

# 2022 REGIONAL FOREST AND FIRE CAPACITY PROGRAM

## DRAFT GRANT GUIDELINES

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Department of Conservation



For additional information, please contact:

Department of Conservation

<http://conservation.ca.gov/>

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## **At-A-Glance: Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program**

The Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program is designed to support the development and implementation of regional priority plans to improve forest health and fire resiliency consistent with the recommendations of the [Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#). This program is administered by the [Department of Conservation](#).

### **Critical Dates**

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## Section 1: Introduction and Program Summary

Public Resources Code section 4208.1 establishes the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program to support regional leadership to build local and regional capacity and develop, prioritize, and implement strategies and projects that create fire adapted communities and landscapes by improving ecosystem health, community wildfire preparedness, and fire resilience. The Department will provide block grants to regional entities (Regional Block Grantees) and to eligible coordinating organizations (Statewide Block Grantees) to support the statewide implementation of the program.

To accomplish the RFFC Program's objectives, block grants will be utilized by recipients to support partner capacity, project readiness, implementation of demonstration projects, and regional priority planning to achieve landscape-level and community wildfire resilience consistent with the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan as well as the California Forest Carbon Plan and Executive Order B-52-18.

The California Legislature established the RFFC Program in statute with the passage of AB 9 (Ch. 225, Stats. 2021, Wood), authorizing the Department to provide regional block grants that will:

*"Support regional leadership to build local and regional capacity and develop, prioritize, and implement strategies and projects that create fire adapted communities and landscapes by improving ecosystem health, community wildfire preparedness, and fire resilience. For strategies and projects that seek to create fire adapted communities, regional entities shall maximize risk reductions to people and property, especially in the most vulnerable communities. PRC §4208.1(a)"*

For the purposes of this program, collaboration, landscape, region, and regional partnerships are defined in Section 6.

### Background

#### Prior Rounds of Funding

These guidelines build off lessons learned from earlier iterations of the RFFC Program that focused on:

1. Promoting and supporting collaborative planning and implementation of wildfire resilience and forest health protection, management, and restoration efforts at the landscape or watershed level.
2. Coordinating and integrating management of wildfire resilience and forest health protection, management, and restoration efforts at the regional scale.
3. Identifying, prioritizing, and implementing forestry and wildfire projects that meet regional and statewide public safety, ecosystem, and public resource goals.

#### California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force and Action Plan

Building on important work of the past decade, state and federal policymakers and agencies came together in 2018 through the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force) to bolster efforts and expand investments to address the key drivers of catastrophic fires, significantly increase the pace and scale of forest management, and improve the resilience of increasingly threatened communities.

In 2021, the Task Force issued its Action Plan and, among other strategies, committed to a regional approach designed to strategically accelerate efforts to restore the health and resilience of California forests, grasslands, and natural places; improve the fire safety of communities; and sustain the economic vitality of rural forested areas.

## Regional Framework

The RFFC Program is a part of the regional framework adopted by the Task Force in recognition of the essential diversity of California's biological, social, and legal geographies, and the need to bring together local actors to solve local challenges. The regional framework provides a structure for state, federal, and local entities to coordinate their efforts in each of four major geographic regions of the state (see Appendix A), to enhance regional leadership and capacity to respond to wildfire and forest health crises within their region, and to increase the pace and scale of forest and fire stewardship through landscape scale, multi-benefit planning and project implementation coordinated by regional partnerships.

Through the identification of these four regions, the Task Force seeks to provide a functional scale to coordinate scientific and ecoregional tools and analyses, policy, and management. Within the regional framework, the Task Force and its partners are responsible for:

- Coordination of strategies, policies, and programs to advance critical scopes of work, such as the beneficial use of fire and post-fire reforestation.
- Developing science, data, tools, and working with regional partnerships to integrate and deploy strategies, data, and tools at the regional scale.
- Aligning funding sources to achieve holistic objectives.

At the same time, regional partnerships will work through the RFFC Program to organize and elevate local and landscape factors to the regional scale.

