electronically.
2. **Aug:** Applications are reviewed by members of the Division of Forest Environment and the Rhode Island Forest Fire Advisory Committee & applicants are informed of the status of their application
3. **Sept:** Applicants sent grant documents for signature. Applicants immediately return the signed documents to the grant administrator.
4. The sooner the signed contract is returned, the sooner a PO request can be made and the sooner the start date.
5. **Contract time frame: Date of Purchase Order received – June 15, 2021:** Projects are started and completed.
6. **Oct 30:** Final deadline for returning signed grant documents. Applicants that have not returned their signed contract documents by this date will have their funds re-awarded by the grant administrator and the awarded funds will no longer be available to the applicant.
7. **June 15:** Deadline for project completion and all related invoices. If the project is not completed by this date, no reimbursement will be made.
8. **July 31:** Reimbursement and match documentation are due, if not submitted previously. Reimbursement requests may be submitted upon project completion if occurring sooner than the end of the grant period, however, **reimbursement requests submitted after July 31 may not be reimbursed.**

8. What is required for a subgrant contract?

1. In 2019, several changes were made to the grant contract and process – adding several steps to the signing and documentation – completing some early tasks prior to receipt of a contract to sign is advised.
 - a. All SUBGRANTEES must be registered on the state procurement site – you should confirm with your Board that you are registered on this site. If not, someone (your Board) must go to this website and complete the steps: www.ridop.ri.gov/vendor-registration/
 - i. There is a guide here: www.ridop.ri.gov/documents/vendor-self-registration-quick-start-guide.pdf
 - ii. It makes sense to make sure you are registered to avoid delay of your contract.
 - b. Fire Department, Districts or Companies should have an up-to-date Board member information on the State Business portal: www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/business-services
 - c. Contracts require several signatures:
 - i. Chief or main signatory
 - ii. witness to Chief's signature
 - iii. notary public
 - iv. signature by an officer or director the Board

} **on the same date**

 - If you can provide us the name and title of the person when notified of your award, It can be added into your contract.

9. What is required for reimbursement?

Once the project is completed, the award recipient must provide a copy of:

1. Paid receipts, paid invoices and/or checks or statements showing payment (front and back). Only cancelled checks or bank/credit card statements will be accepted as proof of payment. Legible size appreciated.
2. Proper documentation to support in-kind match must include an individual's name, dates, hours, and activities. This can include training/meeting rosters and maintenance logs.

10. How often can a Fire Department be awarded a grant?

Fire Departments are encouraged to apply where the funds will assist with the delivery of services to rural communities/areas, which may be on a yearly basis. However, should the total grant requests received in any grant cycle be in excess of the funds available to award, new applicants and those not having received an award in either of the past 2 grant cycles will be prioritized.

11. How is the application assessed?

- Applications are evaluated by members of the Division of Forest Environment and the Rhode Island Forest Fire Advisory Committee.
- Project must demonstrate that it will be used in Wildland fire suppression. Application must be fully complete and technically consistent.

12. Where to send the application?

You can email your completed application to: nancy.stairs@dem.ri.gov

OR

You can mail 2 completed and **original signed** copies to:

DFE - Division of Forest Environment
VFA Grant Program
260 Arcadia Road
Hope Valley, RI 02832