



Fire Management Handbook
Policy 817

Rural Fire Capacity Program

This guidance document is not a new law. This document is an agency interpretation of existing law, except as authorized by Idaho Code or incorporated into a contract.

Agency Contact

Chief, Bureau of Fire Management

Purpose

Congress has recognized that fire protection in rural communities is generally lacking or inadequate. To improve this situation, Congress authorized the Rural Fire Capacity (RFC) program, formerly known as the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program. This is a cooperative program between Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, which provides financial and technical assistance to organize, train, and equip local forces for fire protection and suppression.

Applicability

Applies to IDL and Association Fire Wardens and Assistant Fire Wardens.

1. Associated Policies

- A. System for Award Management (SAM) Web Portal
- B. Fire Service Organization Defense Logistics Agency Purchases, FMH 841

2. Definitions

None

3. Policy

State Foresters are designated as the administrators of the program through a cooperative agreement with the USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry. In Idaho, Fire Wardens are designated as the IDL contact with the local community Fire Service Organizations (FSO) and Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPA).

4. Procedures

A. Project Applications

RFC applications will be submitted on a **Rural Fire Capacity Grant Application, Attachment 1**, to IDL or Timber Protective Association (TPA) Fire Wardens. Fire Wardens must assure the application meets the requirements of the program. Only those meeting requirements will qualify for financial assistance.

To provide a stable framework for program users, the following timetable will be used:

1. April 1:

- a. Program opens for applications.
- b. Applications and instructions mailed to Idaho's FSOs and RFPAs.
- c. Applications are submitted by FSOs and RFPAs to IDL and TPA Fire Wardens for review.
- d. After review, applications are emailed to the IDL Bureau of Fire Management (Fire Bureau). Originals are kept at the A/D/A office until the retention period has been met.

2. June/July:

- a. Applications are prioritized by IDL in collaboration with representatives from Idaho's fire community.
- b. Successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of grant funding status by the Fire Bureau.

B. Eligibility Requirements

Fire Wardens should carefully review each application and make sure the application complies with the following requirements before forwarding to the Fire Bureau for consideration.

1. Each applicant/recipient of a federal grant is required to have an active Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and maintain current registration through the System for Award Management (SAM) portal. Information can be found at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).
2. Each applicant/recipient of the RFC grant is required to have completed all reports to the State Fire Marshall's office through the NFIRS system.
3. IDL RFC Assistance will not be available to an FSO or RFPA applicant who is not a participant in the County Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) process for their county. In addition, all requests for RFC assistance listed on the application should be identified in the applicant county's CWPP or periodic update/addendum. Any new FSO or RFPA will have a maximum of five years from their inception to become a participant in the CWPP process for their county.
4. A single FSO or RFPA serving a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less is eligible (latest Census).
5. FSOs or RFPAs (fire districts, townships, etc.) may serve an aggregate population of greater than 10,000 as long as the service area of the FSO or RFPA includes a rural area or a rural community having a population of 10,000 or less. The RFC funding must be used to benefit the rural population.

6. A single county or town with a population over 10,000 that is served by two or more FSOs or RFPAs operating entirely within the bounds of the county or town may qualify as long as the service area of a given FSO or RFPA includes a rural area, or a rural community, or the population of the FSO or RFPA's jurisdiction is 10,000 or less. The RFC funding must be used for the rural area.
7. A single community with a population greater than 10,000 and having a single FSO or RFPA with one or more fire stations may qualify. The FSO or RFPA must have a service area that includes a rural area or community that does not exceed 10,000 population. The RFC funding must be used only for the benefit of the rural population. Similarly, a single community with a population greater than 10,000 that also provides fire protection to an adjoining rural community of 10,000 or less population by contract may also be eligible provided the RFC funding is used entirely to support the rural community.
8. A single community FSO or RFPA serving a population greater than 10,000, and not providing protection to a rural area or to a rural community, is **not eligible** for RFC financial assistance.
9. While paid FSOs or RFPAs are not excluded from participation in the RFC program, targeting of grants to qualifying FSOs or RFPAs having a membership comprised at least 80 percent volunteer firefighters is encouraged.
10. The FSO or RFPAs share (match) of the financial assistance must be available at the time of application. Match must be "hard" (cash) match; non-reimbursable out-of-pocket expenses where the subrecipient is responsible for payment. Applicants may not derive their share from other sources of federal government assistance. Note: FSOs/RFPAs must be able to provide a hard (cash) match of at least ten percent of grant funds being requested.
11. Application must be completed **in full** and **signed** by the FSO's Fire Chief or RFPA's Chairman in order to be considered.
12. When developing the RFC Grant Application, contact the nearest IDL Forest Protective District or TPA Fire Warden for assistance with obtaining pricing quotes for items available through the Coeur d'Alene Interagency Fire Cache.
13. When it is possible to order items through the Coeur d'Alene Interagency Fire Cache, but the FSO or RFPA elects not to do so, only **equivalent or lower priced PPE and equipment will be considered for reimbursement**. Any expenditure over and above this pricing **will not** be reimbursed.
14. Wildland firefighting boots **will not** be funded.
15. Fire Shelters – These grant funds will not cover a personal shelter for every member of the applicant's FSO or RFPA. IDL will only consider shelters for the number of seats on wildland fire apparatus.
16. Communications Equipment –All radios purchased must be narrow band and specified as such on the vendor quote. Radios purchased must be compliant with the applicant county's radio plan.
17. Training – There are several state agencies responsible for training of personnel. Applicant should pursue these avenues before applying for funding through this grant by contacting the local IDL, TPA, Bureau of Land Management, or US Forest Service office.

18. Project Request – Provide a detailed description of how this request will improve the response capability within the designated service area for which the applicant’s FSO or RFPA is first and foremost responsible.

C. Project Payments

Once the project is completed, the grant recipient **must sign and return a copy of the Award Agreement Letter**, along with the following:

1. A completed Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification, W-9.
2. Itemized receipts.
3. Proof of payment.
4. A completed USDA Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion - Lower Tier Covered Transactions, AD-1048.
5. A printout of the UEI number with expiration date.

The required forms are enclosed with the Award Agreement Letter to the successful applicant. **Reimbursement will not be processed without these documents.**

Fire Wardens ordering items on behalf of the FSOs and RFPAs will follow the process outlined in Fire Service Organization Defense Logistics Agency Purchases, FMH 841. **The grant recipient must include paid invoices and proof of payment for purchases in the reimbursement package** submitted to the IDL or TPA Fire Warden, following the same process as with any other vendor. Proof of payment documentation can be a bank statement showing the cleared check or credit card payment or an invoice showing the total due is zero.

When submitting the request for reimbursement, the recipient must submit documents demonstrating the ten percent hard (cash) match expenditure in order to be reimbursed the full amount of the grant award.

All requests for reimbursement must be submitted to the Fire Wardens by February 28 following the date of award.

Fire Wardens will check all reimbursement documents for accuracy and completeness and will submit the request via email for reimbursement to the Bureau of Fire Management for payment.

5. Exception Authorization

Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the Chief, Bureau Fire Management, or State Forester.