## Program Summary

The RFFC Program is a key component of the Task Force's poly-centric approach to standing up the regional framework. Regional Block Grantees will be working within their region using information and structure provided by the Task Force and will be communicating details and expertise about the region back to the Task Force. Statewide Block Grantees will be supporting the regions and assisting with communicating with the Task Force or other state and federal partners. This approach is intended to provide support throughout the regions in a timely fashion and allow the state to adaptively manage its wildfire and forest resilience efforts.

For their part, the Regional Block Grantees will be responsible for:

- Developing partnerships
- Leading regional forums
- Integrating, accelerating, and scaling local forest and fire priorities and projects

Regional Block Grantees will work with state and federal agencies and agency partners to use the regional framework to accomplish the goals of the Task Force through the following sequence of activities:

1. Integrating local, regional, and statewide data and tools through the regional priority planning process.
2. Producing landscape portfolios of projects via regional planning and development.
3. Coordinating large-scale, long-term investments based on landscape portfolios.
4. Informing statewide priorities and programs through monitoring, reporting, and adaptive management.

### **Program Authorization and Funding**

The grants funded with these Guidelines utilize the \$110 million of General Fund monies appropriated to the Department for the RFFC Program. SB 85(Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Budget Act of 2020), SB 170 (Budget Act of 2021). This funding is available for encumbrance or expenditure until June 30, 2026, with full liquidation until June 30, 2028. Up to 5.17 percent of the appropriation may be used by the Department for administrative costs.

Should additional funding consistent with the purposes of the RFFC Program become available in future years, the Department may, at its discretion, make new grants or allocate funding to increase grants funded under these Guidelines.

### **Confidentiality and Publicity**

Details, documents, and any other materials related to this program, such as applications, grant agreements, reports, expenditures, photos, etc., are public records that may be publicly released in accordance with the California Public Records Act (Cal. Gov. Code §§ 6250 et seq.).

## Section 2: Scope of Work

### Program Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of the RFFC Program is to develop regional priority strategies that will restore health and resilience to communities, forests, and other wildfire prone landscapes. This program aims to increase regional capacity to develop, prioritize, and implement landscape-level forest health and wildfire resilience projects that have broad support from stakeholders in and affected by the region. To that end, block grantees will seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase capacity, support strategic collaborative planning and coordination, and accelerate wildfire resilience and forest health protection, management, and restoration efforts at the landscape level.
- Strengthen regional leadership on wildfire and forest resilience actions in coordination with key state and federal agencies.
- Build a pipeline of forestry and wildfire protection projects. Identify, prioritize, plan, make ready projects that meet regional and statewide public safety, ecosystem, and natural resource goals.

### Regional Block Grantee Essential Program Activities

Regional Block Grantees are required to engage in the following core program activities, which are described in more detail below.

- Conduct [regional priority planning](#).
- Administer [project development](#) activities.
- [Build capacity](#) among regional partners.
- Participate in Task Force efforts to [coordinate regions](#).

#### Regional Priority Planning (RPP)

The regional priority planning process is intended to build regional leadership by empowering high-capacity regional entities, strengthening local networks of forest and fire practitioners, and conducting extensive outreach with local communities, California Native American tribes, governments, and organizations.

Regional Block Grantees must develop or update a Regional Priority Plan (RPP) that identifies, prioritizes, and plans for wildfire and forest health needs. The following activities must be included in the Regional Block Grantees' regional priority planning efforts:

- Developing broad-based partnerships among stakeholders, implementation partners, and decision-making entities capable of effectively forwarding large scale, multi-benefit programs of work across land types and ownership, over extended time frames.
- Utilizing the best available science, local knowledge, and statewide strategies to develop priorities and decision support strategies which respond to existing needs and environmental conditions within the region.
- Incorporating stakeholder governance into the decision-making process.
- Identifying potential priority projects and management activities based on desired landscape conditions, and compiling projects into landscape portfolios.



## Project Development

Regional Block Grantees must use a portion of this funding to support preliminary project development and permitting activities for the priority projects identified in their RPP or projects that were identified prior to development of the RPP and already have regional support.

Project development activities should ensure that projects are ready to receive implementation funding. These projects should contribute to the desired outcomes for priority projects identified in each RPP and increase ecosystem and adaptive capacities, fire resilience, health, and human safety. Regional Block Grantees must work in collaboration with their partners to develop and permit projects. Project development strategies should be equitable, supporting subregions with both higher and lower capacity.

NOTE: Project development and permitting may occur in parallel with the development of the RPP. Eligible project development activities include design, permitting, project support from landowners or partners, partnership development, and other tasks needed to create a pipeline for multiple years of implementation-ready projects.

## Capacity Building

Regional Block Grantees are expected to use a portion of the funds from this program to further capacity building efforts throughout their region.

Capacity building activities should help grantees and their partners manage increases in project development and implementation workload. Capacity building should achieve broad and diverse engagement of communities within each region to develop a comprehensive understanding of and support for the program.

These capacity building efforts must include:

- Performing community level engagement and outreach
- Engaging vulnerable communities in the development of RPPs
- Providing education and training opportunities for communities, organization staff, and partners
- Development of an Equitable Community Engagement Plan (see deliverables section below for details)

Capacity building efforts may include investments in partner and local staff development, funding new positions, acquiring tools and resources to increase partner capacity for planning, or developing new pilot projects and programs.

Capacity building efforts may include:

- Investments in partner and local staff development
- Funding new positions
- Acquiring tools and resources to increase partner capacity for planning
- Developing new pilot projects and programs
- Participation with existing workforce programs (e.g., local Conservation Corps)
- Demonstration projects

Regional Block Grantees are expected to coordinate with local watershed coordinators, county coordinators funded through California Fire Safe Council, local CALFIRE

representatives, and others conducting local fire and forestry resilience work on capacity building needs.

If included, demonstration project(s) may be identified in the RPP or may be a pre-identified, shovel-ready project. Demonstration project(s) should maximize desired outcomes of the RFFC Program, have quantified achievement of multiple desired benefits of the program, and serve as a model for meeting regional and statewide goals. A demonstration project is one that implements techniques new to the area, highlights new technology or approaches, and could be scaled up and/or replicated.

Demonstration projects must:

- Include a community outreach component that will allow the block grantee to share results with other regions or practitioners.
- Incorporate participation from multiple partners and funding sources, support regional workforce development opportunities, and integrate benefits to the most vulnerable communities within the region.
- Be carried out with the approval of or under the supervision of a licensed forester.

### Regional and Statewide Coordination

Regional Block Grantees will be responsible for coordinating efforts among partners in their region, providing regional leadership, and facilitating communications and data sharing among regional and statewide partners. To facilitate regional and statewide coordination, Regional Block Grantees must:

- Participate in Task Force initiatives, including the development of regional profiles and collection of data, metrics, and communication materials needed for interagency regional collaboration.
- Coordinate regional forums under the Task Force and facilitate discussions among state and local entities through meetings, prioritization discussions, forums, or data inquiries.
- Appoint one or more data stewards who will be responsible for managing & maintaining spatial and quantitative data produced or collected by the regional partnership.

### Regional Block Grantee Deliverables

The following deliverables are required for all Regional Block Grantees.

- Regional Priority Plan (RPP)
- Equitable Community Engagement Plan

### Regional Priority Plans (RPPs)

Each Regional Block Grantee shall use a portion of this funding to develop or update an RPP that identifies, coordinates, and advances wildfire and forest resilience projects at the landscape scale. RPPs are expected to serve regional partnerships to:

- Identify, prioritize, and plan for wildfire and forest health needs within their region.
- Coordinate planning and management efforts with an "all lands" approach across jurisdictions and ownership.
- Build strong regional support for the partnerships, plans, and projects through broad inclusion of stakeholders and partners.

- Organize and communicate regional prioritization consistent with Task Force goals and strategies.

The plan should incorporate actionable components that increase resilience of vulnerable communities and ecosystems within the region at risk from wildfire and other climate-related disasters.

RPPs do not need to be developed or presented in a specific format or medium, and it is expected that every regional partnership will need to adopt solutions and formats fitting the regional needs. However, to ensure consistency, communicability, and short- and long-term utility of RPPs, three key elements must be included in all RPPs:

- Geography & Governance
- Assessment & Methodology
- Landscape Portfolios of Projects

Information is provided for each element in the sub-sections below.

RPPs are intended to be living documents, and on-going investment in regional priority planning throughout the process is expected. Initial RPP efforts may include draft plans and priority project lists that do not contain all the required elements.

### *Geography & Governance*

RPPs must consider and respond to the unique geographic, biophysical, and social characteristics of their region. RPPs must include an analysis of the key geographic characteristics and governing structures that will affect decision-making and implementation of wildfire and forest priorities within their jurisdictions, and the RPP must work to advance policies and programs that enhance coordination, collaboration, and effective natural resource management within their region.

NOTE: In some cases, one unified RPP may be the preferred solution for an entire regional partnership, while other plans may be developed on a subregional basis or integrate different plans from multiple sources. RPP structure, format, and development should be appropriate to the region and the stakeholders, but in all cases RPPs should be integrated into a larger regional framework—for instance, through shared project prioritization, joint demonstration projects, and shared assessment methodologies.

RPPs must be developed with broad participation of regional communities, California Native American tribes, public and governmental agencies, community-based organizations, and other organizations. Regional Block Grantees will lead the development of the RPP for their partnership, working directly with organizations in their region throughout the process.

### *Assessment & Methodology*

RPPs must include:

1. An assessment of the landscape conditions, utilizing the regional profiles and supplementary tools developed by the Task Force's Science Advisory Panel, local knowledge, data, and/or other appropriate tools to characterize the regional landscape with respect to core pillars of wildfire and forest health resilience. Characterization should complement the assessments within the regional profiles developed by the Science Advisory Panel. At a minimum, characterization must include dimensions of community vulnerability and ecological integrity.

2. A methodology for decision making, project identification, and prioritization that is appropriate for the region, the partnership, and consistent with state and federal strategies.
3. A program for ongoing assessment and evaluation of forest and fire resilience activities within the region over time.

### *Landscape Portfolios of Projects*

RPPs must include lists of priority projects that, taken together, respond to landscape scale wildfire and ecosystem health priorities. Portfolios of priority projects should:

- Be geographically explicit.
- Provide multiple benefits and respond to key statewide priorities, including reducing wildfire severity risk, protecting vulnerable communities, improving ecosystem health and biodiversity, and enhancing water security.
- Identify project sponsors and have broad support from stakeholders in the region.
- Include projects at different stages of readiness suitable for implementation in sequence; projects should be cross-jurisdictional, aligning efforts across ownerships, land types, and areas of responsibility.

### *Equitable Community Engagement Plans*

To ensure that grant funds provide direct, meaningful, and assured benefits to the entire region, the RFFC Program requires that recipients work with a diverse group of community members and stakeholders through direct engagement. Regional Block Grantees must involve fire and forestry professionals and key stakeholders in all phases of RFFC Program implementation. Regional Block Grantees must also use proven methods of engagement to facilitate direct participation of the communities within the region, including translation of meetings and materials, scheduling of meetings at times that are convenient for community members, and engaging community members in information gathering as well as outreach.

Equitable Community Engagement Plans must include two phases: 1) a gap analysis and 2) development of the Equitable Community Engagement Plan. The gap analysis must identify who is missing from current or past engagement activities, which will be used for the development phase.

All Equitable Community Engagement Plans must include:

- Description of key stakeholders, community members, and organizations, including any existing community-based organizations, or fire safe councils serving the region.
- Recent history of community engagement in fire and forest health issues, including involvement in any planning or community development activities administered by the local government or other administrative entities.
- Process that will be used to identify the needs of the community and other stakeholders.
- Process for the community to provide feedback on program activities and RPPs.
- Process to inform the public about implementation progress, including updates on project performance and other indicators being tracked.
- Mechanisms to support implementation of the Equitable Community Engagement Plan.
- Timeline of proposed community engagement and outreach activities.

## **Statewide Block Grantee Essential Program Activities**

Statewide Block Grantees will support the statewide implementation of the program through coordination of and technical assistance to Regional Block Grantees, as well as support forest health and resilience efforts across regions and throughout the state.

### **Grant Administration and Reporting**

#### Administrative Activities

As part of the grant's administration, block grantees must:

- Participate in grant and program orientation with the Department.
- Provide quarterly invoices and reports.
- Coordinate and participate in relevant Task Force regional forums.
- Participate in monthly check-in meetings with the Department.
- Provide monthly project highlights and success stories to the Department.
- Participate in monthly webinars with other block grantees.
- Coordinate with local and regional CALFIRE representatives.
- Ensure environmental compliance for all projects and tasks.
- Distribute necessary funds through subgrants and/or contracts.
- Ensure execution of all project deliverables and requirements within the grant term.

#### Invoicing

Block grantees must provide a fiscal report detailing how funds have been expended along with each quarterly invoice. In addition, block grantees requesting advance payments will need to provide additional information.

#### Reporting

Block grantees will be required to participate in monthly meetings with the Department. The monthly meetings are intended to update the Department and address any issues in a timely fashion to help ensure success of each block grant. Quarterly reports will include a narrative summary of work completed, key accomplishments, and collection of data on project development, partnership and community engagement, and other key metrics to be determined in partnership with the Department.

Block grantees will be responsible for submitting written monthly highlights and quarterly reports.

#### Distribution of Block Grant Funds to Third Parties

Block grantees may implement program activities directly or provide subgrants or contracts, and collaborative planning efforts with local entities, including municipal governments, California Native American tribes, nongovernmental organizations, community organizations, fire safe councils, land trusts, resource conservation districts, joint power authorities, special districts, fire departments, residents, private and public forest landowners and managers, businesses, and others, to assist in accomplishing the objectives of the RFFC Program. Block grantees may award subgrants and contracts to fulfill individual tasks or deliverables, or multiple tasks or deliverables, at their discretion and consistent with the recipient's internal contracting or procurement policies and procedures.

## Environmental Compliance

Activities funded under the RFFC Program must comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other environmental permitting requirements. Block grantees are responsible for project compliance and grant agreement budgets that may include the funding necessary for compliance-related tasks.

## Section 3: Grant Awards

### Selection of Block Grantees

The Department is awarding block grants on a noncompetitive basis to support implementation of landscape or watershed level forest health projects in the Northern, Coastal-Inland, Sierra-Cascade-Inyo, and Southern California regions, as shown in Appendix A. To best ensure efficient planning and strategic interagency coordination, the geographic extent of these regions may shift slightly over time. Regional Block Grantees will distribute funds to subgrantees and contractors, and work to ensure coordinated and integrated management of forest health and resilience activities throughout their region.

In addition to funding the Regional Block Grantees, the Department will fund Statewide Block Grantees to provide statewide coordination of and technical assistance to Regional Block Grantees, as well as to support forest health and resilience efforts in communities and priority areas not covered by the Regional Block Grantees.

### Statewide and Regional Entities

Statewide and regional entities eligible to receive block grants are local governments, California Native American tribes, state conservancies, joint powers authorities, public agencies, resource conservation districts, special districts, California 501 (c) (3) non-profit organizations, and tribally chartered non-profit organizations.

The Department will consider the following factors with selecting Regional Block Grantees:

- Demonstrated ability to coordinate the many entities across their region necessary to meet program goals
- Existing strong regional partnerships, and support and capacity to expand these partnerships
- Demonstrated ability to conduct regional planning efforts
- Fiscal and administrative control systems to adequately oversee the expenditure of block grant awards
- Policy and program expertise relevant to meeting program goals

The Department will consider the following factors with selecting Statewide Block Grantees:

- Experience and expertise in developing forest health and wildfire protection planning statewide
- Experience and expertise in conducting effective and inclusive outreach across diverse communities
- Experience and expertise in developing peer-to-peer and inter-regional sharing of project implementation strategies and skills
- Strong relationships with primary actors in forest health and wildfire protection planning statewide
- Fiscal and administrative control systems to adequately oversee the expenditure of block grant awards
- Policy and program expertise relevant to meeting program goals

### Workplan Development

RFFC Block Grantees must collaborate with the Department to develop grant workplans consistent with the goals and objectives of this program. The Department will hold a post-

award consultation with selected entities to develop a workplan, resource plan, and schedule of key activities before grant execution.



## Section 4: Grant Agreement and Administration

### Overview of Grant Execution

1. The Department will announce awards.
2. Each block grantee must enter into a grant agreement with the Department. The block grantee must sign and return the grant agreement to the Department within three months of the award date or risk forfeiting their award.
3. The grant agreement is considered fully executed once the Department's authorized signatory has signed the grant agreement.
4. Once the Department notifies the block grantee that the grant agreement has been fully executed, the block grantee should promptly commence work.

### Performance Period and Grant Term

Regional Block Grantees and Statewide Block Grantees need to complete all tasks and deliverables by March 30, 2028, to ensure payment by the termination of the grant agreement term. The grant term will continue until June 30, 2028. The grant may be extended for an additional time at the Department's discretion and with appropriate budget authorization.

### Funding and Accounting

#### Payment of Grant Funds

- Payment will be made on a reimbursement basis.
- The Department may distribute up to 20% of the original grant amount to a block grantee in advance at a time per Department protocols.
- Except for permitted advance payments, payments will be made in arrears.
- Grantees shall invoice quarterly, unless otherwise agreed upon by the Department, and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.
- Funds cannot be disbursed until there is a fully executed grant agreement between the Department and the grantee.
- Only those eligible costs incurred as outlined in these Guidelines and in accordance with the grant agreement will be eligible for reimbursement.

#### Accounting of Grant Funds

It is essential that complete and accurate records be maintained by grantees. Block grantees must maintain an accounting and record keeping system that reflects sound fiscal controls and safeguards. The accounting information must be sufficient so that the total cost of each aspect of the project can be readily determined and records are readily available upon demand. Block grantees must retain all grant transaction records for a period of four years after final payment.

Any advanced funds must be kept separate in accounting records from block grantee's other funds. Interest earnings shall be allocated to the block grant's advanced funds for use on the project or returned to the Department. Advanced funds that are unused shall be returned to the Department promptly upon completion of the project or termination of the grant agreement, whichever occurs first.

## Section 5: Eligible Costs

### Eligible Costs

Eligible costs must be incurred during the grant agreement term. All costs must be reasonable, as defined in Section 6 of these Guidelines. Eligible costs are:

#### Staff Costs

Reimbursable staff costs are the salary costs for (1) block grantee, (2) subgrantees, and (3) contractors. This is the salary at an hourly rate, benefits, taxes, and leave.

Administrative costs are not reimbursable as staff costs. Administrative costs should be budgeted separately and must comply with the requirements outlined below.

#### Administrative Costs

For the block grantee, reimbursement by the RFFC Program for administrative costs are capped at either (1) twenty percent (20%) of the total block grant award for entities without a current final Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), or (2) up to thirty-five percent (35%) for entities with a current federally approved NICRA.

For subgrantees and contractors, reimbursement by the RFFC Program for administrative costs are capped at either (1) twenty percent (20%) of their direct charges for entities without a current final NICRA, or (2) up to thirty-five percent (35%) for entities with a current federally approved NICRA.

Administrative costs include costs that are sometimes described as indirect costs and are:

- Office space and utilities
- Supplies
- Legal or management oversight
- Prorated general liability, Workers' Compensation, and automotive insurance
- Equipment costs not included as direct costs in the budget

#### Travel Costs

In-state travel for block grantees, subgrantees, and contractors as necessary to fulfill the deliverables of the program.

- Accommodation-related travel costs: maximum reimbursement rates based on county as shown here: <https://hrmanual.calhr.ca.gov/Home/ManualItem/1/2203>, with no option for approval of an "excess lodging rate." with no option for approval of an "excess lodging rate."
- Mileage for travel directly related to execution of the scope of work will be reimbursed at the *Reimbursement Rate Per Mile for Personal Vehicle* as shown here: <https://hrmanual.calhr.ca.gov/Home/ManualItem/1/2202>.
- Rental car, train, or airfare will only be reimbursed to attend those meetings outlined in the Administrative Activities section, and then only if it is the typical method used to get from one location to the other.
- No other travel-related costs will be reimbursed through this grant program, including per diem.

#### Project Development Costs

Block grant funding may be used for project development costs:

- Preparing project plans, specifications, and cost estimates that will result in a specific project
- Acquiring permits (including fees) for specific, future on-the-ground projects
- Analysis required for CEQA and/or NEPA documentation
- Performing necessary cultural resources, biological, botanical, aquatic, soil, hydrologic, wildlife, timber, or other studies/surveys and/or developing necessary project designs related to a specific site or physical project
- Obtaining implementation funding

#### Demonstration Project Implementation Costs (if applicable)

Block grant funding may be used for demonstration project implementation costs including:

- Preparation of bid packages and contractor documents
- Performance costs within the scope of the demonstration project including materials, supplies, and equipment
- Labor and other costs necessary for the physical implementation of the project
- Pre- and post-project monitoring and adaptive management, including preparation of long-term management plans

#### Capacity Building, Outreach, Education, and Training

Block grant funding may be used for Capacity Building, Outreach, Education, and Training activities including:

- Building organizational capacity to increase pace and scale of forestry activities
- Training costs for block grantee employees or subgrantees
- Costs to attend professional development conferences or events
- Materials
- Facilitation services
- Professional training services for educational events or workforce development
- Participant stipends in compensation for services rendered in the development of community work products, and appropriately documented with deliverables such as sign-in sheets or written surveys
- Transportation stipends and provision of transportation services for community participants, such as a vanpool
- Rental costs of equipment, facilities, or venues
- Provision of childcare services for community participants at sponsored events
- Food and refreshments that are determined to be an integral part of an event. Examples of activities where it would be appropriate to approve food purchase would include a design charrette held in the evening, where the meal is consumed as part of the event and replaces a meal otherwise missed by attending the event

#### Equipment and Vehicles

For any equipment or vehicles purchased or built with funds that are reimbursable as a direct cost of the RFFC project, the block grantee, subgrantee, or contractor, as applicable, must be the sole owner on title. During the grant agreement term, equipment must be dedicated to the described use in the same proportion and scope as is in the grant agreement and the block grantee is required to maintain an inventory record for each piece of non-expendable equipment or vehicles purchased or built with funds provided under the terms of a grant agreement.

On completion or early termination of the grant agreement, the Department will either (1) require that the equipment or vehicles be returned to the state, (2) authorize the continued use of such equipment or vehicle within the block grantee's region, or (3) require that grantee refund the Department for the fair market value of equipment that continues to have a usable life but is no longer required for project implementation.

In making that determination, the Department will consider among other things, the useful life of the equipment or vehicle. Equipment or vehicles that remain within the block grantee's region will be required to be maintained in a state of good repair with all licenses and fees paid and made available to government entities in the event of an emergency.

### **Ineligible Costs**

Ineligible costs are:

- Costs that are not related to the RFFC Program
- Costs that occur outside of the grant agreement term
- Incidentals, tips, per diems
- Incentive/participation gifts
- Out-of-state travel and activities
- Activities performed and equipment or vehicles purchased that are not identified in the budget/work plan or approved by the Department prior to purchase.
- The following costs associated with community engagement and outreach:
  - Direct cash benefits or subsidies to participants, such as cash subsidies to secure private transportation services
  - Alcoholic refreshments
  - Participant incentives, such as door prizes, which are unrelated to specific community work products
  - General meetings that do not specifically discuss or advance implementation of the RFFC project(s)

### **Auditing of Fund Expenditures**

All expenditures of public funds under this program are subject to audit by the State of California. All grantees shall maintain books, records, documents, and other evidence sufficient to properly reflect the amount, receipt, and disposition of all project funds (including state funds, interest earned, and matching funds by the grantee) and the total cost of the project.

### **Purchasing**

Block Grantees are expected to adhere to their competitive bid, internal contracting, and purchasing guidelines. Documentation of the grantee's contracting or purchasing guidelines, processes, and project-specific approvals may be requested in the event of an audit by the State of California.

### **Loss of Funding**

Work performed under the grant agreement is subject to availability of funds through the state's budget process.

Actions of the Block Grantee that may lead to suspension or cancellation of funding include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to execute an agreement within three months of receiving an official funding notification
- Failure to submit required documentation within the time periods specified in the grant agreement
- Change in project scope, schedule, or budget without prior approval
- Failure to complete the project
- Failure to demonstrate sufficient progress
- Failure to submit evidence of environmental or permit compliance as specified by the grant agreement
- Failure to comply with applicable laws or grant requirements

## Section 6: Definitions and Reference Material

### Definitions

*Collaboration or Collaborative:* Partnership or cooperation involving multiple and diverse stakeholders (including agencies, as appropriate) to improve natural resource conditions within the same watershed or landscape in ways that do not duplicate efforts.

*Community Wildfire Protection Plan:* A plan developed in the collaborative framework established by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council and agreed to by state, tribal, and local government, local fire department, other stakeholders and federal land management agencies managing land in the vicinity of the planning area. A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment on Federal and non-Federal land that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure and recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability throughout the at-risk community. A CWPP may address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, or structure protection - or all the above.

*Department:* California Department of Conservation.

*Landscape Scale or Level:* A functional designation of a relatively large, contiguous geographic area scaled to capture ecosystem function, integrity, and diversity, where management plans are integrated into the broader landscape conditions to set appropriate short-, medium-, and long-term goals, including integration of natural processes. Management activities are of sufficient scale to affect biophysical processes and stressor (e.g., fire, bark beetles) behavior within that landscape. Landscapes may vary in size but are generally not smaller than 40,000 acres.

*Vulnerable Communities:* Climate vulnerability describes the degree to which natural, built, and human systems are at risk of exposure to climate change impacts. Vulnerable communities experience heightened risk and increased sensitivity to climate change and have less capacity and fewer resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from climate impacts. These disproportionate effects are caused by physical (built and environmental), social, political, and/ or economic factor(s), which are exacerbated by climate impacts. These factors include, but are not limited to, race, class, sexual orientation and identification, national origin, and income inequality.

*Reasonable Cost:* A cost that, in its nature and amount, does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost. In determining reasonableness of a given cost, consideration must be given to:

- Whether the cost is of a type generally recognized as ordinary and necessary for the operation of the entity or the proper and efficient performance of the project.
- The restraints or requirements imposed by such factors as: sound business practices; arm's-length bargaining; federal, state, local, tribal, and other laws, and regulations; and terms and conditions of this project.
- Market prices for comparable goods or services for the geographic area.
- Whether the individuals concerned acted with prudence in the circumstances considering their responsibilities to its employees, the public at large, and the state.

- Whether the cost significantly deviates from the acquiring entity's established practices and policies regarding the incurrence of costs.

*Regional Forums:* A venue for information sharing across a region and between entities working within a region to ensure coordination among stakeholders, and to ensure that areas not presently covered in a regional partnership are engaged and have a role in advancing regional priorities. Forums offer opportunities for sharing successes and challenges, enhancing professional networks, learning the latest scientific findings, and participating in a more regional-focused discussion with work groups to understand statewide priorities and to ensure their local needs and concerns are heard at the state level.

*Regional Partnerships:* A large scale collaboration operating with the common goal to elevate, integrate, and expand regional forest and fire resilience work within one of the four major regions identified by the Task Force's Action Plan. Regional Block Grantees lead and support regional partnerships.

*Regional Profiles:* Profiles will include maps showcasing ecoregion distribution within each region, recent stressor activities (e.g., fire, drought, human development) to highlight potential future stress, key species of concern, and other key ecosystem services provided to the state from the regions. Framing these stressor events with climate change and the management actions that can mitigate or build resilience to these stressors will offer broad scale guidance on the scientifically established management options available to collaboratives to achieve their goals. Guidance would not offer acre-by-acre approaches to management but provides regional partnerships tools and the latest scientific knowledge on key topics that may be applied in their decision-making, while also factoring in other key management criteria such as ownership, topography, and funding availability.

*Watershed:* All land enclosed by a continuous hydrologic drainage divide and lying upslope from a specified point on a stream, river, lake, or other waterbody. Total land areas draining to any point in a stream.

### **Reference Material**

- [California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#), January 2021, California Forest Management Task Force

## Appendix A: Regions Map

The following map is a general representation of the four geographic regions that guide funding allocations. Specific Regional Block Grantee jurisdictions within these regions are not identified.